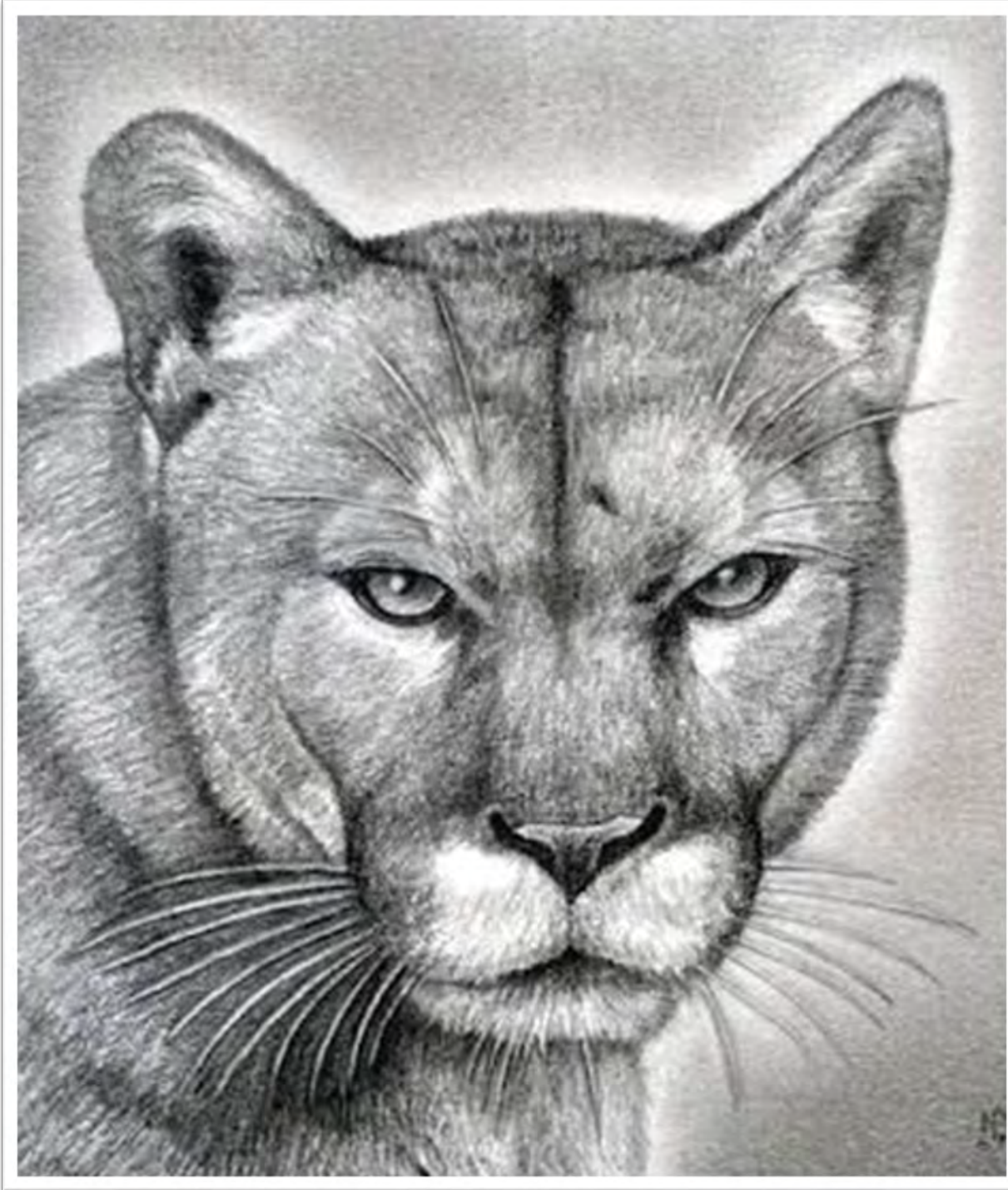


Silver Panther Newsletter

FALL 2024 | Vol 15 Issue 4





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Hello and thank you for taking the time to read this edition of the “Silver Panther”, a newsletter brought to you by the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils (SCPRC) and The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP).

This Newsletter is designed to keep you abreast of the current issues that affect you, the residents of Connecticut nursing facilities.

We invite you to contact us with suggestions of articles you would like to see in future issues, or best practices your facility is using. You may contact us through Email at LTCOP@CT.GOV or by telephone at [1-866-388-1888](tel:1-866-388-1888).



