

The POA BULLETIN

The Property Owners' Association of The Villages

Issue 34.05

Champion of Residents' Rights Since 1975

May 2008

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POA Documents More Hospital Problems

In the previous issue of the POA Bulletin, we asked Villagers to send to us stories about their experiences in the emergency room (ER) of The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH). The stories could be positive, negative, or indifferent about the care and other experiences in the ER. Our intent was to document what was happening in the hospital, especially the ER.

To date we have received 103 letters or emails. 89 of these were about the ER. 78 were negative (88%) about the writer's experience in the ER; 11 were positive.

Some of the negative experiences are truly disturbing. The comments range from unusual delays in waiting for initial contact with the triage nurse or for seeing a doctor, all the way up to frightening delays, mis-diagnosis, incompetence, and actual injury to patients.

We question whether the situation in the ER is an eminent danger to the health and well-being of patients. Some of the experiences related to us could lead even the most skeptical mind to that conclusion.

To be sure, we have only anecdotal stories that were submitted by generally dissatisfied patients. In some cases their stories lacked important details needed for a thorough evaluation. A final judgment would have to depend on a more comprehensive analysis of the information we have thus far received.

Although this survey would not qualify as a valid statistical study, we think it is representative of the experiences of ER patients.

We plan to take our results to the senior officials of TVRH and also the Leesburg Regional Medical Center (LRMC) for review. We seek acknowledgment of the problems and a plan for remedying the problems in a short period of time. We will not accept anything less. We seek to work with hospital officials to remedy these problems. We think these problems should be solved in our community. We hope so. But, we will not be denied on these issues or the eventual remedy. Having a top quality hospital is essential in our community.

The Hospital committee of the POA consists of two directors of the POA and two retired health care professionals. We plan to bring on to our team other professionals experienced with hospitals and the ER.

The Results - 89 stories about the ER were detailed in letters and emails to us. 88% of these stories were negative; 12% were positive.

Of the 88 stories, 59 identified the total time it took to be seen by a triage nurse, or see a doctor, or be admitted. Of the 59, a total of 42 (71%) cited long delays of four hours or more. In many of these cases, our best judgment was that many of the reported symptoms were serious enough that immediate care should have been given without delay. We considered some of the delays to be unreasonable and less than the standard of care that should have been expected.

A total of 26 stories (out of the 89, or 29%) were judged by us to be serious shortfalls in the quality of care consisting of a long wait combined with inappropriate staff attention and care.

In 17 cases (19%) the patient received incorrect or inappropriate medical and nursing care.

We judged that at least 4 patients may have been injured by care, or the lack of care, given by hospital personnel.

A total of 8 patients, after later reviewing their problems with their personal physicians, discovered that ER physicians had mis-diagnosed their problem.

7 patients were told by their personal physicians to go immediately to the ER for admission to the hospital, yet they were subjected to long waits and skeptical or inattentive staff.

Problems in communicating with the physician, because the physician did not speak understandable English, were reported in at least 4 cases.

16 patients (18%) mentioned that they filed a complaint about their care with hospital management.

11 people (12%) offered positive comments about their experience in the ER.

Additional Comments - Many Villagers, as well as the professional members of our committee, could not understand why serious emergencies (symptoms of heart attack or stroke) were not treated in a more timely manner or taken seriously by the ER staff.

Some people noted that only one doctor was on duty when they needed help and that one doctor simply could not administer to patients, including seriously ill patients, in a reasonable period of time.

Most people seem to be well-pleased with the level of care they got once they were admitted to the hospital. However, there were still some troubling stories of rude and inattentive staff on the ward floors.

One of the fundamental underlying problems with the hospital is lack of staff and facilities to handle this load of patients. Training is also an issue here, as are the continuing problems with finding staff and finding the funds to pay a competitive wage.

Follow-Up Actions - We will say it again: we plan to take this information to the senior level management of TVRH and LRMC to discuss these problems. We hope to secure recognition of these problems and agreement on a

remedial plan within a reasonable and short period of time.

Summary - The POA Bulletin printed a story a few years ago that started: "There is something wrong with the hospital." Unfortunately, we could write the same story today about these many problems. The POA wants to put a stop to the complacency that accepts these problems as routine. This is not acceptable. We must insist on solving these problems and helping the hospital to achieve the excellence that we Villagers demand. There cannot be compromise on this issue.

We will continue to accept and tabulate your stories about the hospital, especially the ER. Either write or email your stories to us at the addresses given on page 15 of this issue of the Bulletin in the upper left hand corner. Please include your name for verification purposes. We will protect your confidentiality. If you have information that would be useful to us, please send the story to us. If you don't, the entire effort may be weakened for lack of a sufficient number of stories. Please, do it now....

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VHA Declines to Work With the POA On Hospital Issue

We recognized that these hospital problems and the service to Villagers are broad questions that should have full involvement from our entire community.

Thus, we contacted the president of the VHA, Mr. Roger Kass, and invited the VHA to join with us on this project.

We felt this would be a good opportunity to work together with the VHA on an important project that didn't involve issues concerning the developer. And, we would be able to present a united front that would help our cause in discussions with the hospital.

We were hoping that this would initiate a new era of cooperation between the POA and the VHA. Many resident have asked for better cooperation between our two groups.

