As Population Ages, Need for Hospice Care Grows

*World Hospice and Palliative Care Day will bring information, music, and poetry to a “celebration of life” on Saturday, Oct. 7*

September 29, 2006, Salt Lake City — The U.S. population is aging—one baby boomer will turn 55 years old every seven seconds for the next 20 years. Because many diseases such as cancer occur as people grow older, the need for supportive care, including end-of-life care, is accelerating. Add to that fact that every year, 150 Utah families hear that their child has been diagnosed with cancer.

A celebration of this fact may seem out of place—yet local organizers of World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, to be held from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, October 7, 2006, at the University of Utah’s Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI), have a different message.

“Hospice and palliative care can transform people’s lives,” says Sharon Weinstein, MD, director of Pain Medicine and Palliative Care at HCI. “And it should be available to patients of all ages, including children and their families, who are faced with a life-threatening or life-limiting illness. We want people to know that it’s not about ‘helping someone die’ but instead about enhancing the quality of life for patients and their families.

“This day is a celebration of life—and making the most of what time we have,” she adds.
The all-day event is free and open to the public. Participants can benefit from several activities scheduled throughout the day:

- Poetry-writing workshops geared for children as well as for adult patients, family members, caregivers, and health care professionals
- Photography exhibit featuring works by cancer patients
- Musical performances by Tristan Adair, harpist and music thanatologist; the St. Paul’s Episcopal Church Choir; and the Jamoka Hungarian Band
- Information booths hosted by local hospice and palliative care organizations
- Volunteer training by the Utah Hospice and Palliative Care Organization

A short program begins at 11:30 a.m. in the HCI Eccles Auditorium with recognition of a proclamation by Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. who has designated Saturday, October 7, 2006 as Utah World Hospice and Palliative Care Day. The proclamation presentation will be followed by a reading of a poem by the late Utah poet laureate Ken Brewer titled “What Makes It Bearable.” Brewer died of pancreatic cancer earlier this year.

In addition, Therese Jones, PhD, an associate professor in the University of Utah’s Division of Medical Ethics and Humanities will offer a presentation on the Pulitzer Prize winning play by Margaret Edson titled Wit, a dramatization of the life and death of a woman diagnosed with ovarian cancer.

Several Utah organizations are involved in the event with HCI: Veteran Affairs Salt Lake City Health Care System, End-of-Life Care Partnership in Utah; Utah Hospice and Palliative Care Organization; and Rocky Mountain Candlelighters for Childhood Cancer.

HCI has the only oncology-based palliative care program serving outpatients in the Intermountain West. It is available to cancer patients throughout their diagnosis to improve the quality of their lives.

HCI’s mission is to understand cancer from its beginnings, to use that knowledge in the creation and improvement of cancer treatments, to relieve the suffering of cancer patients, and to provide education
about cancer risk, prevention, and care. HCI is a National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center, which means that it meets the highest national standards for cancer care and research and receives support for its scientific endeavors. HCI is also a member of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network, a coalition of leading cancer centers from around the country that sets the standards for cancer care.