

Sheridan, OR
(Yamhill Co.)
Sun
(Cir. W. 2,190)

APR 4 2007

Allen's P.C.B. Est. 1888

Deer Meadow named in class action lawsuit

Deer Meadow Assisted Living in Sheridan has been named in a class action lawsuit filed March 22 in Multnomah County Circuit Court. 966

The lawsuit names 50 residential facilities in Oregon operated by Sunwest Management of Salem.

Court papers claim the homes for seniors charge for services that the management has no intention of providing.

"This is about broken promises for higher profits," said elder rights attorney Kathryn Stebner, who filed the lawsuit. "It's shameful that Sunwest is preying on our senior citizens and their families at such a vulnerable time."

The lawsuit claims that residents' contracts promise care and services of a certain quality. However, Stebner alleges the contract fails to state that the facilities and Sunwest Management cannot and do not provide those services.

Wally Gutzler, general counsel for Sunwest Management, told The Oregon that the company disagrees with allegations that Sunwest violated state laws. "We would disagree with that," he said in the March 24 edition of the newspaper.

Stebner is a San Francisco attorney who practices in Oregon and California.

Deer Meadow Assisted Living is located at 1350 W. Main Street, Sheridan.

Named as representative plaintiffs in the class action are 81-year-old Cathleen Naylor and 80-year-old Gwen Olmstead, two residents of Sunwest-operated Deer Meadow Assisted Living in Sheridan.

The lawsuit states that Naylor and Olmstead signed contracts for services at Deer Meadow that were never provided. The lawsuit also charges the facility is in violation of state laws governing the operation of residential facilities.

Naylor has been a resident of the home since February 2004 and Olmstead since January 2003.

Stebner says there are up to 60 residents in each center, which would put the potential total number of plaintiffs at about 3,000.

Stebner is co-counsel in a similar class action lawsuit against Sunwest in California. Sunwest operates more than 200 residential facilities for seniors nationally. About 25 percent of them are in Oregon and the company's headquarters is in Salem.