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# Elder-housing 966 staffing ratio target of suit

It alleges Sunwest  
charges for services  
it does not provide

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Statesman Journal

Residents of a Sheridan assisted-living facility have hauled Sunwest Management Inc. into court, accusing the Salem senior housing manager of charging for services it doesn't provide.

The litigation threatens Sunwest with a class-action lawsuit, which could potentially have several thousand plaintiffs. Fifty residential facilities in Oregon operated by Sunwest, including those in Keizer, Stayton, Monmouth and Woodburn, are named in a lawsuit filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court.

At the heart of the dispute: allegations that Sunwest's standard admission agreement misled residents about the number of staff available to provide daily care, such as help with medication.

Sunwest understaffed assisted living homes and "made a considered decision to promote profit at the expense of their contractual and legal obligations to residents," according to the lawsuit.

Sunwest issued a statement calling the lawsuit

## Area properties

Sunwest operates about 180 facilities nationwide. Among its many properties named in the lawsuit are:

**River Road Assisted Living,**  
Keizer

**Lakeside Assisted Living & Cottages,** Stayton

**Lakeside Cottages Retirement,**  
Stayton

**Heron Pointe Assisted Living,**  
Monmouth

**Colonial Gardens Residential Care,** Woodburn

**Silver Creek Assisted Living,**  
Woodburn

## ONLINE

To view the complete lawsuit and Sunwest's statement, go to [www.StatesmanJournal.com](http://www.StatesmanJournal.com).

"frivolous and inaccurate."

"We look forward to addressing the issues in the lawsuit via the judicial process, where we are confident that the true facts of the situation will come to light," the company statement reads.

The lawsuit demands that Sunwest stop the alleged unlawful trade practices. It seeks an unspecified amount of restitution, attorney fees, and other relief from the court.

The lawsuit needs to be certified as a class action before it advances.

See Sunwest Lawsuit, 3A

# Sunwest Lawsuit

Continued from 1A

Named as representative plaintiffs in the suit are Cathleen Naylor, 81, and Gwen Olmstead, 80, two residents of Sunwest-operated Deer Meadow Assisted Living in Sheridan.

Naylor and Olmstead are on a residents' council at Deer Meadow, which fields complaints from its residents, said Kathryn Stebner, a California attorney who filed the lawsuit.

"They go to the administrators, but nothing really changes," Stebner said.

The cost to live in the Sunwest facility starts at about \$1,500 per month, the attorney said.

Although residents sometimes are encouraged to pay for more services, the facility doesn't add more or better trained staff to provide additional care, Stebner said.

In court papers, the plaintiffs allege that staff ratios described in admission agreements counted all

staff members "even those who were not employed to or qualified to act as caregivers."

Sunwest manages retirement, assisted living and memory-care communities. The senior-housing owner and operator has about 180 facilities nationwide.

In January, Sunwest settled three lawsuits that accused it of ignoring staffing problems at its Meadowlark Assisted Living facility in Yreka, Calif.

The California suits alleged staffing issues contributed to residents suffering serious, and sometimes fatal, injuries from falls. Terms prevented attorneys from discussing details of the settlements.

Stebner, the same attorney who filed the recent lawsuit in Oregon, also represented families in the Meadowlark cases.

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