

Making one's wishes known with a Lifestyle Care Plan

By Barbara Rattle
The Enterprise

Kori Novak is keenly aware that every six seconds for the next 14 years, a member of the 78 million-member baby boomer generation will turn 65 and retire.

A 35-year-old faculty member at the University of Phoenix's Utah campus who is pursuing a Ph.D. in gerontology from Capella University, Novak is passionate about caring for the elderly. She is roughly halfway through a 10-year stint on the White House Council on Aging, to which she was appointed by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger after serving as one of the youngest chiefs of staff, at age 26, in the managed health care industry are PacificCare Health Systems in Cypress, Calif.

Today, Novak is focusing her passion on several aspects of senior care — one being assistance for the elderly with no children

living preferences — important information for people living in the care of others.

"It's not legal wishes or medical wishes, it's daily wishes," Novak said. "It's how you want to live your life. It's especially important for people with limited family or who did not marry or didn't have children. This kind of preparation does not take long, it is not intrusive. It's a matter of letting your wishes be known and making sure that people understand who you are and what you want."

Topics covered in the document range from values and beliefs to what makes one comfortable or uncomfortable, what one likes to wear, drink, eat, listen to, when and how one sleeps and TV shows one likes to watch. One client asked that he be served a martini each night. Another wanted her caregivers to know that she enjoys games and puzzles. Others have asked to be around animals, to watch movies every day. One man requested that his trumpet always be nearby.

Novak said the program was based on the case of an adult

man with severe autism who was placed in a long-term care facility after his parents died. Because he would frequently remove all his clothes, he was deemed a "behavior problem" and was heavily sedated for a long period of time. Finally, a relative — shocked about the man's treatment — informed staff that the patient disliked irritating tags in his clothes and removed them in an effort to wear them inside out. Tags were removed from his clothing — and he was removed from sedation.

Other examples abound: an 82-year-old woman accustomed to sleeping with six pillows was given only one during a rehabilitation stay. Her husband, deceased, had been aware of the preference; her adult children were not. Staff interpreted her request for six pillows as "confusion." Increasingly agitated, the woman is administered a sleeping pill that is so effective that she wets the bed. Staff applies an adult incontinent brief, which further upsets the woman, who eventually is restrained and sedated. Two sisters were sedated after being

critical."

"People don't like to think about these things," Novak said. "I don't like to think about dying, but even worse is thinking about living in a way that is not conducive to how I want to live my life, to letting someone else make that choice. This is not a culture that embraces aging the way we should. Preparation and understanding are



Novak

and/or little or no family. She is on the board of directors of Advance Care Planning Inc., an organization founded by a group of long-term care nurses that have developed a document called the Lifestyle Care Plan, which is designed to complement legal documents such as living wills and powers of attorney. The document, which can be purchased for \$99 at www.advancecareplan.com/acp/, allows users to indicate their daily