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**Faith and Grace Hospice Supports National Healthcare Decisions Day on April 16, 2008**

(Montgomery, AL) – **Faith and Grace Hospice, Inc.**, along with other national, state and community organizations, is leading an effort to highlight the importance of advance healthcare decision-making—an effort that has culminated in the formal designation of April 16, 2008 as National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD). As a participating organization, Faith and Grace is providing information and tools for the public to talk about their wishes with family, friends and healthcare providers, and execute written advance directives (healthcare power of attorney and living will) in accordance with Alabama state laws. These resources are available at **[www.fghospice.com](http://www.fghospice.com)**.

Dr. William von Taaffe, Medical Director of Faith and Grace Hospice, encourages all adults to create and discuss an advance directive with their families. “The advance directive provides your physician and family with a critical touchstone for directing your course of care when you cannot participate in the discussion yourself. It’s an important healthcare tool available to all, and one all patients should utilize.”

All adults 19 years of age or older can benefit from making a decision now about their healthcare choices should they become unable to speak for themselves. An advance directive communicates these decisions to families and caregivers and helps them understand the wishes of the patient. While an advance directive is not legally binding, and can be revoked or changed by the patient at any time, it does provide a platform for making one’s wishes known. Advance directives come in two main forms:

- A "healthcare power of attorney" (or "proxy" or "agent" or "surrogate") documents the person you select to be your voice for your healthcare decisions if you cannot speak for yourself.
- A "living will" documents what kinds of medical treatments you would or would not want at the end of life.

According to the Alabama Hospital Association, you must be at least 19 years old to set up an advance directive. You must be able to think clearly and make decisions for yourself when you create your advance directive. You do not need a lawyer to set one up, but you may want to talk with a lawyer before you take this important step. As long as you can speak for yourself, you can change your mind any time about what you have written down. If you make changes, tear up your old papers and give copies of any new forms or changes to everyone who needs to know.

Jerome Belser, R.N., recently created an advance directive to make the decision-making process easier for his family. “Signing an advanced directive is important to me because it gives my family an opportunity to honor my wishes, and at the same time takes the burden of making these decisions off their shoulders.”

For more information about National Healthcare Decision Day, please visit [www.fghospice.com](http://www.fghospice.com) or [www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org](http://www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org).

**Suggested Interviews:**

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*Faith and Grace Hospice, INC is a not-for-profit organization providing care to the terminally ill with a commitment to the dignity and values of patients and their families. More on the web at [www.fghospice.com](http://www.fghospice.com).*

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