



For Immediate Release

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National Healthcare Decisions Day is April 16 Hospice of Santa Barbara Encourages Community to Plan Now

April 15, 2008, Santa Barbara, CA—Hospice of Santa Barbara, along with healthcare providers, professionals, and others across the country, is leading in an effort to highlight the significance of advance medical planning and decision-making.

On April 16, 2008, healthcare organizations nationwide will be providing the public with valuable information to facilitate medical planning and preparing advance directives, as part of the inaugural National Healthcare Decisions Day. An advance directive consists of two different legal documents that enable you to plan for and communicate your end-of-life wishes in the event that you are unable to make health care choices: a living will and medical power of attorney. A living will is used to document your wishes concerning medical treatments at the end of life. A medical or durable power of attorney allows you to choose a person you trust as your healthcare agent, who can then make medical decisions on your behalf.

“The uncomfortable feeling when discussing this topic is typical, because thinking about these decisions is hard for all of us; however, it is much more distressing when families have to make these choices for a loved one,” said Gail Rink, Executive Director of Hospice of Santa Barbara. “It is much more than simply preparing your records—it is informing your loved ones of your personal wishes for medical treatment and helping healthcare providers address medical planning issues in the event that you are unable to speak for yourself. Others need to know your wishes in order to honor them.”

It is important to be as clear as possible when discussing such tender topics because clarity provides involved in our decision making the information and permission necessary to implement our end of life wishes. Talking about your medical desires helps diminishes an agent’s potential guilt and anguish over whether he or she is doing the right thing.

Hospice of Santa Barbara suggests the following steps in preparing your advance directives:

- Discuss with your physician the types of life-sustaining treatments are available.
- Decide what medical treatments you may or may not want for yourself, and share your requests with your loved ones and physician.
- Select a healthcare agent whom you trust and who understands your decisions, and who is willing to take responsibility to ensure your wishes are followed.
- Secure the document.
- Read all instructions carefully to ensure you have included all the information and that your documents are witnessed properly.

- Distribute photocopies to your doctor, family members, and certainly to the two people you select as your decision makers. Originals need to be kept in a safe place where access is easy. Note on the photocopies the location where the originals are kept.
- Review the document annually to determine any changes.
- Remember that choosing a durable power of attorney and discussing the treatments that are right are in hopes to lessen the pain, doubt and anxiety for our loved ones as we approach death. Your legacy to your family is peace of mind. More information about advance directives and other end of life planning information call 563-8820 or visit to Hospice of Santa Barbara's website www.hospiceofsantabarbara.org.

The mission of Hospice of Santa Barbara, Inc. is to provide care to anyone experiencing the impact of a life-threatening illness, or grieving the death of a loved one.

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