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Holiday Season Provides Families Excellent Chance to Assess the Needs of Aging Seniors

PACE® Offers Simple Assessment to Help Families During the Holidays

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 16, 2009 – During the holidays it’s not unusual for family members to notice that an elderly loved one has changed dramatically in the time since a previous visit. Yet, families and friends may not know if the changes are part of the natural aging process or indicative of something more serious. The National PACE® Association (NPA) has developed an easy to use assessment tool to help concerned friends and relatives decide if a more formal evaluation is necessary. The assessment tool entitled, “Does My Aging Loved One Need Assistance” can be found at www.pace4you.org under the Media Kit link.

“The holidays are a perfect time for family members to be on the lookout for signs that elderly relatives may need a professional geriatric evaluation,” said Shawn Bloom, President and CEO of the National PACE Association. “The process of aging and how it affects individuals can be very confusing. Our goal is to help focus families’ and friends’ observations so they are able to determine if an older loved one needs a formal assessment from a licensed geriatric expert.”

Developed more than 30 years ago, the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) model provides an innovative alternative to nursing homes paid for by Medicare and Medicaid that helps people live in their own home. The common sense approach that the PACE team uses to provide medical care and to coordinate support services helps keep people in their homes so they can be near friends and family. It is the hands-on approach beginning with an in-depth evaluation and individualized patient attention that makes PACE unique from other long term care options and the most successful in helping seniors remain healthy and independent.

“In developing this assessment tool, we wanted to keep it simple so that families wouldn’t be overwhelmed with technical terms or concepts that only a trained geriatrician would know.” said Cheryl Phillips, M.D., Chief Medical Officer of On Lok Lifeways, a San Francisco based PACE organization, and President of the American Geriatrics Society. “By focusing on five major observations, we feel

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families can be on the lookout for warning signs without being overburdened. Our goal is to help families use the holidays as an opportunity to begin thinking about how best to maximize the health and well being of their aging relatives.”

The assessment tool, which can be found at www.pace4you.org offers a series of observations and a few questions to consider including:

- **Overall Appearance:** Take the opportunity to observe their outward appearance and to inquire about other areas of their day to day lives. Has there been noticeable weight loss? Do they dress appropriately for the time of day and in clean clothes? Is their home clean?

- **Physical Health:** Assessing the physical health of a senior is often difficult because they may have one or more chronic conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes that are not easily noticed, but there are telltale signs that you need to watch for that may suggest a condition exists or is not being managed well. Do they have vision or hearing problems? Do they have issues with walking and balance? Do they have problems with incontinence or using the bathroom?

- **Mental State:** Being cognizant of changes in a loved one’s mental state is as important as noticing their outward appearance or physical health. Sometimes a trained professional is needed to notice subtle signs. Are they showing signs of confusion, being disoriented or forgetfulness? Have they become isolated? Are they having trouble sleeping?

- **Nutrition:** Sound nutrition continues to be important throughout the aging process. Are they eating regularly? Do they eat balanced meals? Can they get to a grocery store?

- **Social Activity:** The ability of seniors to engage with others and participate in the instrumental activities of daily living is important to allowing them live independently. Do they see or talk with friends frequently? Are they engaged in social activities or hobbies? Do they attend religious activities or a community center regularly?

To view the full document, please go to [www.pace4you.org](http://www.pace4you.org) and click on the Media Kit button.

With 72 PACE programs now operating in 31 states, aging Americans and their caregivers have an even greater opportunity to benefit from the PACE approach to elder care. PACE effectively maintains the health, independence and dignity of seniors with long term care needs as they age by emphasizing preventive and primary care as well as nutrition, transportation and most other services that support the health and well-being of program participants. PACE organizations offer documented results in preserving wellness, supporting healthy outcomes, and promoting quality of life to reduce hospital visits and avoid nursing home admissions. By avoiding these costs, PACE programs reduce expensive care interventions and provide families with peace of mind that their loved one is receiving the best possible care in the most appropriate setting.

**About NPA:**
The National PACE Association works to advance the efforts of Programs of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) to support, maintain, safeguard and promote the provision of quality, comprehensive and cost-effective health care services for frail older adults. More information on NPA and PACE is available at [www.npaonline.org](http://www.npaonline.org). A list of PACE programs can be found at [www.pace4you.org](http://www.pace4you.org).

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