28TH ANNUAL VOICES FORUM EVENT



Voices 2024: A Resounding Success in Advocacy and Empowerment for Long-Term Care Residents

The Voices 2024 event, organized by the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils and the Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP), brought together residents, advocates, and stakeholders from across Connecticut to address key issues impacting long-term care. The event highlighted the collective strength and determination of residents as they shared their insights, raised critical concerns, and explored solutions to foster dignity, respect, and quality of life within care communities.

Engaging Discussions and Valuable Resources



Voices 2024 was filled with thought-provoking discussions and informative presentations that provided attendees with a wealth of information. Topics ranged from residents' rights and council empowerment to the latest advocacy efforts and policy changes affecting long-term care facilities. Attendees actively participated, sharing their own experiences, asking questions, and collaborating to strengthen resident advocacy across the state.

In addition to the live sessions, a variety of resources were shared by presenters to aid residents and advocates in their efforts. Materials included guides on strengthening resident councils, informational pamphlets on understanding and exercising rights, and step-by-step instructions on how to navigate issues within long-term care facilities. These resources are now available to attendees and can serve as essential tools to empower residents within their home communities.

Access the Voices 2024 Recordings and Resources

For those who were unable to attend or wish to revisit the discussions, recordings of the event and copies of materials presented are now accessible on the Voices 2024 webpage. Attendees can visit <https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop/voices2024> to access these valuable resources.

The LTCOP and the Statewide Coalition encourage attendees to share these materials with their resident councils, families, and wider networks to promote awareness and understanding of long-term care rights and advocacy.

A Sincere Thank You

The LTCOP and the Statewide Coalition extend their sincere gratitude to all who attended Voices 2024. Your engagement and passion are



invaluable in driving meaningful change in long-term care. Please continue to utilize the resources provided, share them within your communities, and stay connected as we move forward in advocating for a more equitable and respectful long-term care system.

Looking Ahead

The success of Voices 2024 underscores the importance of platforms that amplify residents' voices and provide a space for shared learning and support. The Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and the Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils are committed to continuing this work, and they look forward to building on the momentum of this event. Together, with the dedication of residents and advocates across the state, they aim to make long-term care facilities in Connecticut inclusive, supportive, and empowering environments for all.

Save the Date: 2025 Annual Event

Mark your calendars! Join us for another impactful day dedicated to strengthening resident councils and improving quality care in Connecticut's long-term care community.

- **Date:** Friday, October 3rd, 2025
- **Time:** 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM
- **Location:** Aqua Turf, 556 Mulberry St, Plantsville, CT 06479

Registration:

Registration will open in August 2025 and be available at <https://portal.ct.gov/lcopp/voices2025> ; Stay tuned for further updates!

We look forward to seeing you there!



SPCRC Executive Board Retreat 2024: A Day of Insight and Planning



Our annual Executive Board Retreat took place on August 8th, 2024, and it was a productive and engaging session. The day began with an introduction and opening remarks by Amy Porter, setting a positive tone for the retreat. Jenette, the E-Board President, then outlined her expectations for the board members, emphasizing collaboration and strategic focus.

E-Board members had the privilege of hearing from Richard Porter and Thomas Ryan, Assistant Attorneys General, who provided valuable insights into legal matters affecting older adults as well as the ways that they support the LTCOP. Following this, Dillon Ellis, PhD, and Christine Bailey from the Center on Aging at UConn Health shared their expertise on aging issues, fostering important discussions about a research opportunity individuals can participate in, in CT nursing homes.



The retreat also featured a thorough review of the committees by-laws and voting for award recipients for the upcoming 28th Annual VOICES FORUM. Lunch in accompaniment of State Representative Mitch Bolinsky, Ranking Member of the Aging Committee, was a highlight, offering an opportunity for meaningful dialogue on aging policy.

In the afternoon, the board reviewed the revised and updated new member packet, discussed the composition of the Steering Committee and Coalition Members, and addressed the removal of non-attending committee members. Ongoing orientation for new members was also a key topic.

Thank you to everyone who participated and contributed to the success of the retreat.



