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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mather LifeWays Kicks Off National Bioterrorism and Disaster Training

25,000 Long-Term Care Workers to Participate

Tucson, Ariz. – November 11, 2005 – Mather LifeWays, co-sponsor of Tucson’s Splendido, a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), unveiled PREPARE, a national training program for long-term care (LTC) health providers to address the consequences of bioterrorism, natural disasters and other public health emergency preparedness challenges. Splendido is a joint venture between The Plaza Companies in Phoenix and Mather LifeWays.

The training program will reach more than 25,000 long-term care workers over the next three years (including physicians, nurses, administrators, social workers, home health care workers, managers and staff) through national conferences, Web courses, train-the-trainer workshops and continuing education.

Persons age 65+, who accounted for more than 12% of the U.S. population in 2003, will jump to 25% of the total U.S. population by 2050.

“Understanding age-appropriate care and preparing the LTC workforce to deal effectively with bioterrorism threats, natural disasters and other public health emergencies represents an immediate need as we face an aging population,” says Linda Hollinger-Smith, Ph.D., PREPARE Project Director and Director of Research for Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging. “Post-9/11 through to the more recent natural disasters has demonstrated that the LTC industry needs education and resources to adequately prepare the more than 1.8 million health care providers, managers and staff to deal with public health emergencies at the local level.”

Administrators from 194 LTC communities in 30 states, including Arizona, participated in a web-based needs assessment survey on emergency preparedness, conducted by Hollinger-Smith. It was found that 91% of LTC health care professionals, direct care workers and other staff are ill-prepared to deal with bioterrorism threats or public health emergencies. Less than 10% of respondents provide education to their staff in areas of performing disaster drills; helping residents cope with disasters; managing biological/chemical exposure risk for elders; and managing LTC workers’ stress and anxiety associated with disasters.

About PREPARE

Mather LifeWays' PREPARE training, taught in a "pyramid learning" environment, is an acronym corresponding to the following program elements:

- Prepare the LTC workforce with knowledge and competencies to deal with bioterrorism/public health emergencies;
- Readiness, recognition, and multidisciplinary response to terrorist events;
- Educate Core Trainers;
- Produce an effective LTC workforce able to treat elders in such emergencies;
- Alert the public health system of bioterrorism events;
- Resources for continuing bioterrorism preparedness education; and
- Evaluating the program's impact

PREPARE participants will include all levels of managers, direct care providers, and support staff working in LTC settings – including nursing homes, retirement communities, assisted living centers, and home health care agencies. Participants will gain knowledge, skills and abilities in bioterrorism/emergency preparedness surveillance, response and recovery through a variety of learning activities and tools via classroom experiences, exercises and web courses. In the long-term, PREPARE provides LTC organizations guidance in integrating this education into quality improvement programs, building community and volunteer resource linkages, and involving their communities with emergency management at local, state and national levels.

Additionally, to prepare the future LTC workforce, continuing education in emergency preparedness targeting geriatric care issues will be offered for professional faculty. Many academic programs have limited success in designing emergency preparedness courses due to lack of faculty expertise in bioterrorism or disaster planning.

Key Partners in the Program

Mather LifeWays also announced that major support for the program will be through a three-year cooperative agreement grant awarded by the Health Research and Services Administration totaling \$1,968,559. The first year of federal funding is \$644,466 with subsequent funding authorized by congress annually.

Mather LifeWays is partnering with a number of organizations to ensure the overall success of PREPARE, including American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging's (AAHSA) research center, the Institute for the Future of Aging Services; the Bioterrorism Educational Program in Aging Collaboratory; Midwestern University's Geriatric Education Center; Rush University College of Nursing; several national and state LTC industry associations; and the National League for Nursing.

For more information about Mather LifeWays' PREPARE program, contact Dr. Hollinger-Smith at 847-492-6815 or lhollingersmith@matherlifeways.com.

Who is Mather LifeWays?

Evanston, Illinois-based Mather LifeWays is a 50+-year-old, unique not-for-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of older adults through lifestyle and residential alternatives that create Ways to Age Well.SM From independent living

to memory support and skilled care, Mather LifeWays' senior residences comprise a continuum of living and choices. Through community initiatives, including the successful Mather's—More Than a Café concept, neighborhoods become better places for older adults to live, work, learn, contribute, and play. The Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging plays a leading role in enhancing the lives of older adults through numerous collaborative and applied research and education projects. To learn more about Mather LifeWays, find your Way to www.matherlifeways.com.

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