



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

WISE & HEALTHY AGING RECEIVES \$235,000 GRANT FROM CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION FOR NEW PROGRAM TO REDUCE AND PREVENT ELDER ABUSE

SANTA MONICA (November 14, 2007) – About one of every 20 elders is a victim of neglect or physical, psychological or financial abuse, according to statistics from the California Attorney General's Crime and Violence Prevention Center. More than 132,000 elders in California are abused in nursing homes each year, and that estimate is probably very low because only one in 14 cases of elder abuse is reported to authorities.

There are more long-term care facilities in the City and County of Los Angeles than there are in any entire state other than California. To help prevent and reduce elder abuse here, WISE & Healthy Aging, nonprofit social services agency dedicated to helping seniors, is launching an innovative, volunteer-based program for seniors and dependent adults who are under court-ordered conservatorships and residing in residential care facilities and skilled nursing facilities anywhere in Los Angeles County.

The Advocates for Conserved Elders (ACE) program is supported primarily by a \$235,000 grant from the California Community Foundation (CCF). It was developed in partnership with the Los Angeles Superior Court (LASC), the largest probate court in the state and possibly the nation, which received 1,500 petitions for conservatorship in 2005.

"Other counties have visitation programs, but nothing like the ACE program," said Superior Court Judge Aviva K. Bobb, Presiding Judge of the Probate Division of the Los Angeles Superior Court. "It would be a natural evolution for this program to serve as a prototype for other communities throughout the country." Judge Bobb is one of two representatives from LASC appointed to the Statewide Probate Conservatorship Task Force, which will help disseminate information about the ACE project.

The court is required by the California Probate Code to conduct periodic reviews of the adequacy of care provided to conservatees and the appropriateness of financial management provided by conservators. Depending on the specifics of each case, these reviews must take place every year or every other year. The court employs probate investigators, attorneys and support staff, but the growing number of seniors and the rising incidence of abuse complaints are increasing the burden on limited resources. Also, because many conservatees live in isolated situations, they may need more regular contact with someone they can relate to as a "friend."

"Although they are often at heightened risk for abuse, many conserved seniors do not have access to a dedicated, consistent third-party advocate. We are delighted to be working with the Los Angeles Superior Court, through the ACE program, to train volunteers who will be available to take an interest in the total well-being of the conservatee, working to improve quality of life and reporting any care-related problems

(more)

to the court,” said Grace Cheng Braun, president and CEO of WISE & Healthy Aging. “The program builds upon the strengths of the Court Appointed Special Advocates program, a nationally recognized model for assisting children. The Los Angeles Superior Court has one of the largest, most experienced CASA programs in the nation.”

Under the ACE program arrangement, WISE & Healthy Aging, in conjunction with the Probate Court Investigators, will train the ACE volunteers. The court will establish the criteria for identifying conservatees at greatest risk of elder abuse and isolation, providing appropriate names and addresses to program administrators. Decisions will be based on limitations of financial resources, isolation from family and other social support systems, and residence in a long-term facility.

ACE volunteers will serve as regular visitors, providing a degree of social interaction for elderly conservatees. They will establish an on-going relationship with the conservatees in order to diminish isolationism and loneliness. During their visits, if the volunteers hear of any complaints about the care received or observe anything that would lead them to suspect abuse or neglect, the volunteer would immediately notify the ACE program manager. In addition to regular monthly reports and meetings, the ACE program manager will liaison with the Los Angeles Superior Court Probate Investigators if there are concerns about neglect or abuse.

Through this new program, there will have immediate access to the court’s Probate Investigations Office. And as required by state law, reporting will occur for any instances of abuse or neglect to the appropriate agencies, including local law enforcement, Adult Protective Services, or the Long-Term Ombudsman Program, as well as the Court and the Conservator. As the only organization authorized by the State Department of Aging to provide long-term care ombudsman services within the City and County of Los Angeles, WISE & Healthy Aging is in a unique position to fulfill this reporting role.

A number of standards have been set to measure outcomes of the ACE program. Interviews, evaluations and surveys of conservatees and Probate Investigators will be among tools used to assess achievement. By the end of the first year of the grant period, planners expect to have at least 50 trained volunteers visiting court-referred conservatees twice a month. The program is expected to have up to 150 volunteers by year two.

WISE & Healthy Aging serves seniors in the Greater Los Angeles area. The organization is the result of a recent merger between WISE Senior Services and Center for Healthy Aging, both longstanding nonprofits that provide direct services and advocacy for seniors for more than 40 years.

For more information about WISE & Healthy Aging services and programs, please call 310.394.9871.

Founded in 1915, the California Community Foundation is one of the leading philanthropic organizations in Los Angeles County, managing more than \$1 billion in assets. Each year, it grants over \$100 million as investments in the future of our local communities. The foundation partners with individual donors and actively supports non-profit organizations to address diverse and dynamic needs of our communities. CCF makes grants in the areas of health, education, affordable housing, the arts and human development.

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