

VALUE OF VOLUNTEERS

- The Oklahoma State Ombudsman Program currently has 200 plus certified volunteers.
- According to the American Association of Volunteer Administrators in Washington, D.C., the nationwide average value of a volunteer's hourly worth for the year 2001 is \$16.05 per hour. This amount includes an average hourly wage, plus fringe benefits. As most salaries do, it increases each year.
- If every volunteer visits residents at the minimum of two hours per week, that would be 400 hours per week or 20,800 hours per year. Based on \$16.05 per hour, this service is valued at \$333,840.
- Many of our Ombudsman Volunteers spend many more than the required number of hours each week visiting residents and resolving problems. On the other end of the spectrum, some of our volunteers do not meet the required number of hours because they or a family member may be ill. Other reasons may include travel, death of a family member, employment, or lack of commitment.
- Volunteers are essential to the Ombudsman Program. They are much more valuable than the monetary value. Over the past twenty years, we have been able to gradually add more Ombudsman staff. Until recently, the maximum number of Ombudsman Supervisors was 14. We now have 24 Ombudsman Supervisors for the state, but even with the increase in staff, it is impossible to be in the facilities weekly and hear the needs and concerns of the residents. Volunteers enable us to know more of what is going on in the facilities on a regular basis. They help make our work much easier once they are trained.
- Volunteers should be trained to investigate complaints and resolve problems, not to just be friendly visitors.
- Be available to listen and provide technical assistance to your volunteers, just as state office staff are available to you. Return their calls. If they feel they are out there by themselves, they may be afraid to make decisions on their own. They may then lose interest.
- Encourage, encourage, encourage, and tell them often that you appreciate them. Treat them as you would any good friend, and they will not just be volunteers, they will be friends.