

# Protecting loved ones: a wish come true

By Cheryl Holland

Facing the end of life is a fact of life. It will happen to all of us. As someone who works in Emergency Medical Services, you understand that reality better than most. What can be avoided is putting those you



care directive for good reason. (Note: there are currently over 12 million copies in circulation nationwide). It is written in everyday language. It is a comfortable way to start a conversation about healthcare choices and final arrangements. *Five Wishes* meets legal requirements in 40 states (South Carolina included), is useful in all 50 states, and can be used anywhere in the world as a helpful guide and documenta-

tion of your wishes. How do you make *Five Wishes* part of your peace-of-mind plan? The necessary documents are a breeze to order. Visit the website [agingwithdignity.org](http://agingwithdignity.org) where you'll also find complete details about how *Five Wishes* works. *Five Wishes* is extremely affordable at \$5 a copy.

Clearly, *Five Wishes* is changing the way Americans talk about and plan for care at the end of life. Just as obvious, at least to me, is that it is a program that gives each of us the opportunity to assure our personal dignity and protect those we love through a single, streamlined, common-sense gesture.

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love in the position of having to make confusing, heart-wrenching decisions on your behalf. By being prepared — by making your wishes known upfront — you can save a highly emotional time from becoming impossibly difficult.

A growing number of people are recognizing the value, and wisdom, of establishing advanced healthcare directives. However, those taking the actions necessary to do so remain in the minority. Why are more people not embracing the concept? The answers (i.e. excuses) I hear on a regular basis include "I don't want to think about it. It's too complicated. It's too expensive."

Admittedly, I can't offer an easy solution to the first (and natural) hurdle of hoping to avoid the issue altogether. Who wants to contemplate his or her own mortality (or that of older parents and relatives, for that matter)? Only you can look inside yourself and find the strength to do the right thing.

Happily, what I can share is a simple and efficient way to overcome the perception that establishing legal, end-of-life directives is a complex and expensive process. It is a program called *Five Wishes*, offered by the respected organization Aging With Dignity.

*Five Wishes* helps you express how you want to be treated if you are seriously ill and unable to speak for yourself. It deals with all of a person's needs: medical, personal, emotional and spiritual by establishing clear guidelines for the following:

- The person I want to make care decisions for me when I can't.
- The kind of medical treatment I want or don't want.
- How comfortable I want to be.
- How I want people to treat me.
- What I want my loved ones to know.

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