

NEWS RELEASE



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UNITED HEALTH FOUNDATION JOINS WITH AGING WITH DIGNITY, U.S. ADMINISTRATION ON AGING, AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION AND MANY LOCAL AND NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO ANNOUNCE 500,000 WISHES CAMPAIGN

Organizations Working with People of Diverse Communities to Distribute 500,000 Copies of End-of-Life-Care Decision-Making Tool

Five Wishes, a Living Will Document, Now Available in 20 Languages to Eliminate Barriers to End-of-Life Planning for Non-English Speaking Individuals

WASHINGTON, DC (June 7, 2007) – To help make end-of-life decision-making accessible for all individuals regardless of culture, ethnicity or income, United Health Foundation is partnering with Aging with Dignity, the U.S. Administration on Aging, the American Hospital Association and other national and local organizations to launch the *500,000 Wishes* campaign, distributing half a million copies of *Five Wishes* over the next year.

Five Wishes is an Advance Directive, or living will, that helps people make important end-of-life-care decisions that address their medical, personal, emotional and spiritual needs before a health crisis. *Five Wishes* helps answer the following questions:

- ? Who will make decisions for you when you can't make them yourself?
- ? What kind of medical treatment do you/don't you want?
- ? How comfortable would you like to be?
- ? How do you want people to treat you?
- ? What do you want your loved ones to know?

Five Wishes meets the legal requirements in 40 states and is used as a model to prepare Advanced Care Directives in the remaining 10. It is now available in Albanian, Bengali, Arabic, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Croatian, French, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese, in addition to English.

The *500,000 Wishes* Campaign is a nationwide "call to action" from leading organizations that are committed to focusing attention on the importance of end-of-life-care decisions and communicating those decisions to caregivers and family members. Additionally, the campaign is a response to the increasing number of people who require assistance in communicating their wishes in languages other than English.

United Health Foundation will fund the distribution of 100,000 hard copies and CDs of *Five Wishes* over the next 12 months to individuals, community organizations, hospitals and hospices.

According to Paul Malley, president of Aging with Dignity, “Critical to our effort in translating and disseminating *Five Wishes* is to respect the social and cultural differences inherent in making critical, end-of-life-care decisions. We strive to help individuals of many backgrounds facilitate this process within the context of their own cultural frame of reference. It is due to the generous support of United Health Foundation and our community partnerships that we are able to achieve this end.”

"Making end-of-life care decisions is a difficult but important task," said Assistant Secretary for Aging Josefina G. Carbonell. "Communication and outreach are critical to ensuring that older Americans and their families have the information they need to make choices and decisions that will ensure their dignity and care at the end of life. The 500,000 Wishes Campaign will help ensure that many who face language and cultural barriers in our country have the information that will allow them to share their most personal wishes for the future with their family and caregivers."

“Through *Five Wishes*, thousands of individuals who may not speak English have access to an advance care directive in their own language,” said Reed Tuckson, M.D., Member of the Board, United Health Foundation. “However, simply translating it is not enough. We must take action by placing this vital service into the hands of the people who need it most. By working in collaboration with culturally diverse communities, our nation’s hospitals and hospices and organizations that serve our aging population, we can help facilitate personal wishes and choices across social and cultural barriers.”

“Hospitals have a long track record of educating patients and the public on end-of-life care and advance directives. It’s important that this information be accessible, understandable and less intimidating for everyone,” said AHA President and CEO Rich Umbdenstock. “This tool will help caregivers reach out and communicate with diverse populations to ensure all patients have the opportunity to make their end-of-life wishes known. Aging with Dignity has performed a vital public service.”

Other organizations supporting the *500,000 Wishes* campaign include: National Hospice and Palliative Care Association, National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, National Alliance for Hispanic Health, National Hispanic Council on the Aging, Asociacion Nacional Pro Personas Mayores, National Asian Pacific Center on Aging, National Council on Aging, National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs, the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

Available online at www.agingwithdignity.org or by calling 888-594-7437, *Five Wishes* was created by the non-profit organization Aging with Dignity with help from leading medical experts and the American Bar Association’s Commission on Law and Aging. The document is easy to use and focuses on personal care preferences in addition to important medical decisions. In addition, the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization web site, www.caringinfo.org offers more information about advanced care planning and links to each state’s Advanced Care Directives.

United Health Foundation

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