

## **The Importance of Rural Non-Profit Assisted Living Facilities**

Chris Wagner, Resident, Kilchis House, Tillamook

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Human Services Subcommittee:

I am fortunate to live in Tillamook County where we have two non-profit Assisted Living Facilities - Kilchis House and Nehalem Bay House – which are owned and managed by CARE, Inc., a local, non-profit social service agency. This means that people who have fallen through the cracks financially can receive the care they need and not be left out because of money. I am one of those people, and ask that you please support Medicaid long term care services.

Twenty years ago, I was diagnosed with severe rheumatoid arthritis. It changed everything for me. Without being able to keep working, I quickly went through savings, sold assets and eventually applied for Social Security Disability. I quickly fell far below the poverty line. I took on getting healthier as a job and managed to get myself into a partial remission for several years. Last year that changed as my mobility wavered. I then fell in the shower and had to get myself out of the tub to save my life.

The fall affected my RA and progressed even further; leaving me with a struggle to do even simple tasks. It soon became clear that I needed help. Home care wasn't for me and would still leave me alone at night. I knew of only one option because I'd been on the CARE Board, and was certain that Kilchis House assisted living would meet my needs. The Medicaid subsidy and my Social Security would pay my way. I contacted Senior and Disability Services and got the ball rolling. And, with the help of devoted friends, I moved into a lovely one bedroom apartment within a couple of months.

What I know now that I didn't understand before is what it takes to run this facility and the gift of getting not only the right help, but the generosity of spirit that comes with it from caregivers who are over-worked and underpaid. Money is not what seems to drive them, but what they can do to make someone else's life better. I also discovered that there is no difference in the services for private pay and Medicaid residents, which helps create a family oriented atmosphere.

Running these two facilities is always financially tenuous. Big ticket items like kitchen equipment, generators or flood repairs are needed, and turnover of staff is a continuous issue. I'm asking for you to increase Medicaid funding for long term care services because the mission of having this care for elders and people with disabilities is vital. Moreover, it's a moral obligation because what I know so well is that anyone's life can change on a dime.

