



• THE STARFISH STORY •

One day, a man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked, he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one.

Puzzled, the man looked at the boy and asked what he was doing. Without looking up from his task, the boy simply replied, "I'm saving these starfish, sir".

The man chuckled aloud, "Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?"

The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, "I made a difference to that one!"



Would you like to make a difference in someone's life today? Contact the **Blair County Ombudsman Program** for a volunteer application.

814-296-6336

MISSION STATEMENT

"Pennsylvania Ombudsmen are federally mandated, legally-based and state certified via standardized training to actively advocate and give voice to older consumers of long-term care services, whether delivered in the community or a facility-based setting. Pennsylvania Ombudsmen champion the right of these consumers to achieve the highest quality of life and care wherever they reside. Pennsylvania Ombudsmen may be staff, volunteers or PEER residents; all are united through an impassioned commitment to listen, educate, investigate, mediate and empower through a visible presence."



VISION STATEMENT

"Advocate for those who can't, support those who can, and ensure all long-term care consumers live with dignity and respect."



CONTACT

**Office of the State
Long-Term Care Ombudsman
Pennsylvania Department of Aging
555 Walnut Street, 5th floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101-1919
717-783-8975**



**Blair County
OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM**

LOCAL CONTACT

**Blair County Ombudsman Program
814-296-6336**



• LONG-TERM CARE •

OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

*Making a Difference
One Resident at a Time*



A Program of the PA Department of Aging



OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM

“Ombudsman” is a Swedish term that means citizen representative. The Blair County Ombudsman serves as an advocate for the rights of all residents in nursing homes/long-term care facilities, assisted living, personal care homes, domiciliary care homes, and adult day centers.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman Program is a consumer advocacy model intended to improve quality of care by helping residents resolve complaints about their care and rights established as part of the Older Americans Act in 1978. Services are provided by staff and trained volunteers.

The Ombudsman provides an avenue for conflict resolution. They strive to ensure dignity, choice, and quality of life for all individuals in long-term care. This can include unanswered calls for help, improper medication administration, discharge or eviction without a proper notice, and lack of respect for residents. The Ombudsman will help to resolve the issue with the resident’s

consent to pursue the complaint or concern. The Ombudsman requires direction from the resident for each step of the resolution process.

A key to the Long Term Care Ombudsman Program function is regular facility and resident visitation by the Ombudsman and volunteer Ombudsmen. The Ombudsman Program will have unannounced quarterly visits to each facility. This alone helps to ensure quality of living.

The Ombudsman can assist residents and family members in knowing the complaint process, how and when to report concerns about quality of care, and making reports promptly. Through their visits, Ombudsmen can act as an impartial third party regarding quality of care and resident rights issues.

Although investigation and resolution of complaints are their primary responsibilities, Ombudsmen also have other roles, such as educating residents and families about resident rights.

The Ombudsman Program’s PEER Program stands for “Pennsylvania’s Empowered Expert Resident.” A PEER is a long-term care resident who is trained to advocate for themselves to improve the quality of their own lives and the home they live in. The PEER’s responsibility is to orient new residents to the facility, learn the proper personnel to contact for particular concerns, letting people know their rights, and being their support system.

If you or someone you know could benefit from the Ombudsman Program or perhaps would be interested in volunteering for the program, please contact the **Blair County Ombudsman Program at 814-296-6336.**

RIGHTS OF LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS

- Right to confidentiality of records
- Right to express grievances without fear of retaliation
- Right to be consulted in planning your medical treatment
- Right to freedom from restraints
- Right to privacy in treatment and care
- Right to decline medical treatment
- Rights pertaining to admission, transfers and discharges, including the right to appeal



VOLUNTEER AS AN OMBUDSMAN TO ADVOCATE FOR LONG-TERM CARE RESIDENTS

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program ensures the quality of care for the growing number of residents living in local facilities. Volunteers are provided training by a Mentor, who assists volunteers

in becoming sources of information, agents of improvement, and confidential advocates for resident rights. The program also offers flexible hours and mileage reimbursement.

Approximately 60% of Long-Term Care residents do not routinely receive visitors. You could be the person who brightens someone’s day! To learn more or to request an application, please call 814-296-6336.