Best Practices

Best Practices for Community Dining at Maple View Manor:

Covid was a time when residents no longer could dine with their peers requiring our residents to dine in their rooms. Reimplementing the community dining experience has provided social connections once again for our residents. Mealtimes are meant to benefit our residents' nutritional health; however, the benefits go beyond nutrition. Dining in a group setting provides not only a social experience but a sensory filled environment extending to emotional and cognitive health as well. Dining in a communal area stimulates memories of togetherness and of family meals in a more relaxed setting. This type of atmosphere can foster social interaction, better nutritional intake, and enhance positive emotional wellbeing.



At Maple View family style dining has shown to promote an alternate interaction with care givers and residents. Casual conversations can be overheard promoting positive experience between staff and residents. Residents feel a sense of respect and worth with the attention this type of environment provides. Families are given the opportunity to join



their loved ones to reminisce about the good old days of times sitting around the family table.

Meals can become a source of frustration for the resident who eats alone. In a community setting we can provide a dining experience that makes mealtimes more enjoyable. Instrumental music playing in the background, the use of tablecloths and social interaction can stimulate memories in creating an inviting ambiance. A dining routine can be beneficial to the residents as it provides comfort, reduces behaviors, and precipitates a connection that it is time to eat.

Our experience at Maple View shows that the benefits have proven to be positive for our residents' wellbeing. Having this dining experience has filtered into other aspects of their daily life by developing deeper friendships, increased energy to participate in other activities whether group or individual as well as decreased behaviors.

Best Practices for Bingo Modifications at Autumn Lake at New Britain:

Bingo at our facility was very straight forward three years ago; one Therapeutic Recreation Director would facilitate the program for approximately twenty residents without any issues. Today, however, Bingo requires a much different approach. As time goes on, our population is ever changing, what was once a room full of twenty independent people is now a room full of double the participants and a strong need for assistance and accommodations. Our current population houses residents with elevated physical and cognitive impairments than in the past, leading us to make several changes in order to host a truly inclusive program. One of the first additions to Bingo was to enlist the help of Luz the Resident Council President. Luz repeats the caller's



numbers in Spanish for a group of residents that don't understand English (we also have a Long-term Polish speaking resident to assist when needed). To accommodate our residents who are hard of hearing, we have set up a table next to the caller, incorporated a microphone with a portable speaker and appointed one of the Recreation Directors to write out the numbers on a whiteboard. There is one resident at our facility who does not register the numbers when vocalized and can only see up close. Another TRD sits with her and writes out the numbers on her personal communication board. This allows the resident to maintain her independence; marking the numbers on her card without someone having to do it for her. The last notable adaptation to Bingo is yet another way we recruit residents to assist their peers. With our vast and large population, there are naturally many residents who are more capable of independence than others. Some of these residents thrive on being given tasks and helping others. We pair these individuals up with their fellow residents who need a little extra one-on-one assistance, again making our program more inclusive and allowing residents to be more autonomous. While there may be quite a few adaptations to Bingo, it allows for so many residents to participate who would otherwise be unable to. The attention to our residents' needs with the adjustments of some of our older practices helps us to foster independence and comfortability in a group setting. This has doubled the attendance at our Bingo games and allowed more residents to increase their social and emotional wellbeing. We love our residents and will continue to accommodate and improve our practices as we see fit for our population.

Testimonials:

“Helping with bingo brings me so much joy because it brings back memories of playing with my mom.” -Thomas Morales



“I am proud to be bilingual and able to help our Spanish speaking residents play bingo. As Resident Council President it means a lot to me to be able to help them.” - Luz Rivera



TRD staff Allison Morris Left, Writing numbers on white board for residents who are hard of hearing and TRD Linda Trigilio below, calling the number with mic next to the table designated for residents who are hard of hearing.





Luz Rivera, Resident Council President calling the bingo number in Spanish

Resident Thomas Moralas helping during a bingo game.



TRD Rebecca Chase-Pellicone writing the numbers down for a resident who registers the numbers by sight.





Best Practices for Music Driven Activities at Parkway Pavillion Health and Rehab Center:

At Parkway Pavilion we have residents in their 40's-105 years old.

The common denominator is music. We have created a creative empowering activity- MUSIC CIRCLE”.

We gather into a friendship circle where every resident is empowered to choose their favorite song. Instead of going “old school “with CD’s we utilize a Bluetooth speaker, WIFI and a cell phone to pull up songs on you-tube. This also allows the group flexibility and the ability to go outside and enjoy fresh air and music.

