

# KENTUCKIANS FOR NURSING HOME REFORM

"A non-profit organization dedicated to the welfare of the "Forgotten Kentuckians"

Our web site is: <http://www.KyNursingHomeReform.org>

June 3, 2009

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## NEWSLETTER

**NOTE:** If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time it is because you requested it, showed an interest in nursing home reform, or an interest in being a part of our new organization, Kentuckians For Nursing Home Reform. If you do not want to receive this newsletter -- just reply to cancel.

### **ACT NOW TO MAKE OUR VOICES HEARD**

**National Congressional Call-in Day Thursday, June 4, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. ET**

Join with advocates across the country for a National Call-in Day tomorrow, June 4, *from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Eastern time* to ask members of the House of Representatives to include support for long-term care services in health care reform. On Thursday only, call **800-828-0498** and ask for your Representative's office.

If you don't know who your Representative is, call your county clerk.

Below is a sample script to use for your calls, if you like:

*"Hello. I am a constituent, and I am calling to ask Representative \_\_\_\_ to support including long-term care in health reform. Nursing homes are often their only option, even when they would prefer less expensive alternatives, including receiving services in their own homes. Please let Representative \_\_\_\_ know that I called to urge him to support including long-term care in health reform. Thank you."*

**Remember, calls should be made between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. Eastern time on Thursday, June 4. If you don't know the name of your Representative, call your local county clerk's office. They will tell you.**

### **MAN ON A MISSION**

**John Karem** of Louisville and his brother had to watch as an EMT team pounded on his mother's chest to resuscitate her. It was a horrible experience, particularly because she had a **Do Not Resuscitate** (DNR) order in her file which her nursing home allegedly overlooked. Mr. Karem doesn't want anyone else to go through this horrible experience, and many have. All he and his family, and his mother, wanted was to let her die in peace. Now Mr. Karem, a sports programming promoter, has spent countless hours meeting with nursing home industry representatives to get them to agree to a simple procedure of putting a purple band on everyone in a nursing home who has a DNR order in their file. Typical of the nursing home industry, however, they are balking at agreeing to a system, and even if there is a standard way of showing DNR they do not want the system required. Mr. Karem and *Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform* are trying to bring all the sides together, including the Kentucky Hospital Association, to agree. **Rep. Bob DeWeese**, R-Louisville, also is helping in the effort. Front-page articles in the

Louisville and Lexington newspapers have chronicled the “man on a mission,” but so far nothing has happened. It is the perfect place for the nursing home industry to do the right thing and work with the advocates for reforming a bad system. Mr. Karem is not the kind of person, however, who will give up, and neither are the many people supporting him including *Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform*.

## **UK CONTINUING CARE PROJECT SCALED BACK**

The project to build a state-of-the-art continuing care community in Lexington, sponsored by the University of Kentucky, has hit the same bump in the road that a lot of projects have these days. The developers, **Praxeis**, are telling their prospective residents that plans now call for starting with assisted living facilities and a skilled nursing home. When Praxeis announced its Limestone Crossing community in early 2005, the intention was to also have independent living homes on the new campus to be built in the Brannon Crossing area of south Lexington. Praxeis says they signed up 279 people for that concept, but decided to hold back going any farther when the current financial crisis hit last year. Now Praxeis representatives are asking these prospects if they like their newest idea which involves putting \$25,000 to \$70,000 up front to insure a place to live when they are ready .

*Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform* suggested the continuing care community for UK in a guest editorial in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* in 2004. The idea had been studied by UK officials before that but never seemed to get going. *Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform* “lobbied” the idea to UK officials and it finally was approved by the UK Board of Trustees with a “request for proposal” in January 2005. Praxeis was the winner, and after an ill-fated attempt to put the project on UK’s Spindletop Farm, almost on top of the Spindletop Club, it abandoned that idea and moved on to the other end of town, Brannon Crossing, now a bustling commercial development.

*Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform* wanted the continuing care community to be part of a three-part UK project: (1) Stepped-up research by UK on how to best provide quality long-term care using the new facilities as a “living laboratory” (2) creating an Institute for Long-term Care Research with an endowed chair at the head, and (3) utilizing the UK Cooperative Extension Service to deliver results of their research to Kentuckians. Up to now, UK and Praxeis officials will only give lip service to advocates proposals. The concentration now seems to be to get the project off the ground, literally.

## **FIVE-STAR SHINING IN SPITE OF NAYSAYERS**

That Five-Star Rating System of nursing homes goes right on shining brightly in spite of industry attempts to put it down. The federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) officials tell us they are getting a lot of phone calls and messages about it, “but most of them are from nursing homes asking about their particular ratings.” If you have a comment or question about the system, you can send an e-mail to [bettercare@CMS.HHS.gov](mailto:bettercare@CMS.HHS.gov) CMS officials are also working to improve the staffing part of the rating. Main flaw there has been that nursing homes self-report their staff working hours, not a very reliable system and open to inaccuracies. CMS wants staffing numbers to be based on each facility’s actual payroll for the reporting period. “It’s one of the first things we are going to put in front of the new CMS administrator,” said **Thomas Hamilton**, a CMS official. Mr. Hamilton said they will probably move to quarterly reporting and start getting nursing homes to participate on a voluntary basis. “It’s not going to happen overnight,” he said.

In the meantime, you can check the current rating of any nursing home by going to <http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare> Also, the ratings change from time to time as new data is fed into the system. For example, in the Lexington area there are now two facilities with five stars – **Homestead** Nursing Center and **Tanbark** Health Care Center (just added).

## SHORT STUFF

- A national study about **Certified Nursing Assistants** (CNAs) reported in *The Gerontologist* showed that almost half of them are a member of a minority group, and their media hourly wage was \$10.04. More than 40 percent of them could not afford their employer's health insurance.
- **Sen. Denise Harper Angel** of Louisville is different in a very good way. She makes regular contacts by e-mail with her constituents and urges them to ask her for help if needed.
- The current median annual **cost** of a **semi-private room** in a nursing home in Kentucky is **\$58,462**; and the annual cost of living in an assisted living facility is \$23,280. Median cost for an adult day-care facility is \$10,790. But a Medicare-certified and licensed home health aide is \$157,872 a year; and licensed homemaker services run \$36,608. All this from the reliable Genworth Financial.
- Many nursing home residents will be eligible for a **one-time cash benefit** from the federal government, but warns CMS: "The money is for the resident's personal use and not to pay the facility for the cost of care."

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

*Kentuckians for Nursing Home Reform* is constantly trying to get the state to put more transparency in its process of regulating nursing homes. So this quote caught our attention: "*Sunlight is the best disinfectant.*" -- **Supreme Court Justice Brandeis.**

## THAT'S IT FOR THIS TIME, BUT DON'T FORGET....

MORE THAN 23,000 PEOPLE IN NURSING HOMES IN KENTUCKY NEED US. THEY ARE KENTUCKY'S "FORGOTTEN PEOPLE."

**BERNIE VONDERHEIDE**

**KENTUCKIANS FOR NURSING HOME REFORM**

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**P.S.**

Can't eat pork, Swine flu...

Can't eat chicken, Bird flu.

Can't eat Beef, Mad cow....

Can't eat eggs, Salmonella.

Can't eat fish, heavy metal poisons in their waters.

Can't eat fruits and veggies, insecticides and herbicides.

I believe that leaves Chocolate and ice cream!

Remember

STRESSED spelled backwards is 'DESSERTS'