Unfortunately, Mr. Kass and the VHA turned us down. Mr. Kass said that TVRH was doing well. He cited the recent awards for TVRH and said that TVRH was "one of the best hospital facilities in the country."

This again shows that the VHA has its head in the sand and will not support an important Residents' Rights issue, even when the very well-being of Villagers is at stake.

We ask that all fair-minded Villagers think very carefully about this episode. Look at what the VHA does for you and then look at what the POA does for

you. Which organization is making more of an effort on your behalf?

If you value what the POA is doing on your behalf, please consider joining our organization. With more members we are stronger and more representative and can better advance the interests of all Villagers.

But, we still can't do it without you and your continued support. Please consider joining the POA now. You can use the membership form on page 15 of this issue of the Bulletin.

This is your community now. Please join the POA, the homeowners' organization that is working for you.

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The Next POA Meeting Is On Wed, May 21

The next POA membership meeting will be on Wednesday, May 21, in the auditorium at the Paradise Recreation Center, north building, at 7:00 p.m.

Please note the new location, **Paradise Center**, and the new day, **Wednesday**, for this **one** meeting in May. We will be back to our regular schedule on the third Tuesday in Laurel Manor starting again in June.

Max Pullen, Lady Lake Mayor, will speak on the new developments, shopping centers, and Sam's Club in the town of Lady Lake.

Please join us for this important meeting. Coffee and donuts afterward make for a nice social time. And, the discussion and opportunity to meet fellow Villagers add up to a thought-provoking and interesting evening. Non-members of the POA are welcome.

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Urgent Care Facilities

Unlike most community hospitals, The Villages Regional Hospital does not run or coordinate a system of Urgent Care facilities for community residents. In fact, very little is known about Urgent Care facilities in The Villages. We had to call each of them to get basic information. It is amazing that only a few of these

Urgent Care facility phone numbers appear in our local phone directory so Villagers can easily call for help.

None of these facilities have any formal ties with the Villages Regional Hospital. Villagers who seek help at an Urgent Care center during the day will have to carry their own urgent care records if they need the services of The Villages Emergency Room at night.

So far, we've located at least 3 facilities. As a service to Villages residents, we are printing a brief description of each of these.

1. Lake Regional Urgent Care - located at 910 Old Camp Road near Lake Sumter Landing. This office treats most minor illnesses and injuries offering x-ray and minor lab facilities. It is open 7 days a week - 9 am to 7 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday - 9 am to 5 pm on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. This urgent care center is a business owned by two physicians. For more information - call (352) 259-4322.

2. Exceptional Urgent Care Center - located at 17820 SE 109th Avenue - right across from the Wal-Mart on Highway 441 behind the CVS drug store. This facility offers x-rays, EKG's, and minor lab tests. It is open 6 days a week - Monday thru Saturday, 9:00 - 5:30 pm. This facility is a business owned by an osteopathic physician, Dr. John Im. For more information - call (352) 307-1826.

3. Exceptional Urgent Care Center - located at 11950 County Road 101 - in the Dana Plaza near the corner of Highway 101 and Highway 466. This facility offers X-rays, EKG's, and minor lab tests. It is open 6 days a week - Monday thru Saturday 8am to 6 pm. This facility is a business owned by an osteopathic physician, Dr. John Im. For more information call (352) 391-5200.

Please note that Urgent Care Facilities will often, in routine situations, only accept patients with insurance. Hospitals, like TVRH and LRMC, are required to accept all patients, even those without insurance. Thus, individuals without insurance know that they can receive medical attention at a hospital. This can often lead to these uninsured individuals using hospital emergency rooms for primary care as opposed to urgent care facilities or private doctors which may demand evidence of insurance coverage before administering care.

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Hospital Emergency Rooms

We've learned a lot from this investigation into Emergency/Urgent Care facilities for Villages residents. We find that The Villages is sadly short of adequate Emergency and Urgent Care facilities - especially at night and on weekends. Between 5-7 at night until 8-9 the next morning only one doctor in The Villages Hospital Emergency Room is available to meet the emergency needs of 70,000 Villages residents. This is an impossible job for any one physician to do.

By policy, The POA does not endorse any hospital for Villages residents. But we urge residents to consider all Emergency Room options. The following hospitals are close by. All of these hospitals have Emergency Rooms. Please note in each of the listing below the distance from Spanish Springs and the local phone number:

1) Leesburg Regional Medical Center - (11 miles from Spanish Springs)
600 E, Dixie Avenue, Leesburg. Phone (352) 323-5762.

2) Ocala Regional Medical Center - (20 miles from Spanish Springs) 1431
SW 1st Avenue, Ocala. Phone (352) 401-1000.

3) Monroe Regional Medical Center - (20 miles from Spanish Springs) 1500
SW 1st Avenue, Ocala. Phone (352) 351-7200.

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Thank You

The POA wishes to thank all of The Villages residents who submitted letters and e-mails of complaint and comment about The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH). We are honored that so many Villagers put so much trust in the POA to read their comments and to work to try to improve this unfortunate situation. We are motivated by the sensitivity of the hospital experiences you explained, and we will work to reduce the chance that these situations will ever happen again.

We will be accepting letters and e-mails for the indefinite future and will work for improved care for Villages Residents.