The recreation staff facilitates the group starting at one point of the circle and going person to person until everyone has had an opportunity. This eliminates yelling out song requests by just a few, more vocal residents.

They choose songs such as “A bushel and a Peck”, “My Bonnie”, “Take me home country road”, “Desperado”, “Me and Bobby McGee”, “Manic Monday”, “White Rabbit”, and Contemporary Christian songs such as “You are the reason” to name just a few.

It is a great opportunity to include an activity that engages a diverse group of residents. Even individuals who experience challenges in formally requesting songs due to advanced dementia or other cognitive changes, are observed truly enjoying the activity by means of smiles, singing along, dancing, and clapping along to the beat.

Music Circle is a resident favorite, being requested right along with live entertainment most Fridays and Bingo. At resident council monthly



meetings, we review past months and upcoming month activities allowing for request of favorite activities.

Billy Joel said it best:

“I think music in itself is healing. It’s an explosive expression of humanity, it’s something we are all touched by No Matter what culture we’re from, everyone loves music.”



Best Practices from Harbor Village

At Harbor Village, you will find our most fun and talked about program is our Resident Council store. The Recreation Department purchases items highly desired by the residents. The residents saved their money to come and shop and browse twice a month. Period the items range. Snacks, drinks, health and beauty aids, fragrances, clothing such as socks, mittens, hats, scarves, reading glasses, seasonal decorative items, notebooks, hair clips, puzzle books, crafts, and more. Residents. They're excited to see what new items we have, and Love receiving their usual favorites. The funds received from the store are filtered back into the store for more items. We self fund our bingo prize payout each month through the store. Not only do we set up the store in our lobby, but we also take a cart. Room for residents unable to come. Otherwise. Started in April 2024 and has grown each month period. When you ask our resident what's their favorite activity. It's always the store or bingo!





Best Practices for Vernon Rehab and Healthcare Center Resident Council:

What does Resident Council mean to us? It is the heartbeat of our community and a way for the residents to advocate for positive change, always improving the experience at Vernon Rehab and Healthcare Center. The most important key aspect for success is the support given by the Department Heads. To ensure accountability and appropriate follow up, residents have requested that at each meeting facility staff are represented by having the Administrator, Director of Nursing, Food Service Director, and Activity Director attend meetings. On occasion we also appreciate presentations by the Ombudsman. We offer a unique space for residents to come together and discuss concerns with management, an opportunity for fellowship, and a source of information and resources. This dialogue between residents and staff ensures residents feel that the administration hears them and offer valuable contributions to our ever-growing community.

In addition, another best practice we do in order to grow participation among Resident Council is by invitations by their own peers. Our core council members actively invite their friends and other residents with personal invitations. Each resident is encouraged and empowered to advocate and speak during the meeting. This gives residents a voice in our community and establishes a channel for management to hear what residents have to say. For residents that are unable to attend, the Activity Director and President meet individually with them, and their concerns or positive remarks are addressed immediately. Any resolutions needed are done in a timely manner and minutes are passed out to all residents. The Resident Bill of Rights and key staff personnel phone numbers are offered to all residents as well as the information for the Ombudsman.

Although the meeting is formal, we keep it positive, and solution based. We take time to celebrate and acknowledge individual staff that have gone above and beyond in caring for residents. We present our



“Resident of the Month,” highlighting key aspects of their volunteer service among their peers and staff members. A photo or video, and brief description of the resident is posted on our website for the families and residents to view. Residents and the Activity Director work closely together in planning special events, upcoming activities, fundraisers, as well as the menu (food committee). The Treasurer announces the amount of our resident fund, which is from fundraisers and or donations. Residents vote on what to use the money towards. Resident Council is a way for all of us to be part of the same team and we have a phenomenal group here!

Resident Council Testimonies:



Richard has a S.B Bachelor of Science in Physics from M.I.T. he taught as a professor for three IV League Universities; Harvard, Boston University, and M.I.T, as well as a Naval Underwater Systems Center. He is currently serving as our Resident Council President and has been for over a year. He advocates for better care, meals, services, and an optimal overall experience here at Vernon Rehab.

This is his testimony. *“I’ve been a resident at Vernon Rehab for two and a half years and am currently the President for Resident Council. During this time, with help from the resident council, the food and care have significantly improved. The lives of the residents have been enriched by daily activities and events. This includes bingo, live music entertainment, cards, movies baking, etc. Having a resident council is a good tool for a building to succeed.”* ~ **Richard Hodges, Resident Council President**



Venna is our Vice-President and has served for over a year. She's a jack of all trades and does a lot of behind the scenes work for Resident Council. She passes out the minutes to all residents, takes notes and reads our resident rights during the meeting. Her testimony is...

