

Helen Help Us

Volunteers Protest Portrayal on TV

5/24/82

By HELEN BOTTEL

DEAR HELEN:

We are writing to protest the stereotypical portrayal of the hospital volunteer on such shows as CBS-TV's "House Calls."

Contrary to what viewers may assume, hospital volunteers have come a long way from being only "pink ladies" or, as this particular show implies, dotty-brained, good-hearted women who give of their time because that is all they have to offer.

At the University of California, Davis, Medical Center in Sacramento, our volunteer services department is 800 strong, co-educational, and run as a professional, revenue-producing unit.

We provide an innovative program in which students interested in health

careers, and people who want to stay involved in the process of caring for others, are sought. We place volunteers in our family practice clinic, pediatrics ward, child play center, dental clinic, ear-nose-throat clinic, laboratories, emergency room and other areas.

Naturally, we still perform those traditional services such as operating the hospital's gift shop, providing patient escorts, delivering mail, etc. Gladly, too.

Please print this, Helen, so readers will know that the volunteer spirit is alive and well in our nation's hospitals.

— NANCY M. SEQUEIRA, president, Volunteer Services, UCDMC.

DEAR NANCY:

Gladly printed. Hospital volunteers deserve a great big hand.

But don't accuse "House Calls" of stereotyping because it showcases one somewhat dotty helper. Humor thrives on exaggeration: Look how the series zeros in on hospital administrators and elderly doctors — are they complaining? — H.

Larry Should Be Ashamed.

DEAR HELEN:

Our seniors didn't have IRA accounts back then, nor the money to put aside for their old age. Now inflation is eating up fixed incomes. Larry should be ashamed! — A.M.

READERS:

Larry got a thorough drubbing. Not one correspondent agreed with him, and several hundred wished him a "bad old age." — H.