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NO. 201005

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday April 8, 2010

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ELECTED OFFICIALS TO PUBLICLY SIGN THEIR LIVING WILLS
4-day Campaign Promotes the Use of Advance Directives in El Paso

On Tuesday April 13, 2010, El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal and members of the medical community will gather at the Texas Tech Northeast Family Clinic to participate in a ceremony where they will publicly sign their personal Medical Power of Attorney, and Directive to Physician, Family and Surrogates forms.

The ceremony is part of a yearly effort by the County Attorney's Office to promote the use of advance directives among El Paso residents.

Advance Directives allow individuals to state what they want for their own medical care in the event that they are unable to make decisions for themselves. Individuals can:

- Direct that a specific procedure or treatment be provided, such as artificially administered hydration (fluids) or nutrition (feeding);
- Direct that a specific procedure or treatment be withheld; or
- Appoint a person to act as your agent in making health care decisions for you, if it is determined that you are unable to make health care decisions for yourself. This includes the decision to make anatomical gifts of a specific part or parts of your body via organ and tissue donation, or of all of your body.

Advance Directives have been historically underutilized in El Paso, and particularly by minorities, including Hispanics, because of their cultural attitudes towards end-of-life issues.

According to a study by the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society, many Hispanics view pain and suffering as a test of faith. There is an acceptance of “what is” and a belief that “miracles happen”. This view sometimes interferes with pain management. It most certainly complicates any discussion on advance directives. The most striking indication of the challenges in communication about end-of-life issues is the insistence by both the Hispanic elders and the Hispanic adult children that their children/parents do not want to have discussions about death and how to prepare to face its consequences.

The campaign to promote the utilization of Advance Directives in El Paso will kick-off with a press conference on Tuesday April 13, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. at the lobby of the Texas Tech Northeast Family Practice Clinic (9849 Kenworthy). Local attorneys will be there until 5:00 p.m. to welcome the public at the clinic’s main lobby, offering assistance in completing the advance directives and provide general legal information about the directives and advanced care planning.

Local attorneys will be available to offer similar free assistance at the following locations:

Wednesday April 14, 2010

Montana Vista

From 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

La Fe Montana Vista Resource Center – 14618 Greg

Fabens

From 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Fabens Nutrition Center – 201 Camp

Thursday April 15, 2010

East El Paso

From 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Happiness Senior Center – 563 N. Carolina

East El Paso

From 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Eastside Senior Center – 3200 Fierro Drive

Friday April 16

San Elizario

From 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

San Elizario Community Center - 1156 Church St.

West El Paso

From 11:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Polly Harris Senior Center – 650 Wallenberg

For more information about National Healthcare Decision Day, please visit www.nationalhealthcaredecisionsday.org

Medical Power of Attorney and Directive to Physician, Family and Surrogate forms will be available at www.epcounty.com/ca

WHO: El Paso County Attorney Jo Anne Bernal

WHAT: Press Conference to promote the use of Living Wills and Medical Power of Attorney documents in El Paso

WHEN: Tuesday April 13 at 1:30 p.m.

**WHERE: Texas Tech Family Practice Clinic
9849 Kenworthy**

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