

Event Set for April 16, 2008

National Healthcare Decisions Day Encourages Early Planning

Forty-one national health care leaders are currently collaborating to establish National Healthcare Decisions Day, which will encourage informed and thoughtful planning for end-of-life care choices.

Participants in Washington, D.C., Chicago and Los Angeles took part in a daylong videoconference early this summer, discussing initial project plans and outreach. Representatives from various groups and institutions took part; each plays a distinct role in the health care process. Among those involved are professionals from the American Hospital Association, Aging with Dignity, American Bar Association, Center for Practical Bioethics, Cleveland Clinic, Association of Professional Chaplains, National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, University of Virginia Medical Center, American Health Decisions, American Health Lawyers Association, Illinois Hospital Association and California Coalition for Compassionate Care.

After discussing a concept paper prepared by the meeting's agenda committee, consensus emerged on several points:

- A National Healthcare Decisions Day project is both desirable and feasible.
- The event should be coordinated at the national and state levels, but organized in a way that allows for flexible approaches and topic emphasis within individual communities.
- The focus should be on the distribution and explanation of tools to assist thoughtful decisions, not on advance directive forms and documents.



Jack Stanley, past president of American Health Decisions, and his wife Linda talk with Alice Kinsler, president and CEO of Hospice Foundation.

- The date for National Healthcare Decisions Day should be April 16, 2008. Planning will begin immediately to that end, with an executive committee that will oversee and coordinate the efforts of four working committees: finance, communications, education and participant recruitment.

Jack Stanley, past president of American Health Decisions and member of

the Monterey County Compassionate Care Alliance, says he has high hopes for National Healthcare Decisions Day and the impact it will have on efforts to improve end-of-life care decisions.

"The publicity surrounding National Healthcare Decisions Day will significantly increase the awareness of, and the comfort with, the notion that it is important to plan in advance for end-of-life decisions," he says. "Also, the planning for a National Healthcare Decisions Day will provide an opportunity to help hospitals and other health care facilities improve the quality of the education about advance care planning that they are, by the Patient Self Determination Act, legally required to provide their patients."

CCA will participate as the lead affiliate in Monterey County and invites all organizations and community members to collaborate on this national project.

Plan to attend
CCA's Fall Forum
focusing on spiritual issues
(see back page for details)



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Message from the Executive Director



It's hard to believe that five years have passed since CCA became a non-profit organization. Through the generous support of community members, and through both personal

donations and foundation grants, we have accomplished so much. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight the achievements of this small, grassroots coalition.

Our primary funder, Hospice Foundation, allowed us to launch our initial project: the Caring Resources Guide website. The site continues to be a resource for patients, families and professionals and was recently updated with the most current information. To complement our website, we created print materials listing local agencies and providers and we translated those materials into Spanish last year. We talk more about plans for extended Latino outreach in this newsletter.

Productions of the play *Vesta* were our first venture into Healing Through the Arts. The well-received play presented an opportunity to explore how art encourages physical and emotional healing. *Call 911*,

a play funded by Hospice Foundation, has proven to be a powerful communication link with the medical community and will be taped and distributed to medical professionals this fall. Our most recent arts project is the production *Living with Grace*. After presenting to small groups, we recently staged a reading at Carmel's Carl Cherry Center for the Arts. A full production is planned as part of our ARTS 2008/2009 project.

Community forums covered topics such as care giving and the future of health care, which was explored during our most recent forum with Leon Panetta. Don't miss information on our fall forum, focusing on spiritual issues at life's end.

The collaborative efforts of our HELP (Health, Economic, Legal Professionals) group are going strong with a workshop scheduled for January. The findings from this gathering will shape a 2008 training module for health care surrogate decision makers.

We're often asked what impact we see from our ongoing efforts. With organizations like ours across the state and country, we are making an enormous difference. Local interest continues to grow. We see more and more professionals willing to collaborate on projects such as HELP and *Call 911*. We see and hear community members anxious to discuss end-of-life issues after viewing *Living with Grace*. Perhaps most gratifying has been the reaction from Panetta forum attendees.

The most frequent sentiment: Although it was a realistic wake up call about the state of our health care delivery system, Mr. Panetta provided a call to action by encouraging us to make a difference through health care advocacy.

