

Citizens for Better Care

Complaining for those who can't make the complaint themselves

By LORRAINE McCLISH

The four-member staff of Citizens for Better Care can expect one telephone call a day concerning a resident in a nursing home or home for the aged who needs help with a grievance. The complaints range from a resident who had a mouse in her room to one who couldn't find anyone to cut his nails. Calls have come about a woman who panicked when she heard a rumor she was being separated from a room-

mate of seven years, and a man who was given the wrong medication with disastrous results. "Some complaints come from the residents themselves, some come from the nursing staff, some from the residents' relatives, some from our own volunteers," said Nancy Sherizen, a compliance investigator for Citizens for Better Care. From a small office in Mercy Conference Center, the staff and a handful of volunteers respond to the grievances

of those in 120 nursing homes and 15 homes for the aged in a six-county area.

THE VOLUNTEERS are given extensive training by the staff before they earn the title "patient advocate." These are the people who complain for the man or woman who is unable to complain for him or herself.

They are trained individually or in groups, whatever is expedient, "because we're always on the lookout for new volunteers," Mrs. Sherizen said. "And because some people who volunteer can do one thing better than another can. We have some who are just very adept at trouble shooting, for example.

"Some can take care of a complaint on the spot. Some need help from us. "Some complaints need intensive investigation. Some have to be taken care of immediately, like the residents who were promised a cup or received their absentee ballots, or the man who had a bottle thrown at him.

"Our volunteers are all trained well in knowing the residents' rights. It's not like a hospital where you have to submit to the staff at home. Residents in nursing homes don't need to be denied a thing," she said.

Patient advocates are asked to make one visit a week to a specific nursing home, generally near their own home, to establish a rapport with the residents and the establishment.

"We ask for a commitment of six months," Mrs. Sherizen said. "In that time the volunteer can get a good feel about how the home functions, meet and know the staff and the residents. The trust begins to develop and pretty soon the residents begin to confide in you."

"Maybe they're suffering from bed sores and just never complained to any one before. A lot of the time our patient



Nancy Sherizen talks about the role of the patient advocate from her office in Mercy Center, next to the logo depicted in soft sculpture adopted for Citizens for Better Care. (Staff photo by Randy Bors)

Anyone can complain — everyone should

Citizens for Better Care offer suggestions to persons who have a complaint against a nursing home or home for the aged to get the most expedient results.

A portion of the service the office offers is educating persons on their right to complain and encouraging those with a legitimate complaint to do so.

1) Document everything in writing. State your name and address, the name and address of the nursing home and the name of the patient.

2) Be very specific; tell what happened, when it happened, how it happened, who was involved. Put in names, dates, times, people and places. Include room numbers or wings.

3) Top your letter with the words: "This is a formal complaint against" and fill in the name and address of the nursing home.

4) If you must remain anonymous, write a letter to Citizens for Better Care. The staff will forward your concerns without your name.

5) Send a copy of your complaint to

Citizens for Better Care, 28600 11 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, 48018. 6) Send complaints about patient care, food, building and sanitation or other services in a nursing home to: Robert Laraway, Assistant Chief, Division of Licensing & Certification, Bureau of Health Care Facilities, Michigan Department of Public Health, 3500 North Logan Street, Lansing, 48914.

7) Send complaints about patients' rights, abuse or Medicaid fraud to: Edmund Bladen, Chief, Office of the Attorney General, Medicaid Fraud Unit, 6520 Mercantile Way, Suite 3, Lansing, 48910.

8) Send complaints about individual doctors, nurses, administrators, or other licensed personnel (not nurses aides) to: Department of Licensing and Regulation, P. O. Box 30018, 1025 S. Washington Avenue, Lansing 48909.

9) Send complaints about adult foster care home to: Adult Foster Care Division, Department of Social Services, Commerce Center Building, 300 South Capitol Avenue, Lansing 48925.

advocates have to teach the resident how to complain effectively," she said.

INQUIRIES about nursing home and homes for the aged is the other half of the two-pronged thrust of Citizens for Better Care.

"Most of these calls come from relatives who are faced with placing a member of their family in a home when deadline is Thursday and this is Monday," Mrs. Sherizen said.

"A lot of them are lacking in knowing just what Medicare, Medicaid or their insurance covers.

"A lot of them want us to make recommendations. Well, we can't do that

but we can supply them with lists of what's available and information on what to look for. They have to do their own research, but we give them enough material to work with so they can make an intelligent choice," she said.

"So many people are brainwashed seeing a beautiful social room or a busy arts and crafts room they never stop to think that their mother is bedridden and will never be in those rooms.

"We make them stop and think."