"Resident Council brings people together for a common cause. We can iron out some of the issues that exist. We

feel good about getting answers right away, which is the goal of a resident council."

~ Venna Gardyne, Resident Council Vice-President

Resident Council Committee Members:



Residents who serve on the committee are responsible for completing various tasks to help the success of resident council. Committee members promote our meetings and explain to new

residents the important of attending. Residents pass out informational flyers, minutes, give updates, volunteer in recreation assisting staff in the set-up and clean-up for bingo and parties.

~ Emilie Camarco, Althea Wojcik, and Dottie Petcavage



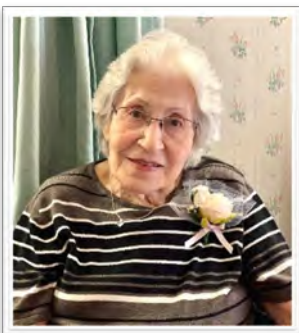
Joan has a Bachelor of Science in Psychology, Math, and Early childhood care from Central CT State University. She worked diligently as the Human Service Director for Harte Automotive, supervising over 600 employees in CT as well as New York. She supports and advocates for her friends and all residents at Vernon Rehab. Here is her testimony.

“Resident Council brings us together. Since we live here, resident council allows us to enter our input on the quality of care, delicious food, and fun entertainment offered and hear any important updates.”

~ Joan Veilleux, past Resident Council President and committee member



“The biggest value of having a resident council is to get to know the needs of the residents in the building and improve quality care. The more support we get the better. In our resident council, we feel listened to as well as treated with dignity and respect.” ~ **Dottie Petcavage, committee member**



“Resident Council is important for the relationship between the nurses, aides, management and residents. The friendliness of the nurses and aides make for a happy camper.” ~ **Catherine A., Committee member**



Best Practices from Trinity Hill Care Center



Inviting various department heads to our Residents Council meetings has been a great improvement into the quality of care in the our facility. “Our questions and concerns are addressed immediately, instead of waiting weeks for a resolution.” *[Ann Marie Valowski, Resident Council President]* I also find that the staff gets to feel the emotions of the residents while in the meeting, instead of reading a request or concern off of a piece of paper. It also makes the record keeping/documentation piece efficient for me. I can document the conversation during the meeting instead of waiting days, and some time weeks, for some staff to fill out the resident council communication form.



Nursing Residents Need Your Help!

The nursing home minimum staffing standard is at risk! Currently, Congress is negotiating an end-of-the-year deal, and some in Congress are proposing to rescind or delay the minimum staffing rule as part of this deal. Both rescission and/or delay would be catastrophic for nursing home residents. This staffing rule was the culmination of decades of advocacy by nursing home residents, their families, and other advocates. It is estimated that the rule will save 13,000 lives each year.

It is incontrovertible that better staffing leads to better outcomes. We cannot let last minute backdoor deals put nursing home residents at risk. It is critical that you reach out to your members of Congress and tell them to reject any end-of-the-year deal that rescinds or delays the minimum staffing rule.

It takes just two minutes to [send a message](#) to your members of Congress.



Take Action Now

Urge your members of Congress to reject any deal that rescinds or delays the minimum staffing rule.

Take Action



CALL TO ACTION / Resident Council Presidents and Therapeutic Recreation Directors



The Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils is excited to continue our ongoing initiative to highlight the outstanding work being done in nursing homes across our state. We know that many of you are implementing innovative and effective practices that greatly enhance the quality of life for residents. Now is your chance to share these successes with your peers!

We are calling for submissions of best practices from Resident Council Presidents and Therapeutic Recreation Directors for our upcoming edition of *The Silver Panther*. Whether it's a unique program, an



effective policy, or a creative solution to a common challenge, we want to hear about it! Your submissions will help inspire and guide other facilities in adopting practices that have been proven to work.

How to Participate:

1. **Identify** a best practice that has had a positive impact on your residents.
2. **Write** a brief description (300-500 words) detailing the practice or program, the results, and any resources or suggestions to help others implement if interested.
3. **Include** any photos, videos, or testimonials from residents and staff.
4. **Submit** your entry via email to LTCOP@ct.gov and Daniel.Beem@ct.gov as soon as possible.