On a state level, I was astonished at the reaction to the death of San Francisco radio and TV talk show host Pete Wilson. Having come from the broadcast industry in Los Angeles myself, I knew it was unprecedented for a radio station to devote six hours of airtime to discussion and personal memories of Mr. Wilson. The following week, the station hosted programs on health care choices and grief. Nationally, professionals have come together to create National Healthcare Decisions Day, scheduled for April 16, 2008. Never before has such attention been drawn to end-of-life issues on such a large scale.

It's been an incredibly productive five years of growth for our organization, for our collaborative partners and for me, personally. We would especially like to thank Alice Kinsler and the board and staff of Hospice Foundation. Their invaluable support made CCA possible from its earliest days, and they continue to back us on every step of this journey. Thanks to all who support us with time, expertise and financial contributions as we work to make the end of life as peaceful and dignified as possible.

— Vicki Nelson, Executive Director

Successful TV Series Enters Third Season

New *Healthy Aging* Segments Address Various End-of-Life Issues

After completing 26 programs in 2 successful seasons, the *Healthy Aging* television series has a full slate of topics scheduled for 2008-09. New segments will address the physiological aspects of grief, aging and health care delivery in other cultures, the future of palliative care, and decision-making issues created by blended families.

Cindy Gum, program host and Chair of CCA's Healing Through the Arts Committee, points out that *Healthy Aging* is designed to impact a wide audience.

"Successful aging and end-of-life issues are a challenge for all of us — at any age or stage in life," she says. "What I love about doing this show



Public access television provides airtime for the *Healthy Aging* series.

is that it creates the opportunity for dialogue around issues that don't get much attention in the media. Our guests have been real people dealing with nuts and bolts issues that are not necessarily 'popular' subjects."

She adds that the program format and venue positively impact the show.

"Public access television gives us the unique opportunity to create dialogue in ways that only a medium such as this can provide."

Also planned this season are programs covering death by suicide, the upcoming ARTS 2008/2009 project, the HELP initiative (including advance directive information), and financial decision making for the end of life.

Access Monterey Peninsula has not yet scheduled its fall lineup; watch our website, www.ComCareAlliance.org for more information on the upcoming season of *Healthy Aging*.

Outreach Program Continues to Expand

Carlos Ramos Helps Shape Local Latino Programs

Over the past year, Compassionate Care Alliance has reached out to members of the Latino community with a variety of print materials and personal assistance.

This year, CCA expands its Latino community outreach under the guidance of local consultant Carlos Ramos. Founder of Ramos Cordova Strategy Group, Ramos has 24 years of marketing experience in the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas and extensive expertise in both the general and Hispanic markets. His communications consultancy group integrates elements of social marketing and commercial marketing as it creates targeted campaigns.

Mitch Matthews, chair of CCA's Latino Outreach Committee, says the organization's tenacity has led to success in the community—and the approach in the Latino community will be no different.

"Since the beginning, Compassionate Care Alliance has been dedicated to improving end-of-life issues in the Latino community, and now the seeds of that outreach are beginning to take

hold," he says. "Since 2004, there has been a three-fold increase in the number of Spanish speaking bereavement groups. Many local churches have taken notice of hospice care, and true activists have taken action in Santa Cruz County. We applaud every group's effort and encourage vigilance in pursuing this very worthwhile effort."

Working with Matthews, Ramos will assess the group's past and current outreach. He will outline CCA's collaborative strengths in previous programs and summarize projected challenges and



Mitch Matthews (left), chair of CCA's Latino Outreach Committee, discusses the committee's strategic plans with consultant Carlos Ramos.

opportunities. From there, Ramos will assist with strategic planning for future outreach and educational programs.

Scheduled for January 12

HELP Workshop Will Offer Support to the Professional Community

Plans for the January 2008 Health, Economic and Legal Professionals (HELP) workshop continue, as committee members create the workshop curriculum during bi-monthly meetings. Determining best practices is a primary event goal; the committee is also working with the local American Bar Association and area hospitals to obtain Continuing Education Units for attendees.

The most recent HELP meeting included a review of case studies that will be shared with the workshop audience. Covering a variety of end-of-life issues, these case studies will encourage discussion among participating professionals. In addition, an overview of advance care planning will address physical, legal, financial, social and spiritual issues and guide professionals on how to ask about future health care wishes, specific treatments and

procedures, status of legal and financial documents and more.