So, if you have not yet contacted us with your story about your experiences in the hospital, either the emergency room (ER) or the ward/floors, please do so. We need to hear your story, be it positive, negative, or neutral. If you don't write to us, we may have to assume that the problems already mentioned are not significant or not representative of what is really happening in the hospital. So, please, write or e-mail to us now. Please do it today !!

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Where Should Our Hospital Facilities Be

Located?

During our research into hospital facilities for Villages residents, we came across some very confusing data.

We are pleased that the hospitals, The Villages Regional Hospital (TVRH) and Leesburg Regional Medical Center (LRMC) have installed a state-of-the-art Cardiac Care Center and a Primary Stroke Center. However these two important facilities are not located in The Villages Regional Hospital - they are located 11 miles away at the LRMC facility in Leesburg.

We don't understand. Medical statistics show us that a community of almost 70,000 residents over 55 is much more likely to need stroke and cardiac care than Leesburg as a multi-age community of 16,000 residents.

We know that strokes and cardiac emergencies are life-threatening injuries that need immediate medical intervention. We are concerned that Villagers will suffer needless delay-of-care complications involved in being transported the additional eleven miles.

What will happen to Village residents who come to the Villages Emergency room with a stroke or a heart attack? Will they have to be checked out by a TVRH physician, then loaded back into an ambulance, and moved to the second facility?

We strongly urge the Hospital Board of Directors to locate its newest facilities as close as possible to Villages residents. A case could be made for transferring the Cardiac Care and/or the Stroke facilities to the Villages hospital to be closer to the majority of potential patients.

We would like to point out that many of our elderly Villages residents do not drive. While transportation within the Villages is relatively accessible - many will suffer a burden if they have to arrange transportation to another city.

We would hesitate to call it irresponsible if appropriate Cardiac and Stroke Care facilities are not transferred/established in the Villages Hospital. But, we would like to see these facilities here in The Villages.

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Use of Various Medical Facilities

It is clear that health care in The Villages is in disarray and it might take a while to have this all fixed. Meanwhile, we all need to be good consumers of health care - for ourselves and for our neighbors. Please implement the following suggestions:

1. As soon as possible, find a family physician for your care. Seek his advice when you first note signs of an oncoming health problem.
2. If you have unexpected health care problems - call your physician EARLY IN THE DAY. Physician's offices are much more likely to work you into a doctor's schedule if they know your need at 9 am - not 3 pm.
3. Obtain a copy of recent Emergency Room reports, Urgent Care reports and your physician's reports and keep them at home. Bring them with you to your next health care system encounter. Remember The Villages does not have a system of inter-office health care communication.
4. Make a list of a) all of your current illnesses, b) all of your current treatments and c) all of your current medications and keep them at home. Bring these with you to Urgent Care, the Emergency Room, or to see any new physician. No one clearly recalls this stuff when they are suffering from pain and trauma. Plan ahead.
5. Know where your closest Urgent Care Center is located. If you have what you think is a minor problem, as opposed to a life-threatening problem or anything close to it, consider going to the Urgent Care Center near you or your regular doctor.

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POA Directors

A Director of the POA, Carole Martin, has been chosen by the Board to fill the position of POA Secretary after the resignation of Mary Paulsboe. Please join us in congratulating Carole on her appointment.

Also, Jack Ryan has resigned from the Board for personal reasons. Thanks to Jack for his long service to the POA. We will miss him in our meetings.

We now have several Director positions open on the POA Board. This is a great opportunity to serve your POA in this important position. You will find the activities rewarding and the time involved may be less than you might imagine. Please contact Joe Gorman at 259-0999 for more information. Or talk to any Board member to learn more about this opportunity.

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POA Meetings on The Historic East Side

There has been a fair amount of interest in the idea of organizing an "auxiliary" of the POA on the historic side of The Villages. The thinking here is that it is difficult for many historic-side POA members to travel to Laurel Manor for monthly meetings, especially in the dark winter months. The thinking is that if an auxiliary of the POA was to meet on the historic side in the afternoon, there would be higher interest, meeting attendance, and focus on East side issues.

Also, there has been interest expressed in a Historic Side Beautification committee.

Let's plan on meeting about these opportunities right after the May meeting of the POA which will be held in the Paradise Center on Wednesday, May 21. We'll meet in the front of the meeting room for maybe 15-20 minutes during the coffee and donut time after the end of the regular meeting. See you there.

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The Village Greens A Vision of an Environmentally Sound Sumter County

The Sumter County Board of County Commissions (BOCC) has asked the community to join with them in developing a vision of Sumter County by the year 2030: a vision that will reflect all we can dream and wish the county to be. The Villages, you and I, are an integral part of Sumter County and, therefore, our input is important.

I see this as an opportunity for people concerned with the environment to get in on the ground floor and stress the importance of incorporating "green" concepts into new plans.

From the standpoint of The Village Greens, the most environmentally aware and concerned citizens, it is clearly a chance for us to bring to the BOCC our concepts and ideas of the best forms of community planning: residential, transportation, agricultural, industrial, mining, and commercial.

I believe there are people who have previous experiences who could be of help in planning for our future here. I would guess that there are also those among us who have the time to investigate the many new ideas that have emerged lately, such as the numerous diverse proposals on renewable energy, auto efficiency, recycled materials, LED traffic lights, solar powered buildings, gray water

recycling, etc.

