

## How Carol Burwick is “Driven by Passion” to Volunteer at Pro Seniors

By Taylor Evans, Communications Specialist at The Seven Hills School

After helping her father-in-law and his wife navigate the ins and outs of settling into an independent senior living facility, Carol Burwick wanted to give back to the community and channel her passion for helping senior citizens.

“I was looking for a volunteer opportunity and honestly, thinking much further down the road about what I want to do when I’m retired, and did an online search and found the Council on Aging and Pro Seniors,” Burwick said. “Pro Seniors just seemed like a really good fit for me.”

Pro Seniors Inc. assists seniors in resolving legal and long-term care problems. Pro Seniors services include long-term care ombudsmen who advocate for seniors in long-term care situations, the Ohio Senior Medicare Patrol, which teaches seniors about Medicare fraud, and identity theft legal services, such as a legal hotline and in-house attorneys. After Burwick learned more about the organization’s mission, she decided to volunteer. She completed training in summer 2019 and now volunteers as an ombudsman. She serves two senior care facilities in the area.



“I visit the two nursing homes that I’ve been assigned and introduce myself to the residents, explain what an ombudsman program is, ask them about the care they receive,” Burwick said.

The residents share their issues and concerns with her. She also asks seniors about the steps they have taken to resolve the issues they’re facing, and informs them of their rights. Her work helps empower seniors to manage their own care.

“If they seem very frustrated or they need additional support, I offer to help them and offer to speak to the administrator or the director of nursing,” Burwick said.

Residents can either ask Burwick to speak on their behalves or they can join Burwick in a meeting with those in charge of their facilities. Her role is especially important to residents who don’t have their own advocates.

“I feel like residents who have family around probably thrive the most and probably receive the most attention from skilled nursing facilities because they have advocates built in. They’ve got their children or nieces or nephews there,” Burwick said.

She added, “There’s so many that don’t have that family support. Just having someone keeping an eye out for those things is really important.”

Burwick, who works in product management at Duke Energy, enjoys the flexibility that comes with her volunteer role.

“There’s no set schedule,” she said. “I can visit any time that I want and I can make it fit my work schedule. I am full time employed and I travel for my work.”

Ultimately, Burwick said she is driven by passion. She shared a story about helping a resident who was having problems with food at her nursing home. While Burwick was training to volunteer, the resident told her that she felt she wasn’t getting enough to eat and due to dental issues, could only eat soft foods. Burwick was able to help arrange a meeting with the woman and the facility’s dietary supervisor.

“I felt like we made a difference there,” Burwick said.

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