



# Meet Our Volunteer

## Meet Rashmi

Rashmi has served as a Long-Term Care Ombudsman for Texas nursing facility residents since 2016.



### **What led you to volunteer with the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program?**

I have been involved helping people for several decades. In 2015, I was admitted to a nursing home after surgery for rehabilitation. Many long-term residents were 80+ years of age. One patient was over 103.

I observed that the majority of these long-term residents eagerly waited for family and friends to visit them, and no one came to see them for weeks and sometimes months. One lady dressed in her best clothes and put on makeup and waited by the reception desk every day for her son to visit. After a few days, I asked the facility staff about this. They said she had done this for months and no family member ever came. It was heartbreaking.

I volunteer with several organizations. A few months after my rehab stay, I saw a 'Volunteer Ombudsman Training Program' notice in my email notification about area volunteer opportunities. I had no clue what Ombudsman meant, nor what their role may be. But an opportunity to help nursing home residents spiked my interest. I contacted the Ombudsman Program and expressed my interest in volunteering. After completing the required volunteer paperwork, I received an invitation to join a training session. Training sessions were intense and informative. Looking back, I am glad that I went through the process and became Certified Ombudsman.



*The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is independent within the Texas Health and Human Services system.*

## **How did your initial expectations of serving as a volunteer ombudsman align with the reality of your actual experiences?**

My initial expectations were to go to a nursing home to talk with lonely residents and cheer them up. I initially had no clue that I would be protecting residents' rights and advocating on their behalf.

## **What impact does your ombudsman work have on the lives of residents at your facility?**

Most residents do not know the role of long-term care ombudsmen. Hence, we regularly explain the Ombudsman Program and our role and how we can help them, if needed. It is important to build mutual trust with residents and family members, so they are comfortable sharing concerns.

I also build professional relationships with facility management. This helps to gain their support to solve residents' concerns.

While living in a nursing home, sometimes the smallest discomforts and service issues encountered may become big issues in a residents' mind. Understanding residents' concerns and helping them to resolve them with the help of facility staff improves their quality of life.

Supporting residents during discharge planning is another vital role we play. Ombudsman support may be especially important for individuals who do not have family or friend involvement.

## **What have you noticed about the best staff in the building? What do they do well?**

The social worker at the nursing home I visit makes daily rounds and visits all residents. She writes down any issues (grievances) and reports to senior management for formal resolution. She makes sure that grievances are resolved expeditiously and then reports back to residents.

## **What might someone be surprised to know about you?**

I worked for Shell Oil for 38 years in various divisions. I was reassigned to increasing responsibilities every couple of years, which resulted in over a

dozen transfers and various locations, including overseas. The last few years with Shell, I managed 15–20 billion-dollar, mega projects overseeing multiple contractors worldwide. Having worked overseas and with international staff, it helps to deal with multicultural residents and their expectations.

I turn eighty in a few months, and I am still very active. If I can be Volunteer Ombudsman, so can you. Come and join us, it will be a rewarding experience.

## **For More Information About Volunteering**

Email or call Pat Borgfeldt, Ombudsman Developer, Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman, [Pat.Borgfeldt@hhs.texas.gov](mailto:Pat.Borgfeldt@hhs.texas.gov) or (512) 438-2545. Apply now using this link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/MVumMnED8Z>.