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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Name Change Reflects Broad-Based Efforts to Improve End-of-Life Care

WICHITA, KS - (12/11/01) Over 23,000 Kansans die each year. About 85% of these Kansans experience moderate to severe pain during the last three months of life. Too few of these citizens fully understand the health care options available to them, and too few have shared their health care wishes with their physicians and families. Education for health care professionals has not typically included end-of-life issues. Informal caregivers, largely family and friends, provide about 80% of the care to these ill Kansans, and the costs are high for employers as well. Kansans are living longer, have more medical interventions available, and there are many more citizens with disabling conditions as they near the end of life. End-of-life care is a huge issue in Kansas!

The LIFE Project (Living Initiatives For End-of-Life) is a statewide effort of over 70 organizations and groups. **The three-year old project is focused on helping Kansans live with dignity, comfort and peace at the end of life.** The LIFE Project has initiatives focused on creating and sustaining a healthy public policy environment, increasing expertise among health care providers, and engaging and empowering citizens who work as advocates. According to Donna Bales, President/CEO of the LIFE Project, “The enthusiasm and efforts of the LIFE Project partners, the support from Kansas public policy leaders, and the active leadership of locally-based *Caring Communities* has lead to significant improvements in end-of-life care. But,” Bales cautions, “There is still much important work ahead.”

The Association of Kansas Hospices was the founder and lead agency of the LIFE Project. Due to the overwhelming success of the statewide initiatives, and the level of shared leadership in the LIFE Project, the Association of Kansas Hospices has made a bold decision. Recognizing that the mission of the LIFE Project is really the mission of the organization, both **the board and members of the Association of Kansas Hospices have voted to change the name of the 501c3, non-profit organization to the LIFE Project Foundation.**

According to Bales, “The change of the name of the organization from the Association of Kansas Hospices to the LIFE Project Foundation more clearly conveys the work we are doing together. The LIFE Project is focused on improving end-of-life care in every setting. Changing the name of the organization to reflect the broad-based, collaborative effort this work has become is a tribute to both the hospices who provided key initial leadership and to all the Project partners who are actively engaged at this point.”

More information about the LIFE Project is available through its website, www.lifeproject.org, toll-free *Consumer HelpLine* (1-888-202-5433), and a **Pain Management Hotline** (1-913-588-3692).