

By Marie Frey
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Defining Quality Care in Nursing Homes A Celebration of Residents' Rights Week

What do you think nursing home residents would say when asked, "What does quality care mean to you?" I put that question to several residents recently because I've been thinking about the upcoming celebrations for National Residents' Rights Week (October 7 – 13) whose theme is, "Advancing Excellence: A Resident's Perspective on Quality.

Ruth, who lives at the Highlands of Brighton told me, "When you live independently and go to a nursing home it is like going from one world to another. Quality is to have staff who listen to what I want and not what they feel is best for me. Quality is a staff member who is genuine about caring. They go the extra mile. They assist because they want to help, not because they have to. They do things before you even ask."

Virginia, a resident at the New York State Veterans Home in Batavia said, "Quality starts with an inviting environment. The grounds are landscaped in a calming park-like atmosphere. You immediately sense when walking in the doors this is a happy place. Generally speaking everyone has a smile on their face and a laugh in their voice. They genuinely want to assist you. If they can't they direct you to the person who can. Quality living occurs when needs are met and true friendships are built. Quality is people of all levels coming together to be a family."

Mary Jane, a resident at Woodcrest Commons, has the same perspective. "Quality means the administration is accessible to each resident. They are interested in one's input and follow through when possible. Staff members treat each resident as they would want their mother to be treated. Quality is when the facility tries to provide a home like environment. The outside courtyard and gardens are accessible and beautiful for all to enjoy. They serve good food and are not afraid to try different things. A variety of quality entertainment and outings are available."

Ruth, Virginia and Mary Jane represent the 2.7 million Americans living in 62,000 nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and board and care homes across the country. The Ombudsman program, operated by Lifespan, trains volunteers to advocate for residents of long-term care in Monroe, Ontario, Livingston and Genesee counties. In all, there are 10,288 long-term care beds in these four counties alone.

In addition to Residents' Rights Week, the national group, Consumers Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, is commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Nursing Home Reform Act which recognizes residents' rights to make individual choices in how they receive care.

Our goal here at Lifespan is to ensure that quality care – and that’s quality as defined by the residents themselves – is provided in every residence so that the “move from one world to another” is a move from one’s home (in its best sense) to another home. Lastly, I want to thank Mayor Robert Duffy for also proclaiming this week as Residents’ Rights Week in Rochester. If you are interested in becoming an advocate, problem solver and a friend for residents living in long-term care, contact Marie Frey at 244-8400, ext. 114 or email mfrey@lifespan-roch.org.

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