



## A Note from the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman:

National Assisted Living Week is Sept. 13-19, and Residents' Rights Month is coming up in October. These celebrations are great opportunities to recognize the tremendous work long-term care facilities do on behalf of older adults and adults with disabilities, but they also provide us with a chance to reflect on the quality of life offered to residents and tenants.

Many would argue that, after quality of care, activities have the most significant impact on quality of life in long-term care facilities. For residents and tenants, activities are anything outside of their care plan or activities of daily living, and often are what bring variety to days otherwise filled with routines.

Research has demonstrated that providing a variety of fun and entertaining activities in long-term care settings is an excellent way to engage residents and tenants while enhancing mental and physical well-being, strengthening relationships, providing a creative outlet and more. However, in order for activities to be well-received, they need to be meaningful and residents/tenants need to have a choice as to whether they wish to participate.

This month, I encourage you to take a look at the types of activities your facility offers and ask yourself whether your calendar is filled with things the residents/tenants might be doing if they did not live in a long-term care facility. Are there things to do that match individuals' interests and hobbies? Are there self-directed activities available for those who do not prefer to be part of a group or who want to focus more closely on a specific activity?

Think about the types of activities you would like to choose from if you lived in your facility and talk to



your activity director and staff to see how new and engaging activities can be incorporated into the schedule. By ensuring activities are meaningful and giving individuals options when it comes to participating in activities, you can help the people you care for truly enjoy life.

Deanna Clingan-Fischer, JD

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## Making Activities Meaningful

According to experts, all adults have the need for a sense of occupation and identity, a desire to contribute and be involved in life that they find personally significant. Without meaningful activity, people can feel lonely, isolated, helpless or bored; for older adults or adults with disabilities, those feelings can soon lead to depression, frustration or anger and greatly diminish their quality of life.



Whether or not an activity can be described as meaningful depends on the individual. Typically, meaningful activities are purposeful; include individual choice; renew past interest in life; bring pleasure; and are personally or culturally valuable and relevant. Moreover, people engaged in meaningful activities will often describe feelings of joy, relaxation and high self-esteem.

Still, there is not a "one-size fits all" model when it comes to meaningful activities. A former elementary school teacher or singer may associate especially fond memories with group sing-alongs, while a sports enthusiast or crafter may have no interest in singing out loud at all.

It's very important to realize the goal of meaningful activity is the process, not the outcome. If someone once loved to do intricate needlepoint but is now unable to see very well or control her hand motions, it might be tempting to say any type of sewing activity would be frustrating for the individual. Yet, if the activity itself makes the person smile, puts a twinkle in their eye or brings back happy memories, there is no need to focus on the finished product.

In order to make activities meaningful, it is also important to make them person-centered:

- Offer activities that are challenging but within the individual's ability to perform.
- Choose a time of day that is best for the individual.
- Ask for the person's agreement to participate before starting; respect his/her right to refuse to participate.
- Clearly identify the goal of the activity and connect it to something that is meaningful to the individual.
- Break the activity down into simple steps.
- Frequently provide positive feedback to increase self-esteem and enhance feelings of inclusion.
- Give the individual time to make choices and work through challenges.
- Watch for signs of fatigue or stress and take breaks, as needed.
- Help the person successfully end the activity, even if a task is not completed.
- Invite the individual to express their feelings about the activity and what they found to be meaningful.

For more information about planning meaningful activities, contact your Local Long-Term Care Ombudsman at (866) 236-1430.

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## Website Updates!

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman recently reorganized its website to make it more user-friendly. By organizing content into sub-categories for Families & Caregivers as well as Long-Term Care Professionals, the site is easier to navigate and cross-lists a number of resources. Visit the site today at <https://www.iowaaging.gov/long-term-care-ombudsman> and be sure to check your bookmarks - some of our URLs have changed!

## Upcoming Events & Learning Opportunities



- Residents' Rights Month (October) is just around the corner, and this year the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is offering a cultural sensitivity training to help interested persons gain a better perspective of what residents and tenants of long-term care facilities experience every day.

"Care Matters" is a unique training event that will take place in communities across the state during the month of October. The cost is \$10 to register and includes a boxed lunch. For more information, please contact Cairn Reisch at (866) 236-1430 or [cairn.reisch@iowa.gov](mailto:cairn.reisch@iowa.gov). Space is limited and registration closes Sept. 21, 2015.

> [See additional details and register for this event](#)

- On Thursday, Sept. 17, the National Council on Aging will host a webinar entitled "Suicide Prevention and Older Adults" as part of Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Participants will learn about the risk factors for suicide among older adults, as well as successful strategies for prevention.

> [Register for the webinar](#)

- Save the Date! The 2016 Governor's Conference on Aging and Disabilities is coming to the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines on May 23-26, 2016. This conference, sponsored by the Iowa Department on Aging and the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council and powered by the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities (NASUAD), will highlight the myriad ways Iowa's aging and disability communities are evolving and invite participants to engage in a thoughtful dialogue about the positive impacts of a society committed to independent living. Look for more information and a Call for Sessions coming soon!

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## Welcome New Volunteer Ombudsmen

Please join us in welcoming the following new members of the Volunteer Ombudsman Program:

- Gianni Beer, Genesis Senior Living Center (Des Moines)
- Dixie Casady, Careage of Newton (Newton)
- Frieda Peterson, Oakland Manor (Oakland)
- Marliss Rockwell, North Crest Living Center (Council Bluffs)
- Pamela Rosman, Bethany Lutheran Home (Council Bluffs)
- Allen Scult, Iowa Jewish Senior Life Center (Des Moines)
- Matt Spitzli, Iowa Veterans Home (Marshalltown)

For more information about the program, visit <https://www.iowaaging.gov/VOP>.

The mission of the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care by investigating complaints, seeking resolutions to problems and providing advocacy, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care.

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested.

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