Avenues for Advocacy

a newsletter of the Lower Savannah Regional
Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
Lower Savannah Council of Governments' Aging, Disability and Transportation Resource Center

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Happy New Year!

We hope that 2019 has started out positively for your facility's residents and staff! If you are like me, months pass by in a blur. Bria Adams, our new Ombudsman Specialist will be accompanying me during this quarter's routine visits. Staff in a few homes in Aiken, Allendale, Barnwell and Orangeburg Counties have already met her, but I look forward to introducing her throughout the region.

I have some lofty goals for 2019 regarding community education, resident and family councils as well as opportunities for specialized training for people working with or caring for persons with dementia and related disorders. Stay tuned for details!

I appreciate you all for the work you do with compassion and understanding for our residents! Blessings to you! ……………….. Susan

Keeping the Ombudsman in the Know!

Flu related issues: With the increased number of reported flu cases in our area and the ever present stomach bugs, I know that patient and staff health and infection control is a top priority. At times, you may even determine that visitation restrictions are needed.

PLEASE remember the Resident’s Right to have access to visitors and the legal guardian and family members’ right to have immediate access to the resident (SC Code of Law 44-81-40(K). Please consider standard infection control precautions that do not restrict resident and family contact before you implement restrictions on family visits. If you find necessary to impose visitation restrictions, please call the Ombudsman at 803-508-7056 or email to shgaren@lscog.org to let us know.

Natural Disaster/ Winter Weather related issues: When severe weather threatens and the state Emergency Management Center opens, as in the past, the Regional LTC Ombudsman will have to provide a report on any facility affected by the event to include status of the structure, utilities, and sheltering status. I will send email requests for updates as in previous months. Want to tell me before I ask? Consider adding me to your email distribution list for emergency updates. Send your status and updates to shgaren@lscog.org.
February is Oral Hygiene Awareness Month

We all know that good oral hygiene is key as our gums can be the speedway that bacteria use to get into our bodies. Healthy adults may be able to combat bacteria in our mouth, but our elderly can’t. Poor oral hygiene and dry mouth from insufficient fluid intake can make other conditions worse. Did you know that people with dental implants have to be even MORE diligent with their oral care?

Poor oral hygiene care is a common care complaint reported to the ombudsman. Consider planning a special focus event for residents and staff in February, but remind staff now of their responsibility to help residents keep their teeth and gums healthy! Brushing at least twice a day is recommended. Use the dental health educator from your dental contractor to provide staff training.

A Word about Fun Activities

NECESSARY! Everyone needs to have fun. Recreation is a necessary part of life. Whether your house is a home of only four people (we have some) or home for hundreds, residents should be offered and encouraged to participate in recreational activities. Fun games bring laughter, and we all know that laughter can be the best medicine! Are you interested in having the ombudsman join your residents for a fun game of Residents’ Rights Bingo? Call me!

I know that there are a lot of activity directors and staff who are offering creative daily activities. During one of my visits at PruittHealth Orangeburg, their activity director, April B, had set up an INDOOR fishing pond! She shortened cane poles, added safe “hooks” and fishing line and gathered everyone around the indoor pond! Since storage space is limited, her “pond” was an easy to store round, blue tablecloth! Everyone was having such a great time catching the big one! You “fish” can be all sorts of different prizes. FUN HAD BY ALL!