There also needs to be a serious discussion on preserving the balance between residential development, agriculture, mining, and industry.

The Village Greens and POA members are probably more aware than most of the importance of monitoring the growth of the community in relation to its effect on the aquifer, the preservation and balance of the indigenous animal population, and in general recognize the importance of being active and good stewards of our planet.

If you missed the first meetings here in The Villages and in Bushnell, the BOCC has a website where you can read more about this project and participate in their survey. Please, go to www.sumter2030.com

I would like to commend the Sumter BOCC for showing the community respect by including us in these important plans for the future of our community. Let us not forget, we are not just Villagers, we are an important part of Sumter County, and the direction the county takes in the future will affect not only the value of our property, but also the quality of our lives and the quality of the lives of the generations that follow us.

If you are interested in joining me in forming a coalition for a Greener Sumter County, please let me hear from you.

The next meeting of The Village Greens will be on the 4th Wednesday of the month at Laurel Manor, 6:30 p.m., that is May 28th.

Our guest speaker is Eddie Brown who will talk about "How The Environment Will Effect Our Lives As Retirees".

Sue Michalson
Chair, Village Greens
352-259-1426

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From the POA Website Forum: Exercise Walking

Apr 8: People who walk daily seem to know the rules of walking. You always walk facing the traffic. I see people all the time walking with their backs to the traffic They can't see behind them, and so many seniors are hard of hearing so they don't hear you coming. Take caution and please walk facing the traffic before you get hit. Also, two people walk side by side and they seem to dare you to hit them. They will not form a single line until you pass.

Editor's Note: This editor is an exercise walker who walks facing traffic. On

several occasions, I have seen distracted drivers drive right at me, causing me to jump on the grass. I wouldn't have seen them coming if I had been walking with traffic.

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Letter to the Editor: Thanks For Help With Vinyl Siding

A POA member, Ray Micucci, was over to my house and identified many areas of my vinyl siding that needed correction.

Ronald Hess, Project Manager, The Villages, came to my house and made repairs.

However, Mr. Micucci inspected my home a second time to review the work that had been done and discovered that only some of the items were repaired. Unfortunately, many items still remained in need of repair.

Mr. Hess came a second time on Wednesday, April 16, 2008. The corrections made were done by Aluminum Concepts, phone # 352-636-0742, the same company that came out to do the repairs the first time. They had ten employees on site, four of which had certifications (we saw only one certification; the owner of the company named Ryan).

We took pictures during the repair process, which we would gladly give to you if desired.

My sincere thanks to the POA and Mr. Micucci for all that has been done for me. Without you, I would have been left with a home that had poorly installed vinyl siding.

Most important of all, during the process of correction, it was discovered that the poorly installed siding allowed water to penetrate one wall of my front bedroom, which resulted in mold and mildew forming in the insulation.

Barbara Hansen Holscher

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Vinyl Siding: Reply to Mr. Bailey

In the April POA Bulletin I read your letter about people who "b---h and complain." Assuming you were referring to the Siding Committee, because we discuss unpleasant matters, you suggested that we move back where we came from. Why is that, Mr. Bailey, are you afraid of finding out the truth? Because that is what we are pursuing.

Some people care about their homes and community and maybe we belong here more than you. This is what makes a community-helping one another. Perhaps you don't understand the extent of the siding issue; perhaps you don't care about it. But at least let your neighbors in the community have access to information that can help them resolve these defects in their homes' construction. Don't try to stifle distribution of important information to people who need it.

One resident recently remarked that the installer who re-sided her home told her that it had cost the developer over \$5,000.00 to do the repairs. It took that resident over a year to finally achieve the repair. And those repairs would never have been accomplished at all without the support of the Siding Committee volunteers, the POA and the numerous articles in The Bulletin.

Mr. Bailey, do you think that because this kind of sloppy workmanship went on for years and years in the past that it should be allowed to continue into the future? Just because this issue hasn't been resolved within a few months, do you really think we should drop it? The developer would probably like that a lot- it would mean they get to continue their old ways, nothing gets fixed and nobody says anything.

Who is really being negative? We think you are, Mr. Bailey. Your remarks serve no purpose but to vent your thoughts, whereas the Siding Committee is seeking to improve the quality of homes throughout The Villages by informing homeowners about serious problems.

The siding problems would not exist if The Villages contractors had done a proper job installing siding correctly on our homes. And if the framers had checked that the lumber was straight and had built straight walls. And if Villages contractors, subcontractors, engineers, designers, supervisors and inspectors had been conscientious. And if the developer had insisted that quality is the first priority. And if The Villages had immediately acted in a responsible manner to correct the problems that were brought to their attention in 2006, instead of denying, evading and trying to contain the issue.

We think, Mr. Bailey, that you need to redirect your anger to the cause of the problems: sloppy workmanship by Villages contractors and inspectors, etc.

The POA Bulletin is the only source publishing the other side of the story in The Villages, and now space has been devoted to your letter and for our rebuttal. You see, The Bulletin even printed your letter.

We're sending a message, Mr. Bailey. To you, to the developer, to the Home Warranty personnel, to the contractors and to the subcontractors: **SHODDY WORKMANSHIP IS NOT ACCEPTABLE!**

Your attitude is not acceptable either, Mr. Bailey. It simply proves your own lack

of understanding, your apathy, and your selfishness.

