

Contact: DeeAnn Grom  
Hospice at Home  
4025 Health Park Lane  
St. Joseph, MI 49085  
Phone 269-429-7100

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



## New Resource for Caregivers

(Southwest Michigan) November 25, 2008 - November is National Family Caregivers month. To honor family caregivers, Hospice at Home announces the launch of its caregiver support website to help families of the seriously ill provide care for their loved one.

“Caring for a relative with a serious illness can be one of the most stressful times in a family’s journey together,” says DeeAnn Grom of Hospice at Home. “But it can also be one of the most intimate and meaningful experiences. We created this website to provide insight and practical information that can make the family's job much easier.”

According to a survey by the National Alliance for Caregiving and the American Association of Retired Persons, the average caregiver is a 47-year-old woman who works outside the home and spends more than 20 hours per week taking care of her mother. Family members are the backbone of the health care system. Dr. Peter S. Arno, epidemiology professor at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, estimates that family caregivers provided \$350 billion in unpaid services.

But caring for a seriously ill relative is not without its personal cost. Family caregivers suffer from a higher incidence of depression, isolation, and financial hardships that result from the sacrifices they make to provide the care and support that is needed.

“As a society, we are deeply indebted to the family caregiver,” notes Grom. “These people need help to do what they do. They need information and they need support services. The irony is, support programs are available, but caregivers don’t know where to turn to find out about them. That’s where we decided we could make a difference.”

Drawing upon the 24/7 accessibility of the Internet, Hospice at Home created the “Living with Serious Illness” website with articles addressing medical concerns, emotional–spiritual issues, and important legal and financial decisions. It also includes an online directory listing both local and national services—from those that help with the costs of medicines, to insurance counseling, support groups, transportation services, and in-home health care.

In a joint study by the American Association of Retired Persons and the National Alliance for Caregiving, researchers found that the Internet was the resource family members turn to first, with physicians second and friends third. In fact, a study by the Pew Internet and American Life Project revealed that 39% of individuals on the Internet have used the Web sometime in the last 2 years to help a friend or family member who was dealing with a major illness. While not everyone is on the Internet, the digital divide between the information “haves” and “have nots” is shrinking. According to Pew Foundation researchers, as of March 2007, fully 71% of American adults reported accessing the Internet. English-speaking Hispanics represent the largest percentage of Internet users (78%), followed by Caucasian Americans (73%) and African Americans (62%). More than half (55%) of low-income households report Internet access, as do 60% of rural Americans. Nearly 1/3 of senior (32%) log on. More often it is their middle-aged children (65%) who use the Internet to access caregiving information, support and services.

Although Hospice at Home specifically designed its educational website to be helpful to family caregivers, it also expects that the site will gain popularity with

local physician offices and other professionals that come in contact with families of the seriously ill. Office staff can look up services on the website and print the appropriate pages to give to their patients and clients. In addition, there are resource pages with information regarding recent research findings and links to national websites offering continuing education materials.

Hospice at Home is the non-profit community hospice focusing on the patient and family regardless of the patients' diagnosis, treatment choices, life expectancy, or ability to pay. It provides quality care to people adjusting to living with a serious illness, to people facing death, to people anticipating the death of a loved one, or to people healing their grief after the death of a loved one. Hospice at Home places an emphasis on the emotional, social, and spiritual needs of those who need care and those receiving support services. Serving Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, and Allegan Counties, the care is coordinated by a team of physicians, nurses, home health aides, social workers, spiritual care counselors, bereavement coordinators, and trained volunteers. Extending this care, Lory's Place, a bereavement and education center that builds hope and strength for every grieving family, is available to anyone in Southwest Michigan or Northern Indiana

To view the new family support website, go to [www.seriousillness.org/swmichigan](http://www.seriousillness.org/swmichigan). For more information about the website, or if you have concerns about a family member who is seriously ill, email DeeAnn Grom at [dgrom@hospiceathomecares.org](mailto:dgrom@hospiceathomecares.org) or call 1-800-637-3820; or go to [www.hospiceathomecares.org](http://www.hospiceathomecares.org).

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