

OHIO'S FIRST ELDER ABUSE SHELTER TO BE LOCATED IN WARREN COUNTY

Shelter will be at Cedar Village Retirement Community in Mason

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE / DEC. 19, 2011

MASON, Ohio – To combat a growing problem, Cedar Village Retirement Community next month will be launching the first elder abuse prevention shelter in Ohio and one of the first in the nation.

Until now, police, social service agencies, hospitals and other organizations in Southwest Ohio have not had appropriate places to refer victims of elderly abuse. But with the creation of the Shalom Center for Elder Abuse Prevention, Cedar Village will serve as a safe harbor.

“As a faith-based organization, our commitment to the community and to our elders reaches far beyond our walls,” said Carol Silver Elliott, Cedar Village’s CEO and President. “This is our obligation and part of our social and community responsibility.”

Elliott made the announcement at Cedar Village this morning to community leaders, including those from agencies that would refer victims to the Shalom Center.

The Shalom Center will care for abused seniors, aged 65 and over, from Hamilton, Warren, Butler and Clermont counties. Services will include medical, nursing and therapy services if needed; meals; legal services; social work; pastoral care; and social, recreational and educational programming.

Appropriate individuals will be accepted for admission for an emergency stay of 90 to 120 days. Upon admission, the care team will begin working to plan for a safe discharge to the least restrictive alternative. Abuse victims will be cared for in Cedar Village’s nursing home facility, which has 162 beds.

Effective Jan. 1, arrangements can be made for the Shalom Center to care for a victim by calling 888-295-7453.

Cedar Village also will help to teach the community about detecting and preventing elder abuse. “We will be working with community agencies, law enforcement, hospitals and more to build the collaborative network we will need to educate our community, gain and manage referrals and make this program effective,” Elliott said.

The retirement community will provide the seed funding for the center. It has several pending grant proposals for additional funding and will raise other funds.

For decades, many communities have had shelters for victims of domestic violence. But those shelters do not fully meet the needs of older adults who are victims of abuse, even though the issues may be similar.

The movement to create shelters for victims of domestic violence has been fueled by survivors. “Because our seniors cannot create safe harbors for themselves,” Elliott said, “we need to do it for them.”

About a half-dozen shelters for elderly abuse victims exist in nursing homes around the country — including in Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Atlanta. The first opened six years ago in New York City.

Research indicates that more than one in ten elders may experience some type of abuse. Only one in five cases is reported. Annual estimates range from 700,000 to 3.5 million victims in the U.S.

Elder abuse is defined as intentional or neglectful acts by a caregiver or “trusted” individual that led to, or may lead to, harm of an elder. Abuse includes physical abuse; neglect; emotional or psychological abuse; verbal abuse and threats; financial abuse and exploitation; sexual abuse; and abandonment.

All elders, regardless of race, culture or socio-economic group, are at risk. Women and “older” elders are at a higher risk. Dementia and mental health issues as well as isolation also can increase risk.

Elder abuse often is not reported because many victims are afraid or ashamed about it or fearful their abuser will “get in trouble.” Some don’t know where to turn. Others feel guilty or are in denial.

Judy Webb, director of care management and intake for the Warren County Elderly Services Program, welcomed the launch of the Shalom Center. Warren County has experienced an increase in cases of elderly abuse, but hasn’t had an appropriate place to take the victims.

“This is a true step forward for Warren County and the surrounding areas,” Webb said.

-30-

Cedar Village, located in Mason, Ohio, is a nonprofit continuing care retirement community whose goal is to make aging an enriching experience. It offers independent and assisted living apartments as well as short-term rehabilitation and long-term care. Specialties include inpatient and outpatient therapy, specialized dementia care, home care services and hospice care. More information is available at www.cedarvillage.org or 513-754-3100.

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