Raymond Micucci
Vinyl Siding Committee Member

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Vinyl Siding: Sloppy Repairs

We ask The Villages and their contractors yet again: when you go to repair someone's home, whether it's for the vinyl siding or anything else, please repair the problems correctly and completely. Show that you have some skill and some integrity.

We find that in most cases we have seen, both of these two important qualities are grossly lacking.

Very few homes that we have re-checked following repairs were fixed correctly the first time. Only two of the crews whose work we have checked have been doing proper repairs: New Look Exteriors and Brix & Stix. Both of these companies are small but their workers seem to care whether they are doing the repairs right. If they can do it, why can't the others?

How will a homeowner know if their repair is correct or complete? Only by having the installation re-checked by an independent inspector who is familiar with proper siding installation.

We've been told that The Villages is addressing the vinyl siding issue-that they are going back to any homeowner calling for a repair. But whether it gets fixed right doesn't seem to be a big concern of the Home Warranty Department. Homeowners have no confidence that anything is done right-and with good reason-it seldom is done right!

We're sorry this sounds so cynical, but Home Warranty has done nothing to earn our respect or our trust. What will it take for The Villages to do the right thing?

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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Inspections

The POA Siding Committee has been checking homes for a long time. Unfortunately we just can't keep up with all the calls. Therefore, the POA has found a home inspector from Tavares who has agreed to accept a reduced fee of \$75.00 for a siding only inspection and \$50.00 to re-check following repairs.

Mike Mitchell is an experienced home inspector who will provide you with a written report including pictures of his findings. Our committee members have also spent time on the job with Mike to make sure he is catching all the problems. If you want to arrange for a siding only (or a whole house) inspection, you can call Mike at Precision Home Inspections (352) 742-3222 (see ad on page 4 in this Bulletin).

The POA recommends taking the steps necessary to ensure that your siding installation as well as other construction issues are addressed in order to protect your most valuable asset.

Home Warranty is supposed to take care of any problems found within the first year, but if you don't see the problems, their attitude is that the problems don't exist. Therefore, a thorough inspection by a conscientious, independent home inspector, is well worth the money spent.

Many times our POA Siding Committee members have visited homes previously checked by Home Warranty or contractors' personnel who found nothing wrong. Our committee members quickly found numerous problems.

Siding inspections are worthwhile even after the first year. Now, after more than a year of hearing from dissatisfied homeowners all over The Villages, Home Warranty appears to be sending crews to re-do poor quality vinyl siding installations wherever the homeowners point out the problems.

When repairs are done, have them checked out before signing any releases. So while it may take some effort (perhaps several go-rounds with Home Warranty), hopefully you will end up with a better built home.

As Villages residents, and Siding Committee members, we find it depressing to drive through Villages neighborhoods where so many homes have siding flaws that can easily be seen from the street. We still don't understand why this shoddy workmanship was not questioned before. Or if it ever was questioned, why it was not addressed and corrected by the developer's architects, engineers, contractors, supervisors, etc.-trained people who should all be able to see these defects as readily as we can, and who should know better than to allow it to go on.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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Trash Keeps Flying

Why is it so hard for Villages contractors to keep trash and debris in covered dumpsters?

Every time it is windy there is trash on the roads and in the ponds. Why isn't there a policy for workers to pick up at the work sites at the end of each day and then cover the dumpsters and to haul away the loads when they are full instead of letting debris blow all over residents' property and into the ponds? Why should residents have to clean up after the contractors and their workers? Isn't it the project managers' job to see that the worksheets are maintained daily? Pick up your mess-we don't want construction debris or lunch containers & paper cups in our yards, in the ponds or in public areas!

Just drive along Odell Circle and Colony Blvd. and you'll see the trash and construction debris all along the roadside and the cart paths, depending on which way the wind blows.

How many dumpsters are uncovered and overflowing? How many piles of debris are still left on the ground at worksites and end up blowing all around? How many workers still leave paper cups, plastic bottles and Styrofoam containers on the ground? Not to mention the wine, whiskey and beer bottles we have seen discarded in the fields.

The Vinyl Siding Committee

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Thanks For Donations

The POA, Ray Micucci, and the Vinyl Siding Committee members have steadfastly refused the generous offers of compensation made by many appreciative residents in recognition of their vinyl siding work, including the inspections. We all feel it would not be appropriate to accept these offers.

Nonetheless, some residents have forwarded to us donations, which we are applying to the POA Legal Defense Fund. Please be assured that your contributions will someday benefit other residents needing assistance on similar homeowner issues.

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Letter to the Editor: Just Say Thank You

Following is an open letter from Mary Roberts to Mr. Bailey who wrote a letter to the editor in last month's Bulletin about complaining in The Villages.

Dear Mr. Bailey,

Are you not paying attention to the plight of your fellow neighbors? Your condescending and foul-mouthed diatribe, which criticized the concerns of good people, would lead any sane property owner to believe this is so! Most of us have invested our life savings into a property that was misrepresented to us as being of high quality and meeting or exceeding building code standards.

Instead, due to the overwhelming burden brought on by the developer's rush to build, build, build, we are left with homes that were inspected by the very contractors who built the homes we now own. Some of these contractors choose to use unskilled, untrained, and unsupervised labor. My vinyl siding was extensively repaired FOUR times.

