

MAR 27 2007

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# Senior homes charged with bilking residents

## Suit says services billed, not provided

By Susan Goracke  
of the Daily Courier

9/6/06

Three Grants Pass senior residential facilities are among those named in a class action lawsuit filed Thursday in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

The suit names 50 Oregon residential facilities operated by Sunwest Management of Salem, including Spring Pointe Memory Care, Spring Village Assisted Living & Cottages, and The Suites Assisted Living in Grants Pass.

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

"This is about broken promises for higher profits," stated elder rights attorney Kathryn Stebner, who filed the lawsuit.

Stebner, a San Francisco attorney who practices in Oregon and California, said this morning that a similar case is being filed in California, where the Attorney General's office is investigating Sunwest.

The Oregon suit claims 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.

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

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 has lived there since January 2003.

Stebner did not know if any residents of Grants Pass facilities had complained, but she said this morning that complaints of insufficient staff and lack of training had come from current and former residents and staff members at Sunwest facilities in Eugene, Klamath Falls and Yreka, Calif., among others along the Interstate-5 corridor.

"We've had widespread complaints, and we see it as a pattern in both Oregon and California," she added.

With up to 60 residents in each center, Stebner said the potential total number of plaintiffs is about 3,000.

"Right now, everybody living in one of the facilities — from the date the lawsuit was filed to a year back — are in the class," she explained. Stebner's next step is to continue to gather information and testimony for the case.

A phone call left on Sunwest spokesman and lead attorney Wally Gutzler's voice mail was not returned today by the Daily Courier's deadline.

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.

Any local Sunwest facility resident with information to