Judy Citko, J.D., executive director of the California Coalition for Compassionate Care, will be the keynote speaker at the January workshop. Ms. Citko has been a leader in end-of-life care projects on the state and national levels since 1999. California is home to approximately 36.5 million people, which is 12.17 percent of the total United States population. With nearly 11 percent of California residents at age 65 or over, health care and end-of-life issues become increasingly important.

HELP members will use information and professional perspectives gathered during the January event to plan a surrogate training workshop for the general public. Dates are being finalized for the public seminar, targeting individuals, their family members and

the health care agents who will speak on their behalf when their health deteriorates.

The HELP professionals workshop will take place on Saturday, January 12, 2008, at Pasadera Country Club. For more information, call 655-9506.

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Mark Your Calendar for November 7

CCA Fall Forum Focuses on Spiritual Issues

Join CCA on Wednesday, November 7, 6:15 p.m., at Pasadera Country Club, to hear Kathleen Rusnak, Ph.D., discuss spiritual issues surrounding end-of-life care. An ordained Lutheran pastor with a doctorate in psychology and religion, Dr. Rusnak is an internationally recognized speaker who will address the journey individuals take when diagnosed with terminal illness. Topics include thoughts about the meaning of life, essence of self and other spiritual issues raised at life's end.

CCA board president Mary Brusuelas, a registered nurse and assistant director of Hospice of the Central Coast, says those unexpected spiritual questions amplify the feelings of pain we experience during the grieving process.

"Traumatic events cause us to examine our most basic beliefs. We start asking ourselves things like, 'What is the purpose of my life?' and 'Why do bad things happen to good people?'" she says. "Dr. Rusnak helps us understand how important it is that we reflect on those questions in difficult times."

CCA sends special thanks to our forum sponsor, Central Coast Senior Services, Inc. We also thank Vince Cardinale of Ordway Drugs and Medical Supplies for his help in making this event possible.

Seating is limited and reservations are required at 831-655-9506.



Health Care Decisions Week Two Events Planned

During Health Care Decisions Week 2007, CCA will host two major events: our fall forum, featured in this newsletter, and a screening of the film *Two Weeks*.

Two Weeks stars two-time Academy Award winner Sally Field, alongside Ben Chaplin, Tom Cavanagh, Julianne Nicholson and Clea Duvall. In the film, four siblings return home for what they think are the last few days of their mother's life. When she hangs on, they find themselves together – for two weeks. The film portrays the family's day-to-day struggles in dealing with their mother's illness and care, and her reflections on her life and family. The story is based on the experiences of writer/director Steve Stockman. (Filming commitments will prevent Stockman from attending the event, as previously planned.)

Stockman summarizes the film's premise: "It's about a family trapped in the middle of the freeway with a huge semi coming dead at them at 80 MPH. They're going to get hit. The real question is, what happens next?"

Representatives from Hospice of the Central Coast, Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice, and Heartland Hospice will participate as panelists for a post-screening audience dialogue.

The film will be shown at 2 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 21, at The Park Lane, A Classic Residence by Hyatt.

Park Lane Lifestyle Director Gina Puccinelli welcomes the opportunity to present *Two Weeks*, saying, "The film touches on issues that affect all families and we're pleased we can help promote Health Care Decisions Week at our facility."

Event reservations are required at 655-9506.

CCA Arts 2008/09 Project

Living With Grace to Be a Staged Production

What are the end-of-life issues that we're interested in discussing? They run the gamut from dying with our wishes respected, to maintaining independence, to navigating relationships with our family, friends and community.

These issues and many more were brought to light in dialogue sessions following staged readings of the play *Living with Grace*. Over the past six months, the readings were presented to a faith-based support group, a women's arts group, a couples group and a general audience. Although each group was unique, each brought up common topics: concern and confusion over the many health care choices available, questions on how and where we will be taken care of at life's end, and financial and legal issues that may arise. As they openly discussed each subject, audience members expressed relief that they weren't alone in facing these some-

times overwhelming concerns.

The most recent *Living with Grace* reading was held at Carl Cherry Center for the Arts on August 16. A staged production of the play is planned as part of ARTS 2008/2009, CCA's program to bring art exhibits and workshops to venues throughout Monterey County. Through this program, community members will use various artistic channels to experience their emotions and express feelings related to end-of-life issues. Artistic outlets will also help participants address the grief that follows personal illness and loss.



At the most recent reading of *Living with Grace* are (left to right) actors Susan Keenan and Rosemary Luke with playwright Cindy Gum, chair of CCA's Healing Through the Arts Committee.