The first three sets of laborers neither spoke, understood, or read English. The fourth subcontractor, an accomplished framer with years of experience building homes, found that the basic particle board sheathing of our home was warped. He tore out the defective structure, fixed the siding and declared: "this is the last job I do for Morse, it is just not worth the money or the trouble."

Love it or leave it? Wake up! The developer is presently selling homes, just like ours, at a deep discount, with furniture allowances, and including the bond in the sale price. He also just lost a multimillion dollar class action suit over the use of our amenity funds.

What values do you embrace? How do you want to live your life? I sincerely apologize if your lack of empathy is a deficiency due perhaps to a ... self preserving flight from reality.

I value my ability to live a life of service and integrity and to behave in a manner that reflects well on my family and community. I value people who have the strength of their convictions, the generosity of spirit and the passion to perform acts of service to their community. Their selflessness is demonstrated by the sacrifice of their time spent working with people who appreciate their service.

We all need intelligent, informed, and dedicated neighbors who possess the skill to represent the needs of the POA. This group can talk pragmatically to the developer and get the best results through candid talk and honest debate.

Despite your ingratitude you will benefit from the hard work of these good

citizens.

JUST SAY THANK YOU.

Mary Roberts

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From The POA Website Forum: Bulletin Too Negative? Yes -- No

Apr 6: The article in the April 2008 POA Bulletin "Is the POA Too Negative" points to exactly what it is trying not to be, negative. From ten to twelve of the article's eighteen paragraphs express some kind of negativity. As the old expression goes "it is difficult to make lemonade when given only lemons." We need some sugar. The POA is doing great things for our community. But for those who only know about the POA from The POA Bulletin it is sometimes easy to see why they think it is an organization of negativity. Thus one could form an opinion that the POA is not a worthy cause. Reporting of activities in a manner that portrays positive movement and activity is not easy. I know after working within Washington DC politics for over 15 years. Thus, to me, it is imperative to show that the POA is doing great things for all of us "Villagers." So I would like to suggest a word-smiting of The POA Bulletin's articles for one or two issues, using a positive approach on the POA's activities. See what the comments are on this approach. I hope positive, thus increasing the support for the POA and increased involvement by residents.

Apr 3: I agree, the POA and it's Bulletin serve a useful purpose, and some people grumble because they feel the Bulletin is too negative. I don't see the POA Bulletin as a newspaper. I see it as a bulletin reporting the activity of the POA and as such can only impart a limited amount of information. The POA can only take on a limited number of projects. Once they take on a project they stay with it until it is resolved. That is why they are still reporting on the siding issues. What we need here is a newspaper that will report all of the news affecting us even if it reflects negatively on the Developer, the VCDD, and even the Villages "life style." This would not replace the need for the POA Bulletin. Nor would it replace the Sun as the source of info relative to activities etc. Unfortunately, there are some who will not read the POA Bulletin. They take a "How dare they" position. Like how dare they print anything but feel good stuff. The Villages is a wonderful place to live but it is not Camelot or Paradise. Those of us who recognize that can handle a little bad news.

Apr 3: People don't get it! They complain about the POA paper being dour and gloomy! I would tell them to read the Daily Sun for the "feel good" news! But I want to know what is going on in the Villages, I read the POA! Perhaps there will come a time when all the problems with the siding and construction

fascos will be solved. But, until the time we become like Shangri La, I want the POA to keep me up to date! Thanks for doing a fine job. We don't always say it but we appreciate you looking out for us!

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Letter to the Editor: Bulletin: Great Job !!

Thanks [to the POA] for the efforts and achievements on behalf of the Villagers. Keep up the good work! Without you people we wouldn't know what's going on and no one else to help us. Great job!! Keep it up! I am pleased with the great work you do. Although I think the vinyl siding issue is overdone, the POA is a valued publication.

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Inferior Workmanship By Contractors

I want to thank the residents for e-mails concerning their problems with construction departments, required inspections, and the lack of quality control follow-up due to sloppy workmanship by Villages contractors.

Some of the complaints were from residents who have lived here longer than two to three years but felt that due to the negative and confrontational response of the builders and warranty department it was a fruitless and frustrating endeavor to get these repairs completed within their contract year. Many were told that they did not require an outside inspector and problems were not noted during the contact year.

Five e-mails embody the majority of problems and concerns listed by the residents. These are summarized below:

We have cracks in our floor tile in the kitchen and dining room. We called the Warranty Department which offered NO help.

Poorly constructed shower in master bath, no pan, door not hung to code. This led to water leaking into the garage and into the master bath area. Result, water damage and mold build-up in walls and a \$5,100.00 repair job that should never have happened.

We hired AmeriPro Home Inspection Services to check the house before our year was up. The rep was here for more than 4 hours and did a thorough job. He found many siding problems and several instances of shoddy workmanship, with regard to the installation of a window, window moldings that did not join properly, and the absence of caulking around several windows and doors. The builder, Hess Construction, sent men to fix the problems mentioned above, although I really don't know the quality of the repairs.

While the inspector was here, he noticed that when he opened and closed the interior kitchen door which connects the kitchen and the garage, all the dishes and glassware in the kitchen cabinets on that wall rattled loudly. He felt that something was wrong with the construction or the bracing of that wall and put the comment in his report. When the builder, Hess himself, came to my house, he sent a man into the attic in the garage to look at that wall. The man came down, spoke to Mr. Hess and Hess said to my wife that there was nothing wrong and "that's the best we can do." Of course the noise continues and we are concerned that one day the cabinets and or the wall might come down.

