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Merger of Hospice Providers Progresses in Tompkins and Cortland Counties Hospicare Files Certificate of Need for Cortland County Hospice Services

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On April 24, Hospicare and Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County filed a Certificate of Need application with the state of New York to gain formal approval for the expansion of Hospicare's services into Cortland County. The filing of these papers follows several months of discussion and negotiation between **Hospicare and Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County** and **Caring Community Hospice of Cortland**.

"Over the last few years, new regulatory requirements and financial constraints have made it increasingly difficult for smaller hospice agencies to thrive," said Dale Johnson, Hospicare executive director. "By combining the two agencies into one, we will be able to function more efficiently in today's healthcare world. At the same time, we will continue to provide the medical expertise and compassionate care both agencies are known for."

The Cortland County Health Department has administered Caring Community Hospice since its beginning, but because the state of New York no longer wants counties to manage direct care health agencies, the Cortland County legislature has chosen to cease its involvement with the hospice. To ensure that Cortland County residents continued to receive hospice services, County Health Department officials approached Hospicare about the possibility of combining the two agencies. "Hospicare has an excellent reputation and we felt their close proximity made them an ideal fit," said Public Health Director, Catherine Feuerherm.

Hospicare is pleased to join with Caring Community in a merger that will strengthen their shared mission to bring high-quality, compassionate care to people with life-limiting illness and to support their loved ones. Upon approval by state and federal authorities, the combined agencies will function as one entity serving both Tompkins and Cortland Counties.

"It's important that we continue to meet the growing need for hospice and palliative care in both counties," said Johnson. "Medicare and insurance do not cover the full cost of care, and we will continue to rely on the generosity of our communities to cover the full cost. We remain committed to our promise to provide care regardless of the patient's ability to pay."

Throughout the transition, hospice services will continue to be available to Cortland County residents. Cortland staff and volunteers will combine with their counterparts from Hospicare to serve the Cortland community. In addition, the Hospice Foundation of Cortland County's President, Evelyn Sammons, points out that "The Foundation will continue to operate, to accept donations and to support hospice services in the Cortland area and those services will continue to be offered at the current 11 Kennedy Parkway location, which the Foundation owns and maintains as part of its supportive role."

Contact:

Jackie Swift, Communications Coordinator
Hospicare & Palliative Care Services of Tompkins County
172 East King Road, Ithaca NY 14850607.272.0212, 607.277.3785 fax,
jswift@hospicare.org, www.hospicare.org

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