



Contacts: Karl Oestreich Paul Malley
United Health Foundation Aging with Dignity
(952) 936-1226 (850) 284-6016
Karl_oestreich@uhc.com p.malley@agingwithdignity.org

**UNITED HEALTH FOUNDATION AND AGING WITH DIGNITY WIN NATIONAL HEALTHCARE
CONSUMER ADVOCACY AWARD FOR 500,000 WISHES CAMPAIGN**

- *Society for Healthcare Consumer Advocacy recognizes nationwide, grassroots effort to help people overcome language and cultural barriers in planning ahead of a health crisis*
- *“Five Wishes” living will gives families peace of mind that their preferences will be honored; more than 1,000 multi-cultural organizations have participated in distributing translated documents*

MINNETONKA, MN and TALLAHASSEE, FL (April 9, 2008) – The Society for Healthcare Consumer Advocacy (SHCA) will honor the United Health Foundation and Aging with Dignity today for the 500,000 Wishes Campaign – a grassroots effort to distribute half a million copies of the *Five Wishes* living will document in 20 foreign languages. The 2008 National Healthcare Consumer Advocacy Award, to be presented today in St. Louis, Missouri, recognizes an outstanding community or national leader or group that has made a significant impact on the quality of care for the health care consumer.

Five Wishes is an advance directive, or living will, which helps people make important decisions that address their medical, personal, emotional and spiritual needs ahead of a health crisis. The United Health Foundation sponsored the translation of Aging with Dignity’s *Five Wishes* advance directive into 20 languages, in light of the increasing number of Americans who need to communicate their end-of-life care preferences in a language other than English. The Foundation also funded the distribution of free copies of the translations for individuals who could not otherwise afford it.

Since its launch in June of 2007, the 500,000 Wishes Campaign has put the translated *Five Wishes* into the hands of more than 120,000 people who previously did not have access to advance directives in their own languages. To date, more than 1,000 organizations have heeded the call from the United Health Foundation, Aging with Dignity, the U.S. Administration on Aging, and the American Hospital Association to distribute these translated resources and raise awareness for the use of advance directives. Participating distributors include hospitals, hospices, and local, regional and national groups that serve multi-cultural and senior communities.

In addition, to date, Aging with Dignity has already distributed more than 10 million English copies of *Five Wishes* through more than 15,000 organizations, including UnitedHealth Group. UnitedHealth Group, which provides funding for the Foundation, makes *Five Wishes* available to members of its senior health plans, as well as to its more than 65,000 employees.

“The 500,000 Wishes Campaign is about helping as many people as possible from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds take control of their end-of-life decisions before they experience a midnight emergency at the hospital or are affected by an incapacitating illness,” said Reed Tuckson, M.D., member of the board, United Health Foundation. “This award recognizes the importance of bridging cultural and language differences to give all people the peace of mind that their personal preferences, values and beliefs will be honored in a terminal illness situation.”

Paul Malley, president, Aging with Dignity said, “We knew the translated versions of *Five Wishes* would be popular, because planning for care at the end of life is a basic human need that transcends language and culture. As a result of the 500,000 Wishes Campaign, thousands of family conversations are taking place that couldn’t

have before. We're very pleased with the progress so far and are grateful for the recognition by SHCA. We remain committed to getting this vital tool into as many hands as possible."

"Making end-of-life care decisions is difficult," said U.S. Assistant Secretary for Aging Josefina G. Carbonell. "Communication is critical to ensuring that all adults, especially those who are older, as well as their families have the information they need to make important decisions and choices to ensure their dignity and care at the end of life. The 500,000 Wishes Campaign is making a difference for many who face language and cultural barriers in the United States by allowing them to share their most personal wishes with their family and caregivers."

Grace Doughtie, Habitat for Humanity of Brevard County in Florida said, "In our recent Homeowner Education Workshop, we had a lengthy discussion about wills, estate planning and health care surrogates and I gave all of our future homeowners a *Five Wishes* booklet. To my surprise, everyone asked for additional copies to give to other family members. The Hispanic families were delighted to find the English translation in their booklet – they are all trying so hard to learn our very difficult language and saw this as another opportunity to learn. It also helped me, as the instructor with very limited Spanish skills, to communicate more clearly on the subject."

Sandy Rowe, Rainbow Hospice, Park Ridge, Illinois said, "I used the traditional Chinese version of *Five Wishes* in a presentation I did...I found the written document to be much more focused on the culture. I've also done the program translated into Urdu, Hindi, Polish and sign language."

About Five Wishes

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 for an advance directive in 40 states and is used in all 50 states as an easy way to communicate preferences to family members and health care providers. It is now available in 21 languages, including English, Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Croatian, French, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese.

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.

About Aging with Dignity

Aging with Dignity (AWD) is a private nonprofit organization based in Tallahassee, Florida, with a mission to safeguard human dignity as America ages. It was founded in 1997 by Jim Towey, who was head of Florida's social service agency, legal counsel to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and most recently Director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. His experience working with Mother Teresa inspired him to found AWD and later create *Five Wishes*. AWD provides educational guides and video presentations related to *Five Wishes*, in addition to the new *My Wishes* pediatric document for seriously ill children. Its *Hope Today* project, a Florida grassroots initiative, aims to locate and care for those seniors living alone who often feel unwanted, unloved, and forgotten. It builds much-needed networks of support and reaffirms human dignity.

About United Health Foundation

The United Health Foundation provides reliable information to support health and medical decisions that lead to better health outcomes and healthier communities. The Foundation also supports activities that expand access to quality health care for those in challenging circumstances and partners to improve the well being of communities. The Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organization funded solely by UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH). For more information, visit www.unitedhealthfoundation.org.