

Pendleton, OR
(Umatilla Co.)
East Oregonian
(Cir. D. 10,236)
(Cir. S. 10,491)

APR - 6 2007

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



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston Terrace Assisted Living is a defendant in a lawsuit faced by their parent company, Sunwest Management out of Salem.

966 Lawsuit names Hermiston Terrace

Plaintiffs allege company misrepresents staffing levels at assisted living facilities

By KATHY ANEY
of the East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Hermiston Terrace Assisted Living is a defendant in a lawsuit faced by Sunwest Management. The Salem company owns and operates the Hermiston facility and 49 others in Oregon.

The litigation may evolve into a class-action lawsuit that could potentially involve several thousand plaintiffs.

“We allege that Sunwest Management did not tell residents that there was not adequate staff to take care of them,” said Kathryn Stebner, a San Francisco attorney who filed the lawsuit. “Rates were raised to cover extra staff

e
id
n-
to
ne
ss
at
on
ne
16-
id.
to
tes
ses,
alls
off
hey
suit
iat's
rap-

LAWSUIT

Continued From 1A

"All the decisions on staffing and training are coming from the corporate level."

The two plaintiffs, Cathleen Naylor, 81, and Gwen Olmstead, 80, serve on a residence council that deals with complaints from people who live at Deer Meadows. Their lawsuit alleges that the company's standard admission agreement misleads residents about the number of staff available to feed, clean, supervise and conduct other duties of daily living.

Naylor and Olmstead took residents' concerns to administrators and received no relief, Stebner said.

"Their pleas have been ignored," she said.

Sunwest released a statement to media that said the company disagrees with "this

frivolous claim and its untrue allegations."

"In the coming weeks and months," the statement continued, "we look forward to addressing the issues in the lawsuit via the judicial process where we are confident that the true facts of the situation will come to light."

Staffing levels are a prime concern in the suit.

"The staff has to work 16-hour days," Stebner said. "They are basically told to keep working."

Her law firm, which litigates elder abuse and neglect cases, has fielded a flurry of calls from elderly residents.

"Our phones are ringing off the hook," Stebner said. "They feel empowered by the lawsuit — everyone is saying, 'That's happening to me, that's happening to me.'"

9/6/6