

A HISTORY OF CELEBRATING RESIDENTS' RIGHTS WEEK

One way to honor residents' rights is by celebrating Residents' Rights Week, the first full week of October (October 1-7, 2006). This is an opportunity to honor residents, ombudsmen, citizen advocates, facility staff, and family members who work to respect residents' rights. Setting aside a week to focus on rights is an effective way to make sure that this important topic is never forgotten in your community, facility, or state.

Residents' Rights Week is designated by the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform each year to honor residents living in all long-term care facilities, including nursing homes, sub acute units, assisted living, board and care, and retirement communities. It is a time to reflect on the importance of the Nursing Home Reform Law of 1987 which promises quality of life and care and residents' rights for each resident. During this week NCCNHR also gives special recognition to the work of thousands of individuals who collaborate daily to help assure that dignity, privacy and other basic human rights - often taken for granted in the community - are maintained as an integral part of the lives of residents living in long-term care settings.

Residents' Rights Week originated in 1981 at an annual meeting of the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform. Several nursing home residents in attendance (from NY, MN, WA, IN and DC) decided that it would be special for all residents across the country if time were set aside to celebrate residents and their rights, separate from annual National Nursing Home Week events always held in May. NCCNHR organized a successful petition drive to persuade Congress to designate a "Residents' Rights Day." Senator Claude Pepper (D-FL) and Senator David Pryor (D-AR) responded by introducing a Congressional Resolution for that purpose.

NCCNHR was also successful in making arrangements to take five nursing home residents to the White House to meet with President Jimmy Carter's Special Counselor on Aging, Dr. Harold Sheppard. The residents who attended were Janet Tulloch, Rae Spanover, Joan Knowlton, Ethel Gross and Virginia Caming (all now deceased).

Since 1980, NCCNHR has preserved this tradition, although we have extended the designation to a full week so that facility staff, family members, community advocates and ombudsmen will have flexible opportunities to conduct educational programs and festive events.

Thank you for working to make Residents' Rights Week special and meaningful for all involved. Please remember to share information about your successes so that we can include them in next year's packet. Every resident appreciates each step you take to help promote and maintain dignity and humanity in long-term care services. If you have questions, please call us at (202) 332-2275.

RESIDENTS' RIGHTS WEEK

ACTIVITY IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

Celebrate Residents' Rights Week with one or more of the following activities –

- The family or resident council can work with the facility activity staff to organize an event honoring residents.
- Invite local dignitaries, and other community “celebrities,” to a kick-off event and for a tour of the facility.
- Order a Residents' Rights week packet from NCCNHR. Share the materials in this packet with others.
- Have family members, residents, or staff submit “letters to the editor” in a community publication to share what Residents' Rights Week is about. Include what your facility is doing to recognize the week.
- Conduct a facility-wide poetry or story challenge.
- Participate in the NCCNHR Poetry Contest
- Design a Residents' Rights Week 2006 Bulletin Board.
- Arrange staff in-services on residents' rights and related topics.
- Sponsor your own Poster Contest. Display the entries around the facility.
- Ask residents how they would like to celebrate Residents' Rights Week 2006!