

Critical Rancho program threatened by budget cuts

by Greg Waskul, Rancho Los Amigos Foundation

Feb 10, 2011



*Participants in the Adult Day Services program are physically or cognitively impaired.
Photo courtesy Rancho Los Amigos*

DOWNEY – After Betty Johnson’s husband died, she quickly started showing signs of trouble in her own life. She began wandering around the neighborhood at night in her bathrobe. She was rapidly losing weight. Neighbors and friends reported that she was often confused.

Betty’s family intervened, and soon she was living with relatives. But it didn’t take long for her family to feel overwhelmed in trying to care for her many special needs around the clock. It seemed that if they didn’t get help soon, they would have only one option – to place Betty in a nursing home.

But then a neighbor told them about Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center’s Adult Day Services program, which for more than two decades has provided a structured, therapeutic program in the community that has enhanced the quality of life for physically and cognitively impaired participants and provided a respite for those who care for them.

Funded through Rancho’s Los Amigos Research and Education Institute, the program includes Adult Day Health Care and Adult Day Care, as well as holding a state designation as an Alzheimer’s Day Care Resource Center. The Adult Day Services Program has won many international, national, state, county and local awards since it began operating in 1988.

“This program is not only a vital part of Rancho, but is very important to the overall health of the community we serve,” said Rancho Chief Medical Officer Mindy Aisen, M.D. “Ironically, many participants such as Betty are not initially excited about joining the program. But as they participate and begin to make friends, they look forward to coming to Rancho and adding meaning to their daily lives.

In fact, Betty increased her physical, social and recreational activities and made several new friends in the Adult Day Services program. Her time spent out of the home has also given her caregivers enough of a break so that they have been able to take care of her at home for several years. Most importantly, Betty is happy.

But now the newfound happiness of Betty and her fellow Adult Day Services participants is being threatened by Gov. Jerry Brown's current state budget, which would eliminate funding for Medi-Cal's entire Adult Day Health Care program in California.

"When you contrast