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Twin sisters, one voice and one cause

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CHESTERFIELD – For Chesterfield County resident Jan Vick, losing her twin sister, Ann S. Perdue in 2004 due to a medical error was not what the sister duo had planned.

For this reason and dealing with the sadness and anger of the death of her beloved twin sister, Vick wanted to help protect other patients who might find themselves in the same type situation at any given time.

After numerous phone calls, mailing numerous files and complaints to over 17 agencies and individuals, round-the-clock research and a lot of prayer, Jan Vick, along with her ongoing faith in God, then founded the 501(c) 3 non-profit organization today called the South Carolina Voices for Patient Safety (SCVPS) on Jan. 15, 2009.

“I founded this organization because of Ann’s unnecessary death. It was my desire to alleviate these “senseless deaths” for other South Carolina families,” said Jan Vick.

Jan Vick is also a woman who wears many hats. She is the owner of Hairstyles by Jan located on Main Street in Chesterfield, serves as a Patient Advocate on the South Carolina Mission Lifeline Steering Committee, Health Sciences South Carolina Community Advocate Committee, South Carolina Heart Care Quality Alliance and the South Carolina State Advocate Committee. She has also worked in conjunction with other organizations, such as AARP, the American Heart Association, South Carolina Hospital Association, Health Sciences South Carolina, and Mothers Against Medical Error to bring about patient safety reform throughout South Carolina.

With tears mixed with joy and sadness in her eyes, she added, “I feel blessed and honored to serve in these capacities. I always praise God for all of these accomplishments.” She continued, “One of the most important aspects of this tragedy that I am most thankful for are the healthcare changes that are taking place now due to the Ann S. Perdue Heart Patient Bill, which we shelved to work collaboratively with the Hospital Association to implement safety measures for all patients.”

Her son, S.C. Rep. Ted Vick said, “This is something very dear to my heart. The Ann S. Perdue Independent Autopsy Fairness Act, which is named after my aunt, would require the county coroner or medical examiner to be notified if a patient dies within 24 hours of being admitted to a hospital or a health care facility where invasive surgical procedures are performed, as well as 24 hours thereafter. This

bill also would require the facility to inform the patient's authorized representative in writing of the right to have an autopsy performed and reveal the costs involved."

According to Jan Vick, the SCVPS is a liaison between patients and hospital facilities when they encounter a problem with the quality of his or her healthcare or a family member's healthcare.

She said that S.C. Sen. Vincent Sheheen and S.C. Rep. Ted Vick introduced the Companion Bills to the Senate and in the House in 2008.

"All cases have been resolved satisfactorily for both, the families and the facilities. Most of the time, families just want answers and assurance that these same medical errors will not ever occur again. I have devoted myself to advocating for patients and educating others on patient safety. The whole purpose of South Carolina Voices for Patient Safety is to make the next patient safer. We are your voice for a safer tomorrow," Jan Vick added.

In an effort to make others aware of such unforeseen and tragic incidents such as in Perdue's case, a black and white childhood photo highlighted with a short article about the two sisters was showcased in a 2008 summer issue of AARP magazine. This movement has sparked the ongoing push in South Carolina for monitoring patients more closely after surgery, along with numerous other safety measures.

Jan Vick said she could never have achieved this balance in her life and the lives of others without the support of her husband, J. Ted, her family and friends.

She concluded, "My sister's name and legacy will live on due to our love for her and all of the accomplishments achieved for the people of South Carolina. What began as a tragedy, God has turned into a blessing. Only God can take a tragedy and transform it into a blessing for others. I thank God for the people he has placed in my path while on this amazing and spiritual journey. I just give God all the praise for all of these accomplishments."

To learn more about South Carolina Voices for Patient Safety visit www.scvps.org, email jvicktwin@aol.com or call 843-910-7677.

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