

Serving residents of long-term care homes in Vanderburgh County

# VOICES VIEWPOINT

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## WHAT IS VOICES?

VOICES, Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that was founded in 1980. We provide free and confidential Long-Term Care Ombudsman services. VOICES, Inc. is the only agency in Vanderburgh County dedicated solely to advocate for residents in nursing homes and licensed assisted living homes in Evansville. Our services include investigation of complaints, resolution of problems and protection of resident rights. Additional services include information/training for staff, residents, and the general public on long-term care issues. These issues include quality of life, residents' rights, selection of a home, advanced directives and sources of payment for care.

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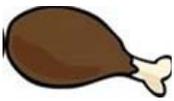
***All proceeds go towards providing long-term care ombudsman services.***

# WINTER AND ALL IT BRINGS



Not long ago, it seems, I was talking to you good people about the beauty of falling leaves. One man called them heaven's canvas, as they fell to earth. Weren't they lovely as the colors changed to brilliant tones of red, yellow and orange heralding in the new season: Winter. Now I have heard it said that this time of year was depressing, with its bare trees, brown grass and those flowers and gardens, that had yielded the beauty and fruits so lovingly cared for, long since gone. Let us take a look at all winter means to us. Temperatures drop, air conditioners sit silent and heaters come on and warm our homes. Clothing that replace our cool, comfortable shorts and t-shirts, seems heavy and cumbersome with every movement we make. Yes. Winter has raised its ugly head.

There is another way to look at winter. Holiday dinners, with food that has been lovingly slaved over for days now sits on the table. Pictures are taken (or today videos) of smiles on friends and family's faces as they pass potatoes and then gravy around the table. Then come the enticing vegetables and succulent rolls with butter. The turkey that mom and grandma cooked and just maybe a ham fixed for those who prefer it to turkey. You see, for reasons that escape me, there are some who hate turkey, but love ham. Give me a drumstick every time and I am in turkey heaven. Why I can eat on that all day and still have some left at supper. Leftovers of our bounty are brought out for the next go around. The days lovely feast might be shared now with those who came later after having shared another meal with family elsewhere.



I almost forgot a very important part of the meal. How did I do that!!...those home-baked pies and cakes, pumpkin, pecan, chess with whipped cream covering the entire top...umm, umm. The cakes were next. Those red velvet, chocolate, German chocolate and any type imaginable...so delicious. With stomachs aching from eating 'til it hurt, and with everything so good we just couldn't pass it up, especially that second helping of sweet potato casserole. Belts were loosened yet another notch for comfort. Any left overs were placed into the fridge and cold turkey sandwiches were eaten the next day or so until all was gone. Oh how wonderful the memories of family, fun and food!



In the weeks after Thanksgiving, we gear up for the holidays. Shopping store after store for that "just right" gift those sweet little angels called grandkids might like to play with and wear. Of course, we search for the perfect gift for all our loved ones too. Will Bob like this shirt, or will he prefer this one? Aunt Martha loves to wear the wonderful perfumes that she has, but only on special occasions so it will last longer. Prices go up and it has become difficult for her to keep up with that cost. So, I think a good gift would be the perfume she loves. All kinds of trinkets are there for the finding. No one should go without this Christmas. The choices abound and something will catch the eye that says, Aunt Rose, Cousin Beth or Uncle Dave. After putting much thought and consideration into shopping, I have picked out gifts I am happy with. Now I am hoping the recipients will like them as much as I think they will.



I hope you have a winter that won't be too hard on you with the weather—surely not too much snow, even though we are guaranteed at least one just because mother nature has to play her yearly trick on us. After all it is winter!

May you and yours be blessed with all the love this holiday season brings. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays my friends!



## Loss and Theft of Personal Items

During the Holiday season I receive many calls about residents who are missing items they received as gifts. I hope you never have the unpleasant experience of finding that your personal items have disappeared—either through loss or theft. Personal loss is NOT an inevitable fact of life in a nursing home or assisted living home, and you do not have to accept it!

For most residents, the only link to the past may be a few cherished possessions, so protecting these invaluable belongings from loss or theft is of great importance.

### **Here are some things you can do to protect your belongings:**



1. Use a permanent marker to **write your name on clothing and other personal items** in an area that does not show when worn or used.
2. Engrave or permanently **mark dentures and eyeglasses** with your name. (Most dentists are able to engrave dentures.)
3. Ask to see your **personal inventory sheet** and verify all your possessions are listed.
4. **RETAIN A COPY of the inventory sheet** and **keep any receipts** or appraisals of these items for your records. Better yet, **take photos** of your items to help in locating them, receiving reimbursement or making a police report.
5. **Ask to be provided with something that can be locked**, such as a drawer or box. **Keep the key with you at ALL times** and find out if anyone else has a copy of the key.
6. **Only keep small amounts of cash** for your use. Homes are obligated to maintain a “Patient Trust Account” for you (at your request) and to provide reasonable access (during normal business hours) to your account.
7. Identify the staff personnel responsible for investigating reports of loss and theft. **Report any loss to that person IN WRITING as soon as you can AND SEND A COPY TO YOUR OMBUDSMAN** (see page four for address). Make sure the home gives you the results of the investigation.
8. **Request reimbursement if the property cannot be recovered.**

Federal and state laws require long-term care homes to protect the personal possessions of their residents and have written policies for handling loss and theft. Ask to see a copy of these policies. If a home fails to maintain a reasonably secure environment, the home may be held responsible for the loss or theft of your personal property. For more information, please contact Michelle Motta, your Ombudsman.