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Institute for the Future and United Cerebral Palsy Launch Collaborative Research Initiative for the Public Good

"Ruby's Bequest" Will Address Weakening "Caring" Ecosystem -- From Aging Baby Boomers to Medicare in Crisis to Care for the Disabled

updated 9:45 a.m. ET, Wed., March. 18, 2009

PALO ALTO, CA - The Institute for the Future (ITFF), an independent non-profit research [organization](#), announced today in partnership with United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) the launch of a ground-breaking open, collaborative platform to address the troubled future of caring for the public good. The forum was created as an online story-telling platform called Ruby's Bequest. There, people of all backgrounds and experiences are invited to share their concerns, questions and innovative solutions on topics ranging from elder care to Medicare to Social Security and any other component of the caring ecosystem. Ruby's Bequest (www.rubysbequest.org) is now open to the public.

The unique immersive experience in which thousands of people will work together online to imagine -- and create -- the future of caring and caregiving in the United States builds on social [networking](#) tools familiar to most of us and within the context of a fictional narrative. The community of Deepwell, its problems and opportunities reflect the coming years for all of us.

Data gathered from these story collaborations over the duration of the five weeks will culminate in a public research report that will help UCP, affiliated organizations, and others focused on care-giving options engage in better decision-making to fill the widening gaps in our care ecosystems.

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"All of us will become caregivers at some point, and face obstacles to attaining the best possible future for the ones we love and for ourselves. UCP helps people find solutions to these obstacles, and believes utilizing new media and engaging the public will uncover new solutions beyond traditional care structures," said Stephen Bennett, President and CEO of United Cerebral Palsy. "UCP is excited to be a part of this project and collectively

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drive [awareness](#) and possibilities for how we might actively shape the future of caring and better prepare for the challenges facing us all."

AARP also provided support for the initiative. "We are very interested in this unique approach to engaging people of all ages around the topic of caring and community," said Emilio Pardo, Executive Vice President and Chief Brand Officer, AARP. "We look forward to the comments, concepts and creativity from the participants. Generating conversation around community involvement is critical, particularly given the challenges facing our society."

About Ruby's Bequest

Set in the fictional town of Deepwell, Ruby's Bequest begins with news of a sizeable bequest from Ruby Wood to strengthen the ecosystem of caring in the community. Charged with improving the town's caring infrastructure the residents of Deepwell have created the online forum at www.rubysbequest.org to solicit the whole community and beyond to participate and achieve this mission. Participants are invited to share their own experiences on caring and care giving by logging on, creating a profile and contributing text, photos, videos, and other personal narrative. Subject matter provided in the fictional narrative will include things like "caring from a distance," "tough conversations," "making the system work (better!)" and so on. These subjects are intended to spark further discussion and debate among the community at large about other aspects of caring.

"The caring infrastructure as we know it is changing fast -- federal and local services that we once relied upon -- from adult day care to Medicare and Social Security -- are quickly eroding," said Jason Tester, IFTF researcher and lead developer of Ruby's Bequest. "This means that more of the burden of caring will fall to individuals and communities in the near and long term. A key charter of the Institute is to encourage broader and deeper examination of our future now so that the public can help shape it and be better prepared to face it."

Research, Methodology and Development

As one initiative in a series of future-looking, open and public collaboration projects, Ruby's Bequest is the first directly underwritten by two IFTF sponsors, AARP and UCP. As with the other initiatives, participants are asked to immerse themselves in a story narrative and contribute ideas online through blogs, wikis, podcasts and video, and debate the details of how they imagine their own personal futures might play out within the story. Examples of other IFTF collaboration projects and participatory platforms called Massively Multiplayer Forecasting Games (MMFGs) can be found at www.signtific.org, www.aftershock.net, and www.superstructgame.org.

IFTF's expertise with collaborative forecasting and research data from a joint IFTF/AARP research study on "Boomers: The Next 20 Years" provided part of the foundation for this unique partnership with UCP. There was also a care and caregiving environmental scan and a shared mission to serve the public good. "With the world focused on the collapse of financial markets, it is especially important to understand the big picture that boomers, and really all of us face over the coming decades," said Kathi Vian, a research director at IFTF. "They have crafted complex ecologies of risks and resources throughout their adulthood, and they may well manage those ecologies with surprising skill -- and sometimes surprising innovations -- as they age." As part of the Institute's efforts to expand futures and forecasting literacy across a range of topics, IFTF is involved with three additional forecasting games this year Signtific.org, Superstruct.org, and Aftershock.net.

About the Institute for the Future

The Institute for the Future (IFTF) is an independent, nonprofit research group with 40 years of forecasting experience. IFTF focuses on identifying emerging trends and discontinuities that will transform global society and the global marketplace. We provide insights into [business strategy](#), design process, innovation, and social dilemmas. Our research generates the foresight needed to create insights that lead to action. Our research spans a broad territory of deeply transformative trends, from health and health care to technology, the workplace, and human identity. The Institute for the Future is located in Palo Alto, CA. For more information, visit www.iftf.org or call 650-854-6322.

About United Cerebral Palsy

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United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) is one of the nation's leading organizations serving and advocating for the more than 54 million Americans with disabilities. Founded 60 years ago to help children with cerebral palsy; today more than 65% of the children and adults served by the organization experience a disability other than cerebral palsy. Through its nation-wide affiliate network, United Cerebral Palsy offers services to individuals, families and communities, such as job training and placement, physical therapy, individual and family support, early intervention, social and recreation programs, community living, state and local referrals, and instruction on how to use technology to perform everyday tasks. For more information, visit www.ucp.org or call 800-872-5827.

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