

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Volunteers needed to advocate, protect the rights of long-term care residents**

**Des Moines, Iowa (March 30, 2016)** – The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is searching for spirited volunteers for its Volunteer Ombudsman Program (VOP), with the goal of placing 1 or 2 volunteers in every nursing facility, residential care facility and elder group home in Iowa.

VOP members are trained, certified volunteers who are assigned to a local long-term care facility to advocate for residents' rights. Volunteers visit with residents about their quality of care and life in the facility and help resolve conflicts and concerns. This unique and rewarding opportunity requires a minimum commitment of three hours per month for one year.

Interested individuals should be 18 or older and have a friendly disposition, eager attitude and be able to demonstrate active listening and collaborative problem solving skills. Previous experience in health care is not required, but volunteers must have a strong appreciation for older Iowans and Iowans with disabilities. Certain conflicts of interest may prevent some people from serving, including current employees of long-term care facilities and their family members.

The benefits of becoming a Volunteer Ombudsman include:

- Receiving training, resources and continuing support from the Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman;
- Developing rewarding relationships with long-term care residents;
- Maintaining a flexible schedule that fits your lifestyle; and
- Learning more about Iowa's long-term care system.

New volunteer training is scheduled for Friday, April 8, in Sioux City. Interested persons must submit a volunteer application prior to attending training.

To learn more about the Volunteer Ombudsman Program, or to request an application, call VOP Coordinator Sarah Hinzman at 866-236-1430 or visit the VOP website at [www.iowaaging.gov/vop](http://www.iowaaging.gov/vop).

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*The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman (OSLTCO) works to advocate for the rights and wishes of residents and tenants in long-term care, including those living in nursing homes, residential care facilities, assisted living facilities and elder group homes. Established within the Iowa Department on Aging under the Older Americans Act, the OSLTCO investigates complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents and tenants; serves as a resource for answers regarding long-term care rules and rights; provides information, education, awareness and training about long-term care options and residents' rights; and promotes policy changes to improve the quality of life for individuals in long-term care. More information is available at [www.iowaaging.gov](http://www.iowaaging.gov).*