



advantAGE

CONNECT



Though the 2012 Legislative Rally Day is over the issues still need the attention of the legislators because the **fight** isn't over. Wednesday, February 1<sup>st</sup> residents, staff, leaders and guests assembled at The Heritage Room in Olympia to rally together and speak with their legislators in their respective districts about issues that could greatly affect resident's living conditions, health care and overall quality of life.

Deb Murphy, CEO of Aging Services of Washington, welcomed everybody to rally day and introduced the day's focus. She explained that many of the issues we are facing will significantly impact members and their residents and stressed the critical importance of this day. "Today is our opportunity to speak with legislators with one unified voice and for them to hear from their affected constituents about the damage that will be done to our state's seniors if the proposed cuts to nursing facilities and assisted living communities are enacted into law," Deb said.

Once Deb finished her introductions, Scott Sigmon of Northwest Advocates, a contracted lobbyist for Aging Services, took the podium. Scott went over all the issues and requests for assisted living advocacy and nursing facility advocacy in detail to help provide a better understanding of what Aging Services, as an association, stands for.

*The issues...*

**Assisted Living Advocacy Requests:**

- Oppose the Elimination of the Capital Rate Add-On for Assisted Living Providers
- Support Senate Bill 6022 Relating to Initiative 1163 (Caregiver Training)
- Oppose Supplemental Budget Reductions to Boarding Homes (Assisted Living)

**Nursing Facility Advocacy Requests:**

- Support House Bill 2752, Restore Nursing Facility Payment Methodology Changes Made During 2011
- Oppose Supplement Budget Reductions to Nursing Facilities
- Know the Facts about the Nursing Home Bed Tax



### *The purpose...*

Legislative Rally Day is an opportunity to get involved and be a part of what is happening in long term care, not to just be a bystander whether you are a resident, administrator or executive director of a community.

Lynn Burnett, resident at The Hearthstone, knows better than anybody how important it is to be a part of Legislative Rally Day because she has been attending for the past 13 years. "It's important to have your head counted, we're important to the legislators because they need to know that there are a lot of us [residents] who are interested in these issues," Lynn said.

Lynn encourages her fellow residents to stand up and be heard even if they think the legislators won't hear them out. "It's important to become acquainted with your legislators, to know they are real people and they are friendly," Lynn said. "They put their pants on one leg at a time just like residents do."

Melissa Goetz, Administrator at Riverview Care Center understands that it's important to have an in-person meeting with your legislators during session when bills and budget cuts are constantly being talked about during committee, she also knows the value of advocating all year long. "It is critically important to have face to face time with our district representatives during the legislative session as well as throughout the year," Melissa expressed. "Legislative Rally Day provides us with a structured approach to our most sensitive issues affecting long term care."

Appreciating the beautiful capital and all the other participants that are also passionate about advocating for some of the most vulnerable citizens, it gave Melissa an encouraging feeling. "There is power in numbers, the more unified voices there are, the more our legislators listen," Melissa said.

Bob Howell, Vice President of CRISTA Senior Living knows very well the power of strength in numbers to become a unified voice. "When an important vote comes, it gives me the weight to make the call, email or letter and they [the legislators] know I am speaking for more than just myself," Bob emphasized.

### *The follow-up...*

Legislative Rally Day is only one day but session lasts until March 8<sup>th</sup> and these issues won't fight for themselves. Scott is advocating for advocacy, he encourages residents who participated at rally day to go back to their communities and have a debrief session with their fellow neighbors. They can share their experience meeting with their three legislators and inform the other residents of how the issues can directly affect them.

Scott also encourages everyone to write a thank you letter to legislators because it's another way to reiterate the messages from rally day. "It's all about frequency of message, there's a lot of competition for their time" Scott said. "They get a lot of information in a short amount of time so it's hard for them to digest it all."



Many of the issues that were discussed during rally day had a common theme, revenue. "The need for revenue, a sustainable funding source to support our long term care services is the biggest factor for most of these issues," Scott said.

Scott also said that if enough up front work was done then it's possible the impending budget cut of the Capital Rate Add-On for Assisted Living Providers proposal could be dead on arrival. But a big part of that happening is making

sure that legislators know constituents are watching and they are opposed to it happening. “We need to reinforce legislators who may be getting down and out that there are folks out there supporting them with regards to new revenue because we can’t sustain a billion dollar all cuts budget,” Scott said.