Benefits of Participation:

- **Recognition:** Your facility will be highlighted in our statewide newsletter, *The Silver Panther*, and on our website.
- **Sharing Knowledge:** Contribute to a repository of best practices that others can learn from and implement.
- **Inspiration:** Motivate other facilities to innovate and improve their own resident care practices.

We believe that by sharing our successes, we help to elevate the standard of care and quality of life in all nursing homes. We look forward to receiving your submissions and showcasing the incredible work being done across our state.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to enhancing the lives of our residents.



We are looking for nursing home residents and family members of residents to participate in a research interview about your experiences.

What is this research about?

Our goal is to learn about the reasons people stay in nursing homes or move out. This information will help us suggest better services to meet the needs of older adults and family members.

What does participation involve?

- One interview that will last about 1-hour.
- Interviews can be in-person or by video or phone call.
- You will be asked to share your story of what led you (or your family member) to live in the nursing home and your thoughts about living there.
- After the interview you will receive a \$50 gift card.

Who can participate?

- **Nursing home residents** who are 55 years or older and have lived in a nursing home for at least 3 months.
 - It is okay if you have mild memory issues.
- **Family members** of residents who are 55 years or older and have lived in the nursing home for at least 3 months.
 - We are interested in speaking to family members of residents with a variety of needs, including residents with advanced memory issues.

If you would like to learn more, please contact our Study Coordinator:

Christine Bailey (MFPstudy@uchc.edu). Phone: 860.679.3696

Research study: Increasing returns to the community through Money Follows the Person

This study is being conducted by: Ellis Dillon, PhD

IRB Number: 23-229-1

For More Information: <http://health.uconn.edu/aging/our-research/>

Center on Aging, UConn Health, 263 Farmington Ave, Farmington, CT 06030-5215



IRB Review
IRB NUMBER: 23-229-1
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 05/06/2024

UConn

CENTER ON AGING

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Center on Aging, UConn Health, 263 Farmington Ave, Farmington, CT 06030-5215



The Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is now on Facebook!



Connecticut Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

2K followers • 106 following

www.Facebook.com/ctltcop



Please visit our page and **“Like and Follow”**





Get Updates from Long Term Care Ombudsman Program and E-Board straight to your inbox!

Connecticut
Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

For the Most Up to date Visitation Guidance outlined by CMS/CDC Visit Our [Visitation Center Web Page](#)

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<https://portal.ct.gov/LTCOP>

Please visit the CTLTCOP web page and click **“Subscribe”** to stay informed on topics that you care about most:

- Legislative News
- Local and State Wide Resident Council Resources
 - Silver Panther Newsletter
- Local and State Wide Family Council Resources
 - Visitation / COVID-19 Updates
 - Educational Opportunities / Webinars



Connecticut LTCOP

Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

Community Ombudsman Program



PURPOSE

Enhance quality of life and care for Connecticut citizens who receive long term services and supports



SETTINGS

- Residential Care Homes
- Assisted Living Communities
- Private Homes



WHAT DOES THE LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY OMBUDSMAN DO?

- **RECEIVES** and looks into complaints and assists individuals to resolve problems.
- **EDUCATES** individuals and families about their rights.
- **EMPOWERS** and supports individuals and families to discuss concerns with others providing care or services.
- **PROVIDES** information regarding long-term services and supports
- **ADVOCATES** improvements in state and federal laws and regulations.
- **REPRESENTS** the voice of individuals receiving LTSS and their interests before governmental agencies.
- **IDENTIFIES** and seeks to remedy gaps in provider, government, or community services.
- **RESPECTS** the privacy and confidentiality of individuals.

CONFIDENTIAL AND RESIDENT DIRECTED

All activities are on behalf of residents and at their direction. All communication is held in strict confidentiality. The Ombudsman does not follow up unless directed to by the individual.



SEEKING HELP
You're entitled to seek help to exercise your rights.

