

Media Release

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Life sometimes catches us by surprise

Life sometimes catches us by surprise—an accident, a sudden illness, an unexpected diagnosis—and we are reminded just how many events are beyond our control. It's so important to take charge of those things we can control while we can still speak for ourselves. This is why Aging with Dignity, a national advocate of dignified care for the elderly and disabled, developed a living will called *Five Wishes*.

What are these Five Wishes you should put in writing now to prepare for the unexpected?

- Who will make healthcare decisions for you when you can't?
- What kind of medical treatment do you want and not want?
- What do you want done for your physical comfort?
- What do you want done for your emotional and spiritual comfort?
- What do you want your loved ones to know?

It takes a great deal of time and thought to consider these questions. Whether you're healthy or facing a serious illness or injury, these are not questions you want to have to answer any time soon.

What will happen if you do and your circumstances change, or you change your mind? You can tear it up and create a new one at any time. Your living will is your right to make choices about the kind of care you receive, and your *Five Wishes* are yours to honor or discard as you wish.

What will happen if you don't create a living will? You won't know who will be making decisions about your care, and your loved ones and the people caring for you won't know what kind of treatment you may or may not want.

A family of six grown children couldn't come to an agreement about what should be done for their mother, who was actively dying without having prepared a living will. Each child had a different opinion about what to do. A judge said the majority opinion would rule, but the children couldn't come to a consensus. In the end, the judge held that the oldest child's opinion would prevail. Had their mother completed her living will, the children would have had peace of mind about what their mother wanted and been able to ensure that they honored her wishes.

Written in consultation with The American Bar Association's Commission on Law and Aging and the nation's leading experts in end-of-life care, *Five Wishes* is easy to understand and complete, respected by doctors, lawyers, hospitals, faith communities, employers, retiree groups and hospices, and recognized in 42 states. Haven Hospice distributes this booklet free of charge to encourage everyone to make your healthcare wishes known. To order your free copy, visit www.havenhospice.org, or call 800-727-1889.

About Haven Hospice

Haven Hospice is North Florida's expert in end-of-life and palliative care and is one of three 2008 Circle of Life Award[®] winners nationwide to be recognized as leaders in improving the care of patients near the end of life or with life-threatening conditions. Haven Hospice has also been recognized as a Florida Pacesetter for its leadership in promoting living wills. Haven Hospice has served nearly 50,000 patients and families since 1979 and has been licensed in Florida as a not-for-profit hospice since 1980. For more information, visit www.havenhospice.org or call 800-727-1889.

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