

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Long-Term Care Ombudsman Volunteer Program Recipient of
Governor's Volunteer Award, Outstanding Statewide Program**

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Volunteer program was recently awarded the Governor's Volunteer Award for Outstanding Statewide Program. The award will be presented to Mary Jaeger, State Ombudsman, at the Oregon Civic Engagement Conference November 4, 2011 at the Salem Conference Center.

The award was given based on four parameters – how the program strengthened Oregon communities, measureable outcomes and improvements, community collaboration, and reflected a dedicated and sustained commitment of time and effort. By utilizing nearly 200 volunteers in a variety of roles, the small State staff of ten is able to provide a trained and skilled volunteer in nearly half of Oregon's long-term care facilities to be a presence, voice, and advocate for over 43,000 long-term care residents throughout Oregon. In existence for more than thirty years in Oregon, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman provides a confidential and free service for all of Oregon's residents.

Certified Ombudsman Volunteers are the heart of the program. After undergoing an extensive six-day training, they are assigned to visit nursing homes, assisted living, residential care and adult foster homes on a regular basis. They advocate specifically for the rights of the resident and work with the facility staff and administration to improve the quality of care for all the residents. An Ombudsman volunteer will also educate families, staff and residents about those rights, as well as investigate issues that are of concern to the resident. Inquiries, calls, and concerns are all confidential. Any neglect or abuse issues are reported and resolved by Adult Protective Services, but often a continued presence of an Ombudsman Volunteer can monitor the care of all residents so that serious issues do not develop. "Across Oregon, our volunteers consistently go above and beyond to be the eyes and ears of the residents, and provide a strong voice for those who may not be able to speak for themselves, says Jaeger. Our tiny agency with limited resources can provide a great value to all Oregonians who deal with the challenges and complex issues in Long-Term Care." Last year, Ombudsman Volunteers made over 11,000 visits to residents, which translates to nearly 200 visits every day.

Services of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman are free and confidential for all. Six paid Deputy Ombudsman manage teams of 20-40 volunteers in geographic regions of the state; Recruitment and Screening Committee volunteers provide a local connection to several communities in Oregon to help with screening and interviewing potential Ombudsman Volunteer candidates, as well as promote the program in their own communities. A handful of administrative volunteers provide valuable executive, administrative, and advocacy support. Kathleen Joy, the Executive Director of Oregon Volunteers!, who facilitates the award program for the Governor's recommendation, notes that this program is a great example of utilizing highly skilled volunteers, especially baby boomers. "The Ombudsman Volunteer is very attractive to someone who likes to work on their own schedule, use their professional skills in a meaningful way and can see the direct impact of their efforts. It's a complex and challenging position, but the work has great impact."

Wells Fargo, a major sponsor of the Governor's Volunteer Awards, is also providing a five hundred dollar donation for the Ombudsman program to donate to the non-profit agency of their choice. The

Oregon Food Bank has been selected to receive this donation in recognition of the Oregon Food Bank's effort in senior hunger issues.

The Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman is an agency of the State of Oregon, dedicated to protecting the rights, safety and dignity of the residents of nursing homes, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities and adult foster care homes. Volunteers are a vital part of the Ombudsman program and provide a vital presence to protect the rights and dignity of elders in Long-Term Care. Call Gretchen Jordan, Coordinator of Volunteers 1-800-522-2602 or visit www.oregon.gov/LTCO for more information on becoming a Certified Ombudsman Volunteer, or to report a concern about a long-term care facility.

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