Visit Us On the Web at:
<https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop/ltxco>
or Call
1-866-388-1888



Statewide Coalition of Presidents of Resident Councils

(SCPRC) Steering Committee Members

Sullivan-Martinez, Jeanette <i>President</i>	Pendleton Healthcare
Balisciano Jr., John <i>Vice President</i>	Hewitt Health and Rehab
Bilansky, Susan	Hebrew Home
Leland, Martha	Touchpoints of Manchester
Richard Metayer	Pendleton Healthcare
Robert Willis	West Side
Ivette Alvarez	Newtown
Cindy Michaud	Summit of Plantsville
Mariyln Cadoff	McClean
Carol Runlett	Branford Hills (ARK)



STRENGTHENING RESIDENT COUNCILS

Did You Want to Participate in the Moving Forward Resident Council (RC) Pilot in CT but Weren't Selected?

Don't Worry! We're committed to ensuring that every facility in Connecticut has the opportunity to explore and benefit from the Moving Forward Strengthening Resident Council Guide. Even if your facility was not chosen as part of the formal pilot, you can still join our non-pilot group and receive additional support to enhance your resident council's impact

HOW TO GET STARTED

Simply sign up using the link below, and we will reach out with details on how your facility can begin using the guide and take part in this exciting initiative!

[SIGN UP](#)





Moving Forward Strengthening Resident Council Guide Connecticut Pilot

About the Initiative: The Moving Forward Coalition’s “Strengthening Resident Councils” project is a national effort focused on enhancing the effectiveness and impact of resident councils in nursing facilities. Connecticut was selected as a pilot state and is set to launch the initiative in January 2025 with 25 nursing facilities to test the effectiveness of the *Strengthening Resident Councils Guide* and gather feedback for improving resident engagement. This guide supports resident-directed councils, fostering meaningful collaboration and improved quality of life for nursing home residents statewide. [Access the Guide Here](#)

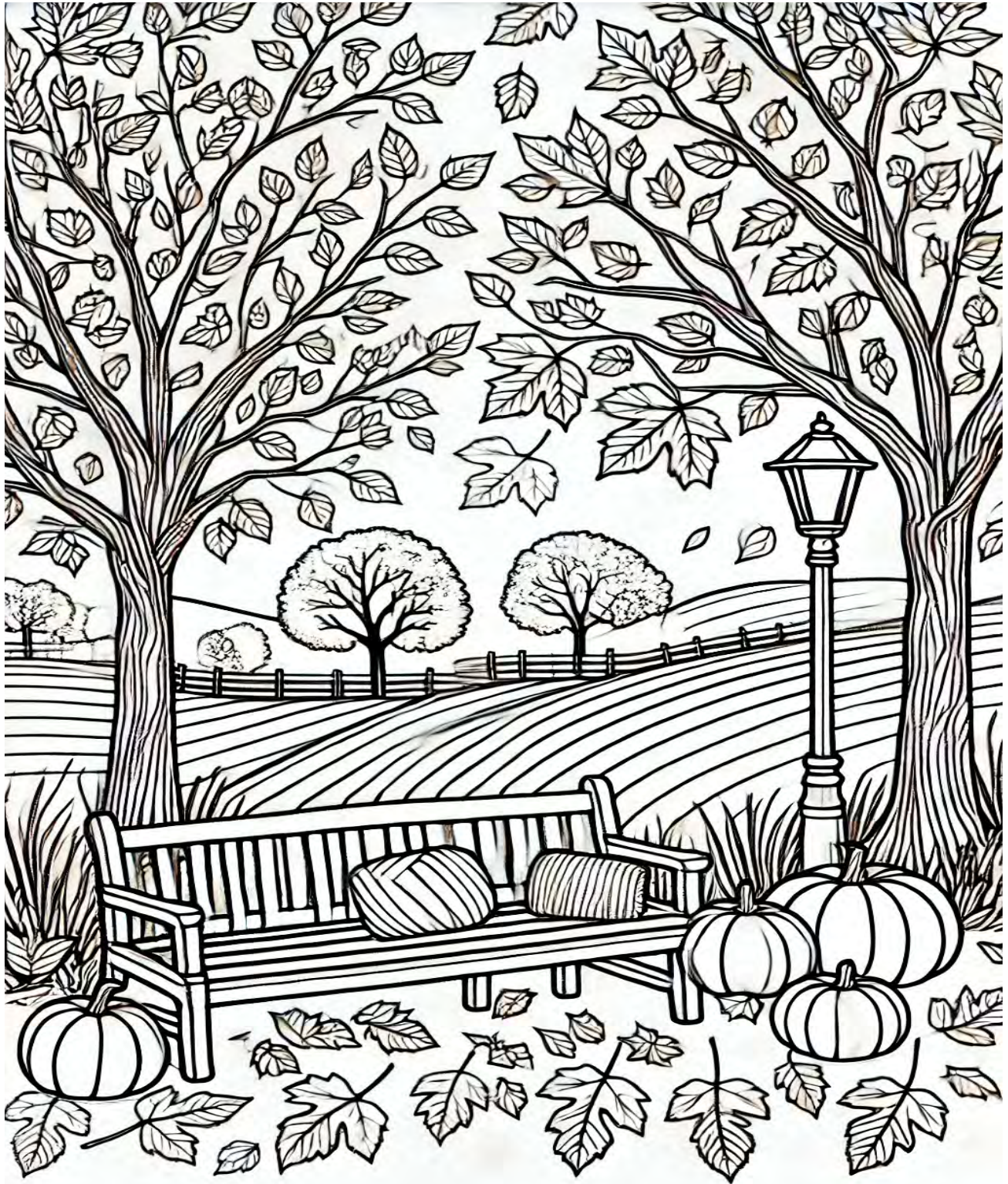
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Games and Puzzles