CITIZENS for Better Care office is open from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.

Inquiries about nursing homes, or those wanting to inquire about training to become a patient advocate will be taken by calling 476-2040.

The staff will also respond to calls for speaking engagements.

"We talk mostly to students in gerontology classes, in senior centers and nutrition sites," Mrs. Sherizen said.

"But we'll talk to service clubs, groups, in organizations on patients rights, legislation, whatever they want to know to give better care to the residents."

Conyers is pulpit guest for U-U church

U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D-Detroit, will speak at the 10 a.m. service, Sunday, Feb. 15 in Farmington Universalist-Unitarian Church. The church is located on Halstead Road, north of Grand River.

His topic is "Religion as History."

He is a graduate of Wayne State University, and in 1967 was given the Rosa Parks Civil Rights Award from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Conyers has been a member of the U.S. Congress for 17 years. He is a senior member of the Judiciary Committee and chairman of a sub-committee on crime.

Exchange meets Feb. 23

Women connect with WE

By SHERRY KAHAN

A network is a system that connects. Recently more than 100 area women indicated that they wanted to plug into a new supportive network called Women's Exchange, also known as WE.

WE is a system of connections, drawing its inspiration from the time-honored, eminently successful "good boys" system. It was kicked off in this area with a meeting sponsored by the YWCA of Western Wayne. Several months ago the YW organized a steering committee to make the idea a reality.

"It's based on the theory that it's not what you know but who you know," said Candy Kidd, Y staff member who was the prime mover behind the establishment of the network.

Those attending the meeting again and again referred to the new group as one in which women would help women.

The basic purpose of a network is to support each other as we learn and achieve what we want to achieve," said Shirley Aune of Farmington Hills, who was featured speaker. She is director of a slightly different kind of network called New Sources.

The speaker added: "A network makes life easier, builds self-esteem, and is a means to share information and pass along job openings."

About three-fourths of the jobs are filled through word of mouth, she added.

"So many women are alone one woman in an all male office," she observed. "They need support from women who are in similar positions."

GEORGINE SLOAN of Livonia, president of the fledgling networkers, regards the establishment of such systems as something of a landmark in the upward progress of women.

"More women are going to work and want to get ahead," she explained. "They look at how the men do it through their networks, and want to do the same."

She mentioned that she has "received tremendous positive feedback" about the idea from women who attended the initial gathering. "You could feel the excitement," she said. "There must be a need or we wouldn't have attracted that many people."

Follow-up meetings already have



SHIRLEY AUNE

good way to learn how different females and companies do things. I've already seen networkers work well in person as an information exchange."

Mona Greco of Westland, part owner of a beauty shop in Orchard Lake, called the meeting "very interesting." "For a long time women didn't know where to look for solutions to problems in their lives, either personal or in business," she said. "In a group like this, women can go and find their answers. I was not surprised at the turnout. It's a let's-help-each-other kind of gathering."

Homemaker Sharon Morris, another Westlander and a volunteer at the YWCA and the American Cancer Society, felt the network was not only for the employed.

"I like to meet people," she said. "I think I can benefit from the program. Who knows what may come along. If the right thing came along, I might be employable."

A TEACHER EMPLOYED by the Wayne-Westland school district, regarded the Women's Exchange as a place to meet women she wouldn't meet in her everyday experience.

"I work mainly with teachers," said Donna Schwab of Canton Township, who teaches adults at the Northville Psychiatric Hospital in a program run by the school district. "But here I'm meeting women in other professions. With education problems today and lack of teaching jobs, it will help let you know if there is a place for you in business. With the economic situation you have to prepare for the problems that may come."

Leslie Frederick of Plymouth, an area program director at the YW, is proud her organization was the catalyst in the formation of a network in this area.

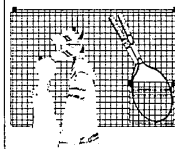
"Women in the job market have spent too many years competing with each other," she said. "They are suddenly realizing that in order to be happy with what they are doing, in the home or out, they need to help and support each other. If we don't do it will?"

"Let's say they were talking about a promotion," commented Lucy Roberts of Southfield, who manages a personnel office in that city. "I could call up several women in the network and ask what salary range I should expect for

(Continued on Page 2B)

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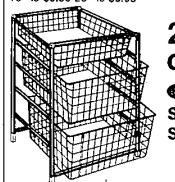


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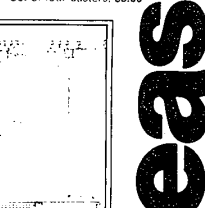
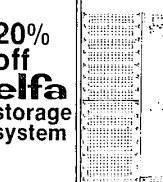
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