

Grieving parents reach out to others

■ New support group will help those who have lost children.

By **DANIELLE RUSH**
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Jeff and Donna Russell have felt like "Job in slow motion" over the past few years.

Jeff Russell said like the Biblical Job, they faced a series of losses, but over a period of several years, rather than in quick succession.

In January 2004, Donna Russell's stepfather died in a car accident. Then, on Jan. 27, 2005, their son Jeffrey Jr., age 24, died from injuries sustained while serving in the U.S. Army in Alaska.

In October 2005, a grandson died just a few hours after his birth. Finally, on Sept. 7, 2007, their son Rick Russell, 28, died.

The couple went for personal counseling and attended grief support groups, but felt none of them was exactly what they needed.

Donna Russell said most of the people at the support groups had lost a spouse or parent, and their grief was different.

"It's not that it was worse. It was just different," she said. "I can't relate to them. I haven't lost a spouse."

Now that they've had time to start moving forward in their lives, Jeff Russell said, they want to help other parents in their situation. That's why they have started Heartprints, a support group for parents and grandparents who have lost a child.

Donna Russell named the

Helping others:

The Heartprints support group's next meeting is from 6 to 8 p.m. Sunday at New Beginnings Christian Fellowship, 1900 S. Berkley Road. Future meetings are planned Feb. 22, March 15 and 19, April 12 and 26, and May 10 and 24.

For more information call, (765) 776-0868 or (765) 776-0025.

group, saying that children leave prints on their parents' hearts that last forever.

Jeff Russell said they know there are other parents who have lost children, and they want them to know "you don't have to walk alone. We can walk together."

He said 12 people attended the first session. Future meetings will be held two Sundays monthly at New Beginnings Christian Church, 1900 S. Berkley Road.

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Russell said even though the meeting is at a church, and he is the pastor, they are not there to preach at anyone, and the group will be nonjudgmental. What is said there, stays there, he added, and it is OK to be angry with God and talk about it.

He said while he still doesn't understand why his sons had to die, he feels he can use that experience to help others.

"I've come to learn in life that God has a reason for our pain. ... If we can reach back and help somebody, that's what we want to do."

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