TOLL FREE NUMBER

1-866-388-1888

Email: ltcop@ct.gov

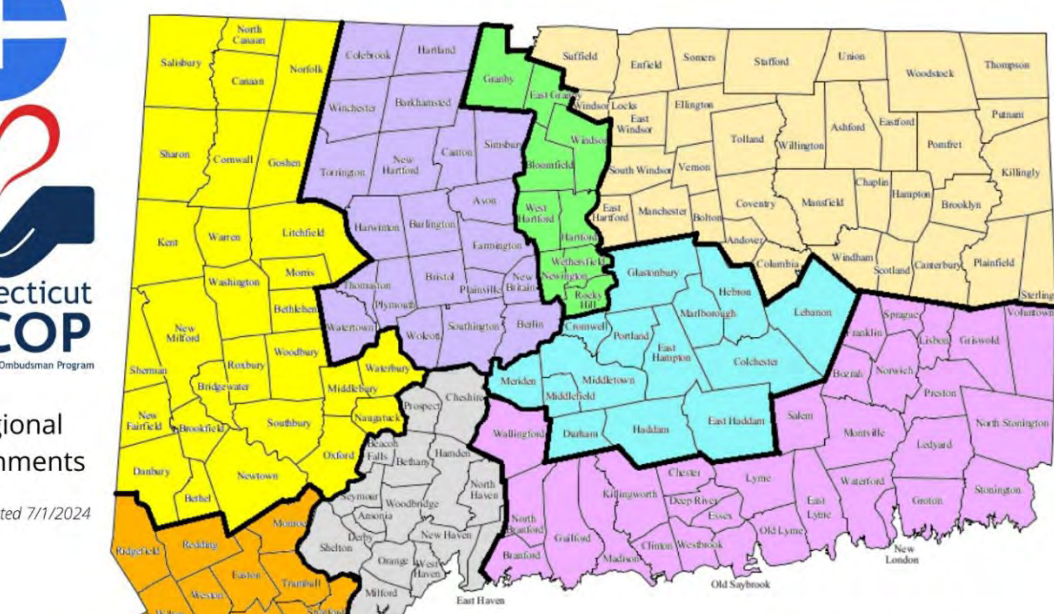
Facebook: www.facebook.com/CTLTCOP

State Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/ltcop>

Contact The CT Long Term Care Ombudsman Program Toll Free 1-866-388-1888



Regional Assignments
Last Updated 7/1/2024



- Stacie Ellis
- Brenda Texidor
- Amanda Mangiafico
- Tasha Erskine-Jackson
- Stacey Larrabee
- Sylvia Crespo
- Kiomara Cruz



MedicareAdvocacy.org

The Center for Medicare Advocacy

The Center for Medicare Advocacy, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization which provides education, advocacy, and legal assistance to help elders and people with disabilities obtain necessary healthcare. We focus on the needs of Medicare beneficiaries, people with chronic conditions, and those in need of long-term care. The organization is involved in education, training and litigation activities of importance to Medicare beneficiaries nationwide.

TOLL FREE NUMBER

Telephone: [860-456-7790](tel:860-456-7790) | Toll Free: [1-800-262-4414](tel:1-800-262-4414)

Email: info@medicareadvocacy.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MedicareAdvocacy.org>

Website: <https://medicareadvocacy.org/>