

Community Corner: 1.4 million hours of caring — Peg Taylor Center marks 25 years of adult day care

By Kyra Gottesman

Posted: 06/09/2011 05:24:43 AM PDT

CHICO — It is a one-stop shop for adults and seniors with serious health issues. The Peg Taylor Center for Adult Day Health Care combines the services of a community center, sports club, skilled nursing center, physical and occupational program, social services center and a luncheon cafe.

"Our program has everything in one place. We put together a comprehensive plan to get our clients healthy again regardless of what's going on with their health. We set goals with them and greatly improve the quality of their lives," said Diane Cooper-Puckett, the center's executive director.

Since its inception 25 years ago, the center, one of the first to provide adult day health care and still considered a pioneer in its field, has served clients ages 18 to 104, though the majority are 70 to 90, with a range of illnesses and health challenges including multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, strokes and severe accident injuries.

"We just recently took a look at our current group of clients and figured out that between them they contributed 1,228,800 hours for a total of 640 years to the work force during their working years. They were engineers, ranchers, teachers, nurses and childcare providers," said Cooper-Puckett. "We are in awe of the people we work with."

As the founding director, Cooper-Puckett has a basket full of client success stories, each recounted by the veteran caregiver with pride and love.

Cooper-Puckett recalls the 24-year-old mother who had been in a horrific car accident leaving her unable to walk or care for herself and her young daughter. She worked with the center's team of nurses, therapists and staff for seven years, progressing from being wheelchair bound to using a walker to using a cane to walking on her own. By the time she left the center's care, she had recovered her ability not only to walk but to care for herself and her daughter independently.

"It was a wonderful thing. There was so much potential for recovery and little bit by little bit it all added up and she received her life back," said Cooper-Puckett.

A gentleman in his 50s had suffered a stroke and when he came to the center his goal was to be able to drive again. The Peg Taylor team helped him reach his goal.

Another stroke victim, a woman in her 50s, who was also suffering from depression became a five-day-a-week client and little by little she pulled out of her depression meeting the goals she set for herself; first regaining use of her hand, then her arm, then her legs and finally her ability to walk.

"We set progressive goals and along the way, we discovered she was a talented artist and writer. She'd lost a lot of her ability on her right side but we were able to help her convert to using her left hand to create. She began painting and drawing again and it was beautiful," said Cooper-Puckett.



Cori Miller, assistant director at the Peg Taylor Center for Adult Day Health Care, talks Tuesday morning with client Beverly Beach. Lots of activities are planned for the people with a range of illnesses and in various stages of recovery from accidents and other life-changing illnesses. (Ty Barbour/Staff Photos)



Emily Pretto (at far right) leads a sitting exercise class Tuesday at the Peg Taylor Center for Adult Day Health Care. (Ty Barbour/Staff Photos)



Peg Taylor, a public health nurse and educator who retired to Chico in 1969, continued to volunteer in the health community in her later years. She was the first ombudsman for the Area Agency on Aging and volunteered for hospital auxiliaries and hospice. It was through her chairmanship with Butte County Long Term Care Council that an idea for an adult day health care facility began. The center opened its doors in 1986. Taylor died at the age of 91 in 1995. This is picture of Taylor is displayed at the center.

While disproving common medical myths isn't part of the center's mission, it is something the staff, many of whom have been part of the team for more than 20 years, do every day. They include Mary Gonzales, recreation therapist; Registered Nurse Debi McDermont, ADHC nurse; and Cori Miller, assistant director.

"The old idea that after a stroke any recovery that's going to be made will happen in the first year just isn't true. We continue to disprove that. A lot of what we used to assume has changed. Now we understand much better that people can shift aspects of using their brain to recover and improve," she said.

The result of this knowledge is the center's acceptance of clients, up to 125 at a time, who have recently suffered and injury, illness or stroke as well as those who have lived with health limitations for years.

Clients aren't the only ones who receive benefit from the services. Caregivers, typically family members, of the ill or injured also receive benefits and services including respite.

"No one expects to spend 24 hours a day, seven days a week with their family. These caregivers — parents, spouses, children, nieces, nephews and even grandparents — are dedicated to their loved ones but the situation has set their lives on edge," said Cooper-Puckett. "Having a safe place that provides skilled care, therapy, socialization and recreation for their loved ones helps normalize life for them too. We are here to support the whole family."

Peg Taylor Center's 25th anniversary

open house

4 p.m. Sept. 22

The Peg Taylor Center

Mission: The Peg Taylor Center for Adult Day Health Care, a non-profit 501 (C) 3, provides life-saving daily health care to older men and women and all adults with seriously disabling conditions. The goal of this care is to foster a high quality of life and independence to help them live in their own homes or with their families for as long as possible.

Services: physical, occupational and speech therapy; nursing and personal care; social work services; recreational activities; nutritional counseling and hot lunches; transportation; caregiver support; and health education

Staff: 30 plus contractors

Volunteers: 40 donating 2,600 hours annually

Hours of Care and Meals: 90,000 hours of care provided and 10,000 meals served annually; 1.4 million hours of care to clients from Butte, Glenn and Tehama counties since 1986.

The Lemonade Drive: Launched by the center's board of directors in order to "make lemonade out of the lemons (i.e. funding cuts) handed to the center's programs by state budget cuts, the goal is to raise \$60,000 by reaching out to the community to let people know that we can meet our funding challenges with their help," according to Diane Cooper-Puckett, founding executive director.

Contact: 124 Parmac Road, Chico, 342-2345; www.pegaylorcenter.org or contact@pegaylorcenter.org.

In addition to cash donations the center's donation wish list includes:

Art Supplies

Wii to be used for therapy

Volunteers for art program

Acoustic musicians to play during lunch

Contributions towards purchase of diabetic supplies

Professional Grade Blender for meal preparation

Plastic sealer for freezing food

New motor for the drinking fountain

Computer memory to upgrade computers

Up-to-date Fax machine

B-Line Para transit tickets or contributions towards transportation

Location & Contact: 124 Parmac Rd., Chico, 530-342-2345; www.pegaylorcenter.org or contact@pegaylorcenter.org.