



National Institute for Jewish Hospice Certifies VITAS Innovative Hospice Care(R) of Milwaukee

Hope at the End of Life is the Cornerstone of Jewish Approach to Hospice

MILWAUKEE, July 20 /PRNewswire/ -- Discovering hope is part of the Jewish approach to end of life -- a key learning from VITAS Innovative Hospice Care's recent training and certification with the National Institute for Jewish Hospice (NIJH). NIJH certified VITAS Innovative Hospice Care(R) of Milwaukee as a Jewish hospice, thus enabling the program to fully address the needs of all Jewish patients on religious and ethnic observance.

Julie Vold, senior patient care administrator for VITAS' Milwaukee program, considers this certification a natural progression for the program. "We define ourselves by the specific needs of the patients and families we serve," she stated. "As our program evolves to better serve our growing and diverse communities, the VITAS values remain the same -- to put our patients and families first."

The certification class was conducted by NIJH officers Rabbi Maurice Lamm and Rabbi David Lamm, and by Rabbi Barry Kinzbrunner, MD, FACP, VITAS senior vice president and chief medical officer. In addition to the participation of VITAS' Milwaukee program staff, the event was attended by members of VITAS' Atlanta and Chicago programs.

"Regardless of individual beliefs and traditions, there's a strong commonality in what we all embrace, and that is hope," acknowledged Russ Hurst, a chaplain with VITAS' Milwaukee program. "For each person, we recognize that end-of-life care is sacred and special. For this reason, we are committed to being able to serve the individual needs of our community, especially underserved populations, including people of the Jewish faith," he said. "I'm so pleased that our team had the opportunity to participate in the NIJH certification and learn the particulars of the Jewish traditions and needs at end of life."

To be accredited by the NIJH, a hospice must undergo in-depth, on-site training of all employees and volunteers, Jewish and non-Jewish. The curriculum addresses the unique concerns of Jews about entering a hospice, their expectations at the end of life, their fears about their families and futures, Jewish religious rituals at death and during the mourning period, practical strategies to ease the suffering and comfort patients and families, and what words to avoid. Discussion includes the specific belief systems, customs, traditions and needs of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and secular or non-practicing Jews.

The NIJH offers ongoing education and resources following certification through its consortium. Of the 40 programs formally accredited as Jewish hospice in the United States, 17 are VITAS programs. Patients and families interested in learning more can call 1-800-93-VITAS.

VITAS' Milwaukee area program provides responsive, round-the-clock hospice care, including the guarantee to respond to referral inquiries in four hours or less. Patients and families in the program area are able to access VITAS staff day or night through a 24-hour Telecare(R) call center staffed by VITAS triage nurses. In addition, patients have access to all four levels of care -- routine, inpatient, respite and continuous care -- including physician visits to patients at home or in nursing homes.

About The National Institute for Jewish Hospice

The National Institute for Jewish Hospice, established in 1985, serves terminally ill Jewish patients and their relatives. The NIJH provides authorized endorsement for Jewish hospices within non-Jewish hospitals and nursing facilities, provides intensive training for medical and other healthcare staffs, and provides continuous consultation with them on

problems relating to hospice and the Jewish community. Rabbi Maurice Lamm, President of the National Institute for Jewish Hospice, is professor at Yeshiva University's Rabbinical Seminary, where he holds the Chair in Professional Rabbinics. He is the author of five major books, including "The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning." In 2003 Rabbi Lamm published the "Jewish Hospice Manual" with Rabbi Barry M. Kinzbrunner, MD, senior vice president and chief medical officer for VITAS Healthcare Corporation.

About VITAS Innovative Hospice Care(R)

VITAS Innovative Hospice Care(R), a pioneer and leader in the hospice movement since 1978, is the nation's largest provider of end-of-life care. Headquartered in Miami, Florida, VITAS (pronounced VEE-tahs) operates 40 hospice programs in 16 states (Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin). VITAS employs 8,512 professionals who care for terminally ill patients daily, primarily in the patients' homes, but also in the company's 25 inpatient hospice units as well as in hospitals, nursing homes and assisted living communities/residential care facilities for the elderly. At the conclusion of the first quarter of 2006, VITAS reported an average daily census of 10,480.

SOURCE VITAS Innovative Hospice Care

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