

Owner of local retirement home faces class action suit

By JASON COX
Of the Keizertimes

The parent company of a Keizer retirement facility has been accused of failing to provide services it promised to its residents.

While no specific accusations are lodged against River Road Assisted Living in a complaint filed Thursday, March 22 in Multnomah County Circuit Court, anyone who stayed there between March 22, 2006 and the filing date this year could be part of the class action. According to the complaint, more than 3,000 people who lived in a Sunwest facility could be eligible.

Meanwhile, management at Salem-based Sunwest Management, Inc., parent

company of River Road Assisted Living and more than 180 retirement facilities nationwide – many of them in Oregon and California – has called the lawsuit “frivolous and inaccurate.”

River Road Assisted Living is named in the lawsuit, as are every other facility owned by Sunwest Management in Oregon.

San-Francisco based attorney Kathryn Stebner said she chose to name all the facilities because the practices are “widespread ... throughout Oregon and California in terms of the services not provided.”

The complaint alleges that two women at a facility in Yamhill County paid for services they didn't receive

from the homes and that the company failed to comply with Oregon law.

And while the complaint does not list any specific alleged offenses at the River Road facility, Stebner said her firm “assume(s) is the practice at the Keizer facility is the practice of Sunwest in Oregon and in California.

“People go to Sunwest and enter into a contract assuming they will receive a certain level of services,” Stebner said. “In fact, sometimes they are told they'll have to pay more money to get more services. The complaint alleges that that (these services are not provided).”

Stebner's firm is dedicated to cases involving senior citizens, particularly their care at

senior living facilities.

Steven Stradley, director of risk management at Sunwest, chided the firm and other trial lawyers in a statement for “fil(ing) such misguided class action lawsuits in a variety of states in order to advance their own practices, as opposed to doing what is truly best for residential care residents and senior citizens in general.”

The statement read that the company will “continue to work hard in keeping with our mission of bringing a premier senior lifestyle to mature adults, allowing them to be healthy, vital and vigorous members of their respective communities in which we are privileged to provide care.”