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NEWS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Unity Participates in National and State Hospice Advocacy
Urges Government to Protect Access to Compassionate & High-Quality End-of-Life Care**

Green Bay, Wis. – May 26, 2009 – Unity, leaders in hospice and palliative care, today announced its participation in recent hospice advocacy days in Washington, DC, and Madison, WI, as part of its continuing legislative outreach.

Unity employees and volunteers met with federal and state elected officials who represent the 550 patients they serve daily in their 12-county Northeast Wisconsin service area and shared with them information on issues of importance in end-of-life care. The meetings were part of conferences planned by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) and The Hospice Organization and Palliative Experts (HOPE) of Wisconsin, in which it holds membership.

Throughout their interactions with members of Congress and the State Legislature, Unity staff emphasized the value of hospice to residents of Northeast Wisconsin, providing data on quality and personal stories on family satisfaction with provided hospice services, and urged lawmakers to protect hospice in its health care reform. On the federal level, Senators Russell Feingold (D) and Herb Kohl (D), and Representatives Steve Kagen (D) and Tom Petri (R), were asked to support efforts to stop proposed cuts in Medicare hospice funding, set to begin October 1st, that threaten to close the doors of hospice programs around the country. On the state level, state senators and assemblymen were asked to expand the Physician’s Order for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST) statewide and include a hospice benefit in all Wisconsin-issued insurance policies. Shared with legislators was a 2007, independent, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded study by Duke University which found that hospice reduced Medicare costs by \$2,300 per patient, amounting to more than \$2 billion in savings per year.



“Our visits with our legislative representatives in both Washington, DC, and Madison were great opportunities to share the stories about how hospice provides high-quality and compassionate end-of-life care for individuals with life-limiting illnesses. At a time when policymakers are looking for answers in the debate on health care reform, this was a way for us to provide education to our leaders and make clear that hospice is part of the solution for patients and families, and is a model of cost-efficient and high-quality care,” said Nicole Curran, Unity Executive Director.

About Unity

Unity, a not-for-profit leader in hospice and palliative care, is a partnership of Green Bay’s three not-for-profit hospitals – Bellin Health, St. Mary’s Hospital Medical Center and St. Vincent Hospital. Unity is a continuation of the former Bellin Hospice program founded in 1977. Unity provides community-based hospice and palliative care, residential hospice care and grief support in twelve counties in Northeast Wisconsin. Unity is a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO).

Unity is based in the Green Bay area with offices in Marinette, Shawano and Sturgeon Bay. For more information call (920) 338-1111 or visit www.unityhospice.org.

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