

# The Advocate

Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

January 2009

Issue #16

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## Greetings

Happy New Year to all of our volunteers!!! The staff in this office wants you to know how much you are appreciated as a volunteer. Thanks for all of your visits, meetings and conversations and countless hours you spend to make the lives of those living in facilities so much better!

## Office Update

Once again, we have made some staff assignment changes within the Ombudsman's unit. The changes include:

Tonya Amos has moved into the position of local long-term care and will serve south-central Iowa and Angie O'Brien will now serve the north central part of the state. Other districts have some minor adjustments in the counties served.

All questions about the Resident Advocate Committee Volunteer Program should be directed to your local ombudsman—see the map on the back page for the name of the person serving your area.

The good news for volunteers is that when you call our office, you will get to speak to the local ombudsman designated for your area. We hope that this decision will enhance the relationship between volunteers and the local ombudsman.

Thanks for your patience and flexibility as we transition through this change and as always, we continue to strive for providing excellent services for the people who need it most!

## The Wooden Bowl Story

Please read this story and consider this when starting out the year in the facility where you serve as a RAC volunteer:

A frail old man went to live with his son, daughter-in-law, and four-year old grandson. The old man's hands trembled, his eyesight was blurred and his step faltered. The family ate together at the table. But the elderly grandfather's shaky hands and failing sight made eating difficult. Peas rolled off his spoon onto the floor. When he grasped the glass, milk spilled on the tablecloth.

The son and daughter-in-law became irritated with the mess. 'We must do something about father,' said the son. 'I've had enough of his spilled milk, noisy eating, and food on the floor.'

So the husband and wife set a small table in the corner. There, Grandfather ate alone while the rest of the family enjoyed dinner. Since Grandfather had broken a dish or two, his food was served in a wooden bowl!

When the family glanced in Grandfather's direction, sometimes he had a tear in his eye as he sat alone. Still, the only words the couple had for him were sharp admonitions when he dropped a fork or spilled food. The four-year-old watched it all in silence.

One evening before supper, the father noticed his son playing with wood scraps on the floor. He asked the child sweetly, 'What are you making?' Just as sweetly, the boy responded, 'Oh, I am making a little bowl for you and Mama to eat your food in when I grow up.' The four-year-old smiled and went back to work. The words so struck the parents that they were speechless. Then tears started to stream down their cheeks. Though no word was spoken, both knew what must be done.

That evening the husband took Grandfather's hand and gently led him back to the family table. For the remainder of his days he ate every meal with the family. And for some reason, neither husband nor wife seemed to care any longer when a fork was dropped, milk spilled, or the tablecloth was soiled.

## The Advocate

In the October issue of The Advocate, we discussed sending the newsletter via e-mail for those of you preferred an e-mail copy. Unfortunately, we only got a handful of responses back. Due to the lack of responses, we decided not to send The Advocate out via e-mail at this time. However, if you would like to view the newsletter on-line, please visit: [www.iowa.gov/elderaffairs/advocacy/rac](http://www.iowa.gov/elderaffairs/advocacy/rac).

The Advocate will be mailed in January, April, July, and October. \*\*The schedule for volunteer training will be in the April newsletter, so please make sure you pay special attention to that issue.\*\*

## RAC Officers

We wanted to remind everyone that there should be officers for each Resident Advocate Committee. Each committee should have a chair person and also a secretary. The *chair person* schedules and conducts quarterly meetings, leads group discussions, helps orient new members, updates members on facility information, helps to recruit new members, etc. The *secretary* records minutes of the quarterly meetings, sends the minutes to our department and the facility administrator, organizes materials, and provides leadership if the chair person is unavailable.

Please consider re-organizing your committee on a yearly basis. It may be helpful to rotate positions and to give each committee member an opportunity for leadership.

## RAC Minutes

Please take a moment to look through all of the 2008 meeting minute summaries submitted to the Ombudsman's office. Look to see if all concerns have been resolved, and include any resolution information in your meeting minutes to this office.

## Shining Star Award

### **"TOUGH ENOUGH TO CARE" STAR ADVOCATE**



Do you know a resident advocate committee member who deserves special mention? In each newsletter we will recognize someone who has been nominated. Please call or e-mail Jeanne with your suggestion.

This quarter's STAR ADVOCATE is.....

### **Janice Frey!**

Janice was nominated by Tonya Amos. Finding opportunities to speak about the Resident Advocate Committees proves to be a difficult task. However, over the last several months, Janice Frey, RAC volunteer for Greenwood Manor in Iowa City, has helped this office in conducting two speaking engagements.

