

Pass It On

PEOPLE HELPING PEOPLE

Open Arms

MORE THAN HEART-ache struck Marcella Johnson when she lost her newborn to a rare disease just minutes after giving birth in April 1999. She also found herself suffering a dull, inexplicable ache up and down her forearms. Marcella searched in vain to find a reason for the persistent ache. A book about bereavement issues finally solved the mystery. She had a little-understood condition that can strike mothers whose children have died soon after birth. The pain, she learned, could be relieved by cradling an object roughly the weight of an infant.

Marcella decided she wanted to embrace other bereaved mothers afflicted by the condition. With a local teddy bear company, she created a specially weighted bear. When cradled, it relieves the ache in the forearms. Each "Comfort Cub" comes with a note: "I too lost my precious baby . . . My heart hurt so much and my arms felt so empty. My hope is that this will bring comfort to you."

Hundreds of Comfort Cubs have made their way into the arms of hurt-



ing moms, easing their pain emotionally as well as physically.

—LISA CHENG

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

A Good Fix

TWO YEARS AGO, youth group organizer Brenda Wood and a dozen or so teenagers from our church in Ardmore, Oklahoma, were invited to Kansas City, Missouri, to help fix up an inner-city church. The project was spearheaded by the Front Porch Alliance, Kansas City volunteers who specialize in buffing up homes in run-down neighborhoods.

Brenda was so impressed that she decided to organize a similar group, the Front Porch Bunch, back in Ardmore. Since its inception in 2000, the Bunch has helped people all over the state. Volunteers have done everything from sprucing up a neglected cemetery to refurbishing a Native American church. Most of their work, though, gets done right here in town. From changing light bulbs to trim-