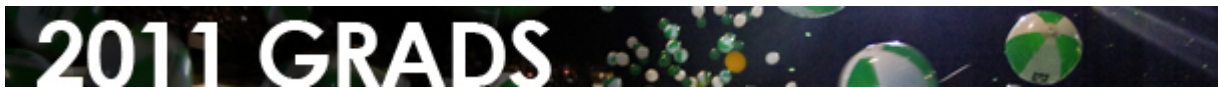


Close to Her Heart

May 10, 2011 1:15 AM Mary Ann Travis
mtravis@tulane.edu

There's always a hole in your heart when someone close to you dies. Regen Foley, who graduates on Thursday (May 12) with a BA in Spanish, experienced the loss of her stepdad when she was only 10. That sad occurrence has shaped Foley's life, motivating her to reach out to others in need.



Reaching out to help others is a way of life for soon-to-be-grad Regen Foley. (Photos by Ryan Rivet)

Foley established the Sunshine Project in honor of her stepfather Rick Sunshine when she was in middle school in Palm Beach County, Fla. She collected and gave away "comfort bags" to hospitalized children. The bags included stuffed animals, coloring books, crayons and handmade fleece blankets.



Foley and her mother collaborated to write this book for children who've experienced the loss of a loved one.

"I wanted to help kids in the hospital because I had spent time with him in the hospital," says Foley. "I'd see the kids around. And it was not a good situation for them."

From a young age, she had already watched her pediatrician mother, Dr. Susan Foley, care for sick children. Of her mother, Regen says, "She is a big inspiration."

Mother and daughter co-wrote and illustrated *Close to My Heart: A Guided Workbook for Children After a Loved One Dies* in 2009. The workbook provides space for children to draw pictures and express their emotions, offering tools to help with the grieving process. Regen Foley also has created a Spanish edition of the book.

She says that she chose to attend Tulane because of its "relaxed yet academic" atmosphere. And, she says, "I liked the service opportunities that Tulane offered."

Through her service-learning courses, she's tutored in an English-as-a-second-language program and worked with children who attend counseling sessions at Crescent House, which offers assistance to abused women and their families. She's also been active in Mortar Board literacy projects. Mortar Board is an honor society for senior undergraduates.

Foley will attend Georgetown University next fall, pursuing a master's degree in Latin American studies. She's currently working on another self-help book for

children who are coping with physical and emotional scars.