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George Mark Children's House Receives Prestigious Honor From Children's Hospice International; Bay Area Organization Recognized For Its Contribution to Children With Life-Threatening Illnesses and Their Families

SAN LEANDRO, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Sept. 29, 2005--George Mark Children's House (GMCH), the first freestanding respite and end-of-life care facility for children with life-threatening and terminal illnesses and their families in the United States, is awarded for its innovative program development with the Children's Hospice International Sister Frances Dominica Award.

The Sister Frances Dominica Award recognizes a health care provider organization which has created a unique program benefiting children with life-threatening conditions and their families. In honor of its outstanding contributions to meeting the growing need for pediatric palliative care, GMCH will be honored during a luncheon at The Children's Hospice International 17th Annual World Congress on October 1, 2005 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Children's Hospice International World Congress unites renowned leaders from all over the world in the field of pediatric hospice and palliative care. The four-day event concludes with an awards ceremony recognizing the achievements of individuals and organizations affiliated with children's hospice and palliative care.

As the first and only program of its kind in the United States, GMCH is inspiring other communities to build similar facilities. More than 22 communities have visited the House and are in various stages of developing children's residential hospice programs. GMCH is also spearheading needed reforms in insurance, including Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement for chronically ill children and their families.

Similar to GMCH's mission, the Children's International Hospice was founded in 1983 in an effort to provide medical, psychological, social and spiritual support to children with life-threatening conditions and their families. "It is an honor to be recognized by our peers for our contributions to pediatric palliative and end-of-life care," said Dr. Kathy Hull, co-founder and Board President.

Since opening its doors in March 2004, GMCH's innovative facility fills the service gap between home care and the hospital setting by providing new services which represent important additions to the continuum of care: respite care (round-the-clock care), transitional care (between the hospital and home), and end-of-life care. All care is based on the principles of palliative care, which aims to relieve the suffering associated with life-threatening or terminal illnesses by providing comfort and pain control, preserving the dignity and integrity of the child and family, and achieving the best quality of life possible. GMCH is a haven for all medically eligible families regardless of race, religion, national origin or ability to pay. The ultimate goal of the House is to help families remain intact and functional and able to achieve the most of their time together in the midst of these extreme circumstances.

About George Mark Children's House

George Mark Children's House (www.georgemark.org) broke ground in San Leandro, CA in 1999 to build the first freestanding pediatric respite and end-of-life care facility in the United States. Modeled after similar facilities in England and Canada, many of which have been in place for more than two decades, GMCH provides an important addition to the continuum of care for children with life-limiting or terminal illnesses and their families in Northern California. The House offers respite support (round-the-clock), transitional care (between hospital and home) and end-of-life care. All care is informed by the principles of palliative care, focusing on quality of life.

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