Birdcage screws rusted throughout. Warranty manager and Sumter County Bldg. inspector advised no code violations occurred. Warranty referred me to a subsidiary of T&D Concrete to whom I paid \$329. Now the fasteners on my rain gutters are badly rusted.

My siding was slipping/falling off. I had an inspection done by "Precision" and they found defects. I contacted the warranty department, and they had my builder (Hess) do a "complete re-nail." I'm going to have Precision come out afterward for a re-inspection.

As you can see from these sample e-mails and past articles, there are numerous problems that some residents have to deal with just to get satisfaction for homes that they bought in good faith, an investment not only in money but also in a life style promised by the developer. However, when you have to spend your time dealing with these problems, instead of taking part in our great life style, the magic of The Village slowly dims.

I want to enjoy the remainder of my years in a home that is up to what I was promised, rather than be treated like a second class citizen when I dare to come up against the developer, the warranty department, and the builders to fix the problems.

Please, all residents, if you are having any of these problems, please e-mail me at mcarole94@yahoo.com, so together we can address these problems and get on with our lives in The Villages.

Carole Martin

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Letter to the Editor:

Hospital is Good

Your recent front page article concerning the so called woes at TVRH is a insult and disgrace to the dedicated, concerning, and hard working staff at the hospital.

I have personally experienced the need to be taken to the emergency room twice during the past 4 months. I was immediately attended to and received the most professional care and my family members were permitted to see me during those hectic and anxious circumstances.

My tests, x-rays, and medication were administered without any delay

Observations by my family later told me yes, there were a number of people waiting in the emergency area and most complained of colds, sniffles, some with bruises, and others with stomach aches or cramps. It is certainly my opinion that the majority of the people did not exhibit a high order of priority for an emergency room situation.

I congratulate the TVRH and staff and also the EMS personnel who come to our aid when called upon.

Jean Rykaczewski

Editor's Note: You had a good experience at TVRH. Some of the "negative" stories, however, are truly frightening. We should not accept that. We would like all experiences to be good ones. That is what we are working toward in our efforts to gather many stories volunteered by people with experience in the hospital. To date we have received over 100 letters or emails.

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Letter to the Editor: Tunnel

The Home Depot and the new Sam's Club should be accessible by golf car as well as the Longhorn Steakhouse and the Bed Bath and Beyond in the new shopping center. What can be done to make this happen?

Mmjar5@wmconnect.com

Editor's Note: The developer and the town of Lady Lake and The Villages can't agree on this. Mayor Max Pullen of Lady Lake has said that the cost is prohibitive. Getting permission for a cart crossing would be difficult and involve local, state, and perhaps the federal governments. Mayor Pullen will be the guest speaker at our Wednesday, May 21, general membership meeting in the Paradise Center. Perhaps he can tell us more about this issue.

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Seniors vs. Crime

The Seniors vs. Crime project is staffed by volunteers, usually seniors. The project aim is to assist seniors and others who have problems with service providers and contractors. In The Villages, seniors (especially new arrivals) have become victims of unscrupulous vendors in the following categories:

Lawn Mowing Services: Payment for service should only be made after the lawn has been mowed. Never pay up front for a month's service or enter into a yearly contract where payment is required up front.

Landscaping Services: Payment of up to 50% is often asked for when signing a landscape contract. Down payments should never exceed 10%, and, in case of large contracts, no more than 5%. The contract may call for progress payments as the job progresses.

Water Purification: There is nothing wrong with the water in The Villages. The water in the Villages is tested every month for bacteria and other water quality tests are performed every three months. You may also go to TheVillageWaterWisdom.com for further information. If you are unhappy with the taste of the water, you can buy an inexpensive water system for your faucet or refrigerator. If you wish to purchase a purification system, read the contract before signing. Cancellation must be by mail within three days after signing the contract and sent by registered mail. Do not sign a contract without reading the terms and conditions.

Driveway Pavers: The installing company should have the pavers on hand and a large down payment (i.e., 50%) is not needed

Travel Companies: In exchange for a large down payment, you are promised inexpensive travel. You may also be told that by joining, you will become a travel agent, which will allow you to be eligible to purchase inexpensive travel. However you must take education courses before a Florida travel agent license can be obtained. See a registered travel agent - it will probably cost you less money in the long run.

Summary: Get at least four references, and check them to ascertain the quality of the work before hiring a contractor. Ask to see State and County licenses, and proof that the company is bonded and insured. Examine all documents, and verify licensing at www.myflorida.com. Request proof that the materials purchased for the job have been paid for by the contractor, since an unpaid supplier may put a lien on your property. You may also call the appropriate Senior Sleuth Office in Sumter or Marion County for more information.

Office Locations: The Sumter County Office is at The Sheriff's Office on County Road 466, telephone number is 352-753-2799, and is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. The Marion County Office is at The Sheriff's Office on Buena Vista Blvd. near County Road 42, telephone number is 352-753-7775 and is open on Tuesday and Wednesday between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Come in and see us. It is easier to talk to us before you have problems or have lost money.

