



Local Volunteers Sought For Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Founded in 1975, Florida's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program grants a special set of residents' rights to individuals living in facilities such as nursing homes, assisted living facilities and adult family care homes.

The mission is to improve the quality of life for all Florida long-term care residents by advocating for and protecting their health, safety, welfare and rights. Trained volunteer ombudsmen seek to ensure the health, safety, welfare and rights of residents throughout Florida.

Nearly 60 percent of long-term care residents in Florida do not receive visits from family members and friends. They may feel alone and isolated and feel they have no voice in the daily care they receive. Unfortunately, many of them do not have anyone to look out for their best interests.

Volunteer ombudsmen are community members from all walks of life who are passionate about improving the life for residents living in long-term care facilities. There is a great need to find volunteers in the local Brandon, Valrico, Lithia, and SouthShore areas.

Shannon N. Knowles, Communications Director for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, said, "We receive calls for advice, to provide assistance with concerns, and to visit



As a volunteer for the Florida Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, Linda O'Leary meets with a long-term care resident to make sure needs are being met. Volunteers are needed locally for this program.

By Michelle Colesanti facilities to conduct assessments from a resident's perspective."

Most volunteers serve at least 20 hours per month. They are trained to work with residents and their family members to communicate concerns and resolve problems by providing advocacy, support, education and empowerment. These volunteers simply want their time and talents to make a difference

in improving the lives of people who may be elderly and/or disabled.

"Volunteers are the heart of our program and assist us in our mission to improve the quality of life for all Florida long-term care residents by advocating for and protecting their health, safety, welfare, and rights," said Knowles.

For individuals looking for an opportunity to help make a difference in the community, the Florida Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program currently has volunteer opportunities available in local areas. Volunteers visit with residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect and receiving the care they deserve. Ombudsman volunteers receive special training and participate in monthly program meetings. To learn more about becoming a volunteer, visit ombudsman.myflorida.com, call toll-free at 888-831-0404 or on Facebook under Florida's Ombudsman Program.

Helping Hands Caring Hearts Lends Assistance To Individuals In Need

By Libby Hopkins



away with us so they have never had to be in an assisted living or nursing home," Christine said. "What you can no longer do, we do for you, from weeding the flowerbeds to feeding the pets; we do it all."

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate goal.

"We give you a free in-home assessment and do our absolute best to match you or your loved one with the caregiver that best fits your needs and expectations," Christine said. "If things don't work out with that caregiver, we provide a new caregiver immediately."

They can relieve a caregiver for a day, a week or a month and the service they provide gives the Barfield's a wonderful feeling of satisfaction on a daily basis.

"Just knowing that we can provide love and caring to the end and give them a safe and nurturing atmosphere in the golden years of their lives is tremendously satisfying to us," Christine said. "We hope to continue offering the services we provide to the community for years to come."

Helping Hands Caring Hearts is open 24 hours a day and seven days a week. It serves Hillsborough, Highlands, Pasco and Polk Counties. To learn more about the services, visit www.helpingyoufl.com or contact Christine at 737-6706. Individuals who mention this story when contacting Helping Hands Caring Hearts will receive a 10 percent discount on the first month of service. Their client's spouse or significant other is always free of charge.

Helping Hands Caring Hearts Inc. is a family-owned-and-operated company in Plant City owned by Leonard and Christine Barfield helping individuals in Hillsborough, Highlands, Pasco and Polk Counties. All staff members are screened, bonded, and insured.

Everyone can use an extra hand from time to time, but back in 2000, Christine Barfield of Plant City needed many extra hands. She was in an accident that landed her in a wheelchair for more than a year.

"For a year I was in a wheelchair full-time and I was unable to return to my career," Barfield said.

While she was recovering, her husband, Leonard, had an accident at his construction job that put the couple in need of further assistance.

"In 2007 we decided to step out of the box and form Helping Hands Caring Hearts," Christine said. "We wanted to assist people that need help with the daily activities of living that could no longer be accomplished alone."

Helping Hands Caring Hearts strives to assist its clients in living in their home as long as possible.

"Many of our clients have passed

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