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**Volunteers needed to advocate, protect the rights of Iowa’s long-term care residents**

**Des Moines, Iowa (Sept. 13, 2018)** – The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) is seeking volunteers to join its Volunteer Ombudsman Program (VOP) and advocate on behalf of individuals living in long-term care facilities across Iowa. With a goal of having at least one volunteer at every nursing facility in Iowa, the program continues to seek individuals who care deeply about the rights of older adults and adults with disabilities and wish to make a difference in their community.

“Volunteers play a significant role in our ability to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care facilities,” said State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Cindy Pederson. “With more than 400 nursing facilities across the state capable of housing over 31,000 residents, volunteers are needed to advocate for residents’ rights, identify concerns and seek resolutions to problems.”

“Being a Volunteer Ombudsman has been a rewarding experience,” added Margo Jarosz, who has been volunteering with the program since 2014. “It is both challenging and humbling to build relationships with residents and staff at facilities, and I am honored to be a part of the program. I heartily endorse it.”

After completing a thorough training and orientation process, Volunteer Ombudsmen are assigned to a nursing facility in their area and work on behalf of the OSLTCO to provide advocacy and assistance to the facility’s residents. Volunteers make unannounced visits to the facility each month to talk to residents and family members and work with facility staff to help resolve issues.

To help those interested in joining the VOP learn more about the program and talk to current Volunteer Ombudsmen, the OSLTCO is hosting eight volunteer recruitment events in communities throughout Iowa during the last two weeks of September. A full calendar with details is listed at <https://www.iowaaging.gov/state-long-term-care-ombudsman/volunteer-ombudsman-program>. Registration is not required and anyone over the age of 18 is encouraged to attend.

“Volunteering through this program is what launched my career with the OSLTCO,” said Pederson, “so I can say, without a doubt, that if you are interested in listening, empowering and serving as a voice for older Iowans and Iowans with disabilities, then this is the volunteer position for you.”

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**About the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman**

*The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) works to protect the health, safety, welfare and rights of individuals residing in long-term care facilities by providing advocacy, investigating complaints with residents’/tenants’ permission and seeking resolutions to problems, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and care. In FFY 2017, the OSLTCO worked to protect the rights of the more than 54,000 Iowans living in Iowa’s nursing facilities, residential care facilities, assisted living programs and elder group homes. Activities included advocating for residents’/tenants’ rights and quality care in nursing facilities, residential care facilities and assisted living programs; resolving complaints made by or on behalf of residents/tenants of long-term care*

*facilities; educating consumers and long-term care providers about residents'/tenants' rights; promoting the development of citizen organizations, family councils and resident councils; providing information to the public on nursing facilities and other long-term care facilities, the rights of residents/tenants and legislative and policy issues; and promoting community involvement through volunteer opportunities. More information is available at [www.iowaaging.gov](http://www.iowaaging.gov).*