Hugo Friedlaender, Office Manager
Sumter County, Seniors vs. Crime

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Letter to the Editor: Performing Arts Center

The Volunteers Performing Arts Alliance, and its predecessor organization, have been trying to secure an arts center for the Villages, and the surrounding communities, for some five years now. Initial efforts, during the first three years, were that of asking the Developer, through his representatives, to provide such a facility for the 1200 plus performers and theatrical technical people spread among the two dozen theater groups. The Developer wished us well but was not interested in financing a performing arts center.

In order to make our project feasible, we expanded our scope beyond The Villages to that of a tri-county one: Lake, Sumter, and Marion counties. Hence the changing of our name from Villagers Performing Arts Alliance to that of Volunteers Performing Arts Alliance.

We anticipate the Developer will be taking a supportive role in the future. And, we will NOT compete with Leesburg's proposed Performing Arts Center as agreed to through meetings with the PALS (Performing Arts of Lake and Sumter) president. We are two organizations with completely different goals.

We are interested in partnering with another entity. PALS was one of those we pursued. However, based on the results of our Fall 2007 study and survey, performers and the patrons would not be willing to travel down 441 to the

LSCC campus for rehearsals and for shows. We also felt that partnering with LSCC would not meet the criteria of patrons over 55 years of age. We concluded our talks with the agreement that we both had different goals and that we were not in "competition" with each other.

As far as "cluttering up Villages roads" goes it looks like that will not be a problem as we have been seeking land OUTSIDE The Villages, but yet very near The Villages. Our prospects for that land, at this time, look very promising.

We have always made it clear that we want to provide a state of the art facility adjacent to or nearby The Villages with ticket prices commensurate with today's prices.

We encourage everyone to consult our web site at www.VPAA.org which is updated periodically and has information on how you may subscribe to our monthly newsletter.

The VPAA is comprised of many talented and dedicated people who are intent on providing a much needed cultural facility for this area.

We encourage new volunteers to join us as there is plenty of work yet to be done and many talents needed.

Let's make The Villages an even better place to live.

Richard St. Amant
President, VPA

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Comments From The POA Survey

We asked for comments from residents in the recently completed POA Resident Survey. We found most of these to be worthwhile for reporting to our readership. We will continue with a selection of comments in future issues as space in the Bulletin permits.

I love it in the Villages. Those who don't should relocate elsewhere. No one is forcing you to stay. No one forced you to come. Those who thought it would remain small had ear plugs and blinders on.

The POA Newsletter creates problems, but does not solve problems.

We will miss Pete Wahl.

Square music needs more diversity - not just rock and roll and country.

Lifelong Learning Center needs more diversity - not all feel good courses.

Daily Sun is not fair and equal to all persuasions.

The Developer is too autocratic.

If we are to have a new Performing Arts Center it should be diversified and representative of all areas of the country - not just the Christian Right, Country and Rock and Roll. I really would like to see some N. E. plays, humor and timely political humor.

Better enforcement of finding non-residents using Village facilities.

The Villages is a wonderful place to live - two problems that stand out: The residents have no voice or representation and the residents have no voice or representation!!!!

We enjoy the Village life style. Great need for large arena type seating capacity for professional performers.

Indoor racquet ball court would be appreciated by we racquet ball players.

The Bulleting referring to any Village residents as 'second class citizens' is pompous, egotistical, brash and entirely contrary to what the Villages means. To even suggest the idea, only because of the dates the south portion became available, is self-serving to the 600 of those that were here 6 - 8 years earlier and were 'second class citizens' during that whole time.

Life in general in The Villages is excellent. However, when Mr. Morse started turning everything into a profit center and maximizing every penny out of what previously was advertised as 'free' or part of the Villages 'good life' one wonders about the long-term staying power of residents, etc.

I like it here but so much smoke and mirrors. The developer tried to get us to vote against representative government. When that failed, we were given the RAC which is no more than another CIC. The reason I like it here is due to the very nice people who were also screwed!

Developer, don't forget where you came from and the people who trusted you - your word. Maybe it's time to clean house with the people that make you look bad?

I was under the wrong impression when I moved here that when we moved in and our area built out the guard gate would be manned and gate keys would only be given to residents, not every vendor. Wrong!

I have called several times about the dead palm at the back of Calumet Pool area. Two years gone and it's still there.

The hospital has poor emergency room service.

Government is a dictatorship - but it's good. Had resident control of government in Nevada - it produced stalemates and poor attendance.

Use of pool by Charter school is unfair.

Ambassadors don't pay attention to who is holding up players, especially on Havana. They speed up the wrong people often.

Deed Compliance is inconsistent and slow - what a joke!

Lifelong Learning center instructors are poor, fail to show up and are inconsistent.

Neighborhood Watch is a total waste of money. Those guys are blind and no help!

Traffic in the circles needs to be one lane - sooo dangerous and confusing.

We live in a benevolent dictatorship.

Thanks for staying on top of things that have tendencies for getting out of hand.
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

Why aren't the palm trees groomed??? They are a disgrace¼

Improve landscaping cutback/removal to improve traffic safety on recreation trails.

I'm glad to see recycling become a 'hot' topic of discussion. I'd like to see road lighting better (change of bulbs) handled. We should not have long stretches of roadway with no lights.

The POA is the only tie to the 'real' world. The VHA has nothing to do with homeowners.

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