

Helping Those Who Can't Help Themselves

continued ▲ from Front

Walter points out that seniors are more at risk for having rights violated, saying, "Our mission is to improve the quality of their care."

The Laurelhurst Village nursing home on Southeast Stark Street where Elwood works has below-average complaint rates, but any facility can benefit from more supervision. Elwood can walk into Laurelhurst Village any time of day and see a number of indicators for how patients are doing—their dress, any changed ability to walk, eating habits and visitors.

Ombudsmen therefore seek to improve nursing-home life in many ways that any guest would. On a recent visit, Elwood noticed that a resident didn't have a fork at dinner and pointed this out to the busy kitchen staff.

In addition to a fervent caring for those who can't help themselves, ombudsmen get certified with intensive six-day trainings and a fat take-home notebook of laws and guidelines. They often work side-by-side with nursing-home administration, which provides an interesting counterpart with their regulatory eye.

"It's a nice thing for us too," says Colleen Rees, Laurelhurst Village administrator. "We



Timi Elwood

really need some help advocating for these people."

Rees sees ombudsmen as another resource for the facility's 200 residents. She'll call on Elwood, without family connections or a staff position at the nursing home, to witness signatures because of ombudsmen's impartial position. More irregularly, ombuds-

men will intervene in a complex legal situation, such as with last month's debacle involving a family member attempting to obtain guardianship for a nursing-home resident against the patient's will.

"When the state looks you in the eye, it can make a big difference," Elwood says.

Another major issue for any nursing home concerns court proceedings to declare a resident legally incompetent to make decisions. Since most people can't remember what they had for dinner last Tuesday, Elwood argues for a definition of competency that focuses on human needs and emotions.

"Can they tell you what they want? Can they tell you what they like? Can they tell you how they feel? Those are the important things, not the day of the week," she says.

Feelings became so strong among residents on the topic of food quality that the staff now organizes a monthly meeting on the subject. Elwood sees nutrition issues as a matter of life or death, not just a question of comfort or dignity.

"You have the power to make life better for some people who don't have the ability to do that for themselves," she says.

For more information about the ombudsman program or to learn how to get involved, contact Kathy Walter at 1-800-522-2602.



Ocean 503

Good in the Neighborhood

continued ▲ from Front

Once upon a time, the festival, then known as Good in the Hood, was held on the grounds of Holy Redeemer School, and there was a \$10 admission charge. For the past six years the event has been held at King School Park. Since it was impossible to seal off the grounds sufficiently to make an admission charge feasible, the organizers didn't try. Instead, they have relied on contributions of major sponsors. This year these include Washington Mutual Bank, Providence Health System, Pacific Power, the Portland Development Commission and the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods. They will be honored at the Friday evening session, which is billed as Meet the Sponsors Night.

"This year was a struggle because of the (downturn of) the national economy," lead organizer Cheryl Roberts told the Portland Observer. "We lost some sponsors but gained some new ones. Many stayed with us

because they love the event.

"People are feeling the crunch in many areas, with unemployment, the depressed housing market and rising gas prices. The festival gives a little relief with some free entertainment. It's also



Chatta Addy

an excellent place to find resources. We're encouraging the vendors to provide information on employment opportunities." The Ethnic Market Place is a way to find some good bargains, she says.

Dear Deanna!

I was in a marriage for 3 years that didn't last. I am now legally divorced with no strings attached and I want to live my life. I'm very responsible but my family accuses me of being an unfit parent. My children are old enough to be left home alone and I don't bring my relationships in front of them. I don't want to enter another serious relationship and wish everyone would leave me alone. Does it matter what I do as long as my family is taken care of? --Marissa; Omaha, Neb.

Dear Marissa:

As a parent, you have moral obligations you must adhere to whether you want to or not. There's nothing wrong with having fun, recreational dating and enjoying the rush of single life. Double check your actions in regards to your parenting skills and the care arrangements for your children while you're out and about. You may not want a relationship, but you want to be careful and not fall into the category of a garden tool.



Real People, Real Advice
An advice column known for its fearless approach to reality based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

I'm a Christian and there are things that I do that people don't agree with. I feel as if I can drink wine, enjoy music and wear what I want to wear. Don't get me wrong, I love the Lord and do what I'm supposed to do. My life is fine but other people don't think so. I don't like being judged when other people at

church do the same thing but pretend to be super holy. Do I need to go ahead and change churches because these people aren't going to change? --Honest Christian; Charleston, S.C.

Dear Honest:

If you were as rooted in your faith as you pretend to be, you wouldn't worry about what other people think. You need to put your stones away and come out of the same glass house that everyone else is in. You're just as guilty because you just so happen to know their business the way they know yours. Do yourself a favor and mind your business, live according to God's word and seek to receive growth and understanding in your worship instead of human acceptance.

Dear Deanna!

My wife and I are having financial troubles because she won't stop spending money. We live on a budget but she keeps breaking the rules. It's at the point where our bills are late, my credit rating has become poor and we don't have money to

do simple things. I don't mind her spending here and there, but she makes major purchases without my consent, goes on trips and gives money to her family. How do I let her know, this is killing our marriage? --Dan; Long Island City, N.Y.

Dear Dan:

You should bear the responsibility of eliminating her access to cash, bank accounts and credit cards and pay all the bills yourself. Your immediate goal is to stabilize the finances and your credit rating. The next step is to physically give her a budget and if she messes up, leave her to fend for herself. Once this is done, encourage your wife to get some counseling and stick to the budget you give her or you'll both be looking at each other in the poor house.

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