In May 2008, Janice arranged for the Department to be a speaker the Heritage Agency Johnson County Task Force on Aging Meeting. Tonya Amos was the presenter and there were also 2 RAC volunteers and an Administrator who spoke about the benefits of having Resident Advocate Committees. The program was well attended and it was also shown on public television several times.

In October, Janice arranged for the Department to speak to a class at the University of Iowa. Tonya, Pam Railsback and Janice all spoke about the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman and about the RAC program. It was an excellent opportunity to inform young people of advocacy work.

We would like to thank Janice for her time and commitment. She is dedicated to informing the general public about the Office of the State LTC Ombudsman and RAC and she has done a great job so far!!!

## Did you know???

Volunteers in the United States can receive tax deductions from the federal government on some costs associated with volunteering: mileage and other travel expenses, paper, copying, and parking are all included. These deductions apply only if you are not getting reimbursed for these expenses by the organization you are assisting, and you are itemizing on your tax form. If you have questions about your particular situation, please consult a tax professional.

## Rule Review

Please call Jeanne if there are certain topics that you would like reviewed in our "Rules Review" column. This quarter's topic: Resident Rights.

*Chapter 59.39(7)b states that: "Residents' rights and responsibilities shall be presented in language understandable to the resident. If the facility serves residents who are non-English speaking or deaf, steps shall be taken to translate the information into a foreign or sign language. In the case of blind residents, either Braille or a recording shall be provided. Residents shall be encouraged to ask questions about their rights and responsibilities and these questions shall be answered."*

We find that often in facilities this is overlooked. If a resident does not speak English little effort is made to help the person communicate with the staff. If the person has dementia and English is not the first language learned he or she may revert to the native language. If you discover this problem in your facility, please contact your local ombudsman for assistance. We have many creative ideas to help people communicate, or, in the case of someone who is blind or deaf we can connect the staff and/or resident to the appropriate services.

When a person moves into a long-term care facility, that building becomes his or her home. Each person has the right to ask questions, to share grievances or to ask for more information. Most facilities encourage everyone to participate in the daily activities where staff is present to answer questions. If residents are afraid to express opinions or ask questions, the local ombudsman can assist in finding a workable solution.

## Nursing Home Compare Website

On 12/18/08, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) put together a new resource for consumers to quickly compare nursing homes. They use a five star quality rating system. With the rating system, facilities are given up to five stars, depending on three critical areas:

1. DIA inspection results over time
2. Nursing home staffing levels
3. Quality Measures (pain management, prevalence of pressure areas, residents losing weight, percentage of residents whose mobility deteriorated, etc)

This information is available in depth at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). Click on "Nursing Home Compare", and you will be able to compare nursing homes by county, city or zip code. They also provide helpful explanations so you can learn more about the quality measures, survey results and staffing levels.

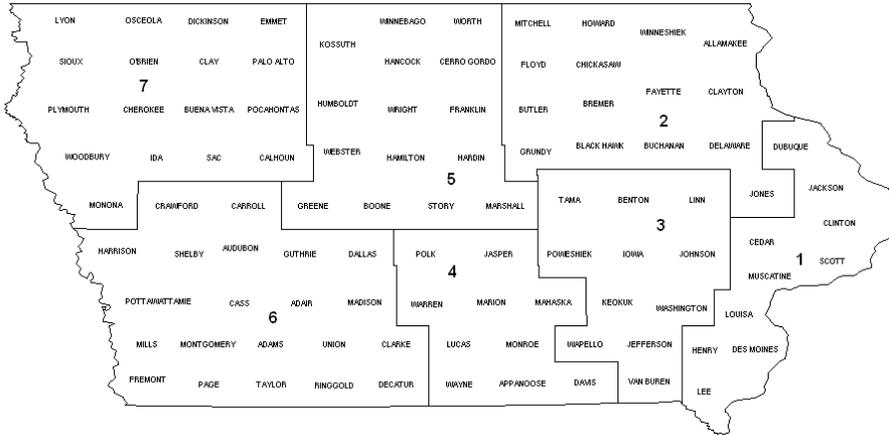
Although the five star rating system is a good way to get a snapshot view of facilities, CMS makes it clear that their rating system is not a substitute to visiting a nursing home. A visit to a facility can show much more than a website. It also helps to view survey results directly on DIA's website: [https://dia-hfd.iowa.gov/DIA\\_HFD/Home.do](https://dia-hfd.iowa.gov/DIA_HFD/Home.do). Click on "Entity Search" and enter the facility's name to view all survey results.

If you have questions on how to interpret the data on the website, please don't hesitate to call your local Ombudsman at 1-800-532-3213.

# OFFICE INFORMATION

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a unit within the Iowa Department of Elder Affairs. All members of this unit can be reached at **800-532-3213** or at the direct phone numbers listed here.

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