

Our Great Volunteers

Helen Karamanos is one great lady. She first became involved with Rivergate Terrace in Riverview, Michigan, in 1993 when a relative was admitted to the Alzheimer's unit. She began making daily visits to help enrich the lives of the residents.

Several years later, Karamanos and another resident representative developed a family council that depended on the local ombudsman, advocacy groups and others to provide an educational forum to increase understanding of nursing home operations and expectations. Today, the family council has developed into a learning forum, with facility team members providing educational support. To keep the group active, Karamanos has instituted programs to encourage family members' involvement in the care and happiness of the residents.

John Polturanus, executive director of Rivergate Terrace, said of her: "While many of the associates at Rivergate Terrace have worked hard by dedicating their lives to the well-being of the residents and the success of the facility, I can honestly say that the facility would not be as special as it is today if we were not blessed with the commitment, the dedication and the love of Helen Karamanos."

For her work and compassion, Karamanos was named to the highest honor bestowed by Life Care Centers of America – the Carl W. Campbell Wind Beneath My Wings Award, which goes to the company-wide volunteer of the year – during the company's annual management meeting last September. On a visit to Rivergate Terrace on March 31, I had the opportunity to see Karamanos in action again – still encouraging the staff, advocating for residents and promoting the facility.

She represents a host of outstanding men and women who serve our nursing, assisted living and retirement centers in incredible ways.

This is National Volunteer Week, and our facilities around the country are observing this special time with programs and celebrations honoring the commitment of volunteers. Sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation, the theme of this special week is "Inspire by Example" – and Life Care's volunteers excel in that regard.

The process is already under way to choose and recognize other outstanding volunteers – such as Karamanos – at our annual management meeting in September. But we salute them all – each and every one – for the role they play in bringing joy to our residents' lives and contributing to the quality of their care.

--Beecher Hunter