



Matt Rohloff, Regional Ombudsman;
Eleanor Jacobs, Resident; and
Heather Bruemmer, Ombudsman Services Supervisor.

State of Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care
Consumer Involvement in the Advancing Excellence Campaign
2006-2008

The Board on Aging and Long Term Care is participating in the Advancing Excellence in America's Nursing Home Campaign, a two-year, coalition-based campaign concerned with how we care for our elderly and disabled citizens. Participation in this voluntary campaign offers the opportunity to: 1) Involve residents and families in quality improvement initiatives, 2) Promote excellence in caregiving for residents, 3) Acknowledge the critical role staff have in providing care and 4) Create a culture of person-centered care.

The Advancing Excellence Campaign will provide consumers the opportunity to participate in a national two-year campaign designed to improve nursing home quality. The campaign will promote opportunities for residents, their families, ombudsmen, citizen groups, and other advocates to work with nursing facility staff on ways to achieve the campaign's goals. Participants will work with nursing facility staff on ways to achieve the campaign's goals and to support facilities' effort to institute meaningful, lasting changes. This campaign will also create opportunities for national, state, and local dialogues on nursing home quality that promote resident-directed care, and culture change, improve quality of care and life for residents, and foster better working conditions for staff.

In Wisconsin, a Local Area Network for Excellence (LANE) steering committee that is comprised of a variety of individuals and organizations was established last October 2006. We were extremely fortunate to have a resident, Eleanor Jacobs, from Attic Angel in Middleton, Wisconsin, join our steering committee and she has shared wonderful words of wisdom and thoughts about her perspective as a long term resident in a nursing home. The resident's perspective in this campaign is a vital and crucial component in defining quality of life and care in the nursing home. Eleanor has given us permission to share her story and thoughts about her life in the nursing home.

Eleanor was born in 1912 in New York, New York and has lived at Attic Angel for the past 17 years. Eleanor has lived in Guatemala, Trinidad, New York, and Bombay, India and spent 22 years in Panama before moving to Madison, Wisconsin. In 1966, Eleanor was hired by the Credit Union National Association (CUNA) to work in the regional office in Panama. In 1972, the managing director of CUNA persuaded Eleanor to move from Panama to Madison as a special assistant in charge of public relations and advertising. Moving back to the US after living abroad almost continuously for more than 35 years was a challenging adjustment, but Eleanor thrived on the challenge and she has received numerous awards for her work. She was the first woman to serve on the executive team at CUNA. Eleanor retired in 1976, but continued volunteer work with U.W. Hospitals and her church. She also served on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Retired Credit Union employees ('79-'86). Eleanor was a successful career woman, wife and mother and has valuable insights on the needs of residents of health centers.

She believes there are three basic situations in Nursing Homes:

1. those who come from hospital for rehabilitation
2. those with terminal illnesses who come to be cared for in comforts in their last days; and
3. individuals with disabilities who need long term care.

Eleanor believes the first 24 hours of care are especially important when an individual is being admitted. "It is critical to recognize that health center residents come from various backgrounds and places. Some have been business people and professors; some, doctors and lawyers; others have been teachers, nurses; other from the labor forces. Communication with this diverse group can be complex. People on both sides can be misunderstood." Eleanor feels that the initial assessment and meeting with the staff can put residents at ease. Residents need to be welcomed to their new home."

Eleanor is president of her health center resident council. She has taken on the important role of communicating with residents to ensure that they know about activities going on in the facility. She fields any questions that her community may have and helps people to understand what their rights are. She feels that health centers need to stay connected to their community. Her hope someday is that health centers are seen as a normal part of the continuum of care, rather than a "nursing facility".

If Eleanor could change one thing, she'd like to change the name of the nursing home industry. She would like to change it to "Health Center and Rehabilitation" instead of "old folk's home" or "nursing home".

Eleanor also talks about technology and its importance. "Residents are now coming to the health center settings who have worked as professionals and they are accustomed to using e-mail, the Internet and other technological resources." She would like these tools to be made available to residents.

When Eleanor was asked what the most important thing the Wisconsin steering committee could do to have an impact on the care people receive in a health center she stated, "It should be the norm that each person is treated as an individual with pride and dignity." The other key component that she addresses is the importance of having the same staff providing care. She said that when staff with limited knowledge of a resident attempts to help, everything is cumbersome and takes more time. The idea of consistent staff makes perfect sense to her. A resident needs a caregiver to help in the a.m., p.m. and nights; thus as a nightmare example, one resident could experience 21 different caregivers in a week". Eleanor stated, "I can communicate my needs, but what about those individuals who cannot? Consistent staffing would ease many

residents' minds. When you know the staff and see them daily, you have a higher level of comfort. In addition, one must not lose sight of the important role of the Certified Nursing Assistants in supporting the nursing staff.”

“I believe strongly about the Advancing Excellence Campaign and will continue to promote it as a consumer and health center resident. I encourage all health centers, families and consumers to become involved as well. The residents in health centers will appreciate it very much. Best wishes to all of you!” stated Eleanor Jacobs.

Respectfully Submitted by: Heather Bruemmer, State of Wisconsin Board on Aging and Long Term Care and Eleanor Jacobs, Attic Angel, Middleton, Wisconsin-Consumer Members of the Advancing Excellence LANE