

DANVERS, Mass., Sept. 13, 2013 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Death-with-Dignity movement suffered a great loss with the passing of former Chairman of the Compassion & Choices Board of Directors, member and dedicated friend, Paul Spiers

P

. Paul died Wednesday in Danvers, Massachusetts . He was 62.

Our movement took great evolutionary leaps in the early years of this millennium, and Paul Spiers was the force behind that evolution. He broadened the focus of the old Hemlock Society to include excellent end-of-life care and, as chair of the board, led it to change its name and mission. In January 2003 , he courageously distanced the organization from movement extremists and clarified the limitation of its advocacy of aid in dying to the terminally ill and mentally competent. In July of that year, the Hemlock Society became End-of-Life Choices and began to realize opportunities for growth and leadership that continue at Compassion & Choices today.

"We all owe him a great debt for his service to our organization. We would not be where we are today without his vision for the unification of two prominent organizations over nine years ago," said President Barbara Coombs Lee. "He will be warmly remembered and dearly missed."

The issue of patients' rights had always been important to Dr. Spiers as a professional, but those rights and the choices provided in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became all the more important to him after a 1994 horseback-riding accident left him paralyzed from the chest down. Following this injury, he spoke out as a person with disability who considered autonomy in end-of-life matters critically important. In fact he led the advocacy group called

Compassion Choices Remembers a Visionary in the End-of-Life Choice Movement: Paul Spiers

Written by Australian Business

Autonomy, which was a stalwart supporter of Compassion & Choices' work.

A forensic neuropsychologist educated at McGill and Clark Universities as well as the University of Paris, Dr. Spiers conducted research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, taught at the Boston University School of Medicine, and served as an expert witness in probate, civil and criminal cases in addition to being an impactful advocate for death with dignity.

As we learn of plans for a memorial service, we will share them.

With over 30 local groups and 40,000 members and supporters throughout the United States, Compassion & Choices leads the end-of-life choice movement. We support, educate and advocate. Learn more at

www.compassionandchoices.org

Contact: Gwen Fitzgerald, 202-669-6587, gfitzgerald@compassionandchoices.org or Marie Manis, 617-379-0033, mmanis@compassionandchoices.org

SOURCE Compassion & Choices

RELATED LINKS <http://CompassionAndChoices.org>