PRESS RELEASE

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LOCAL AREA OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM EARNS STATEWIDE RECOGNITION

TAMPA –Tampa Bay area volunteers are making a difference in the lives of long-term care residents, and one such volunteer recently received much-deserved recognition from the State's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP).

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, within the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, advocates for the health, safety, welfare, and rights of individuals residing in long-term care settings. Ombudsmen volunteers work with residents, family members, administrators, and other parties to resolve complaints or issues brought by, or on behalf of, long-term care residents in Florida.

For the fourth year in a row, the coveted Ombudsman of the Year Award has gone to a local volunteer. Joan Rixom, who serves in the West Central Council covering Hillsborough and Manatee counties, was recently announced as the 2015 awardee by the State Ombudsman, Leigh Davis. "The first time I met Joan, she had me laughing within minutes. She has an excellent outlook on life and is contagious with her upbeat personality and smile. I commend her for her hard work," states Leigh Davis.

Joan Rixom credits her region's successes to several factors, including "the ability to recognize and accept qualified candidates for the positions; the preparation provided by a dedicated staff; the support and encouragement for the new volunteer trainees; the sharing of experiences during sometimes tense times; and all the examples, discussion and help by fellow Ombudsmen and knowledgeable staff."

The Tampa Bay area including Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Pinellas Counties, has over 700 assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and adult family care homes served by LTCOP. Ombudsmen volunteers have a significant task to visit and assist more than 35,000 residents. "There are so many residents that need an Ombudsman advocate in this area that there are plenty of opportunities for a volunteer to shine and make an outstanding contribution to another person's life," states Lynn V. Penley, District Ombudsman Manager.

For more information on the Ombudsman Program or to volunteer, contact 1-888-831-0404.

For more information on the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, please visit:
http://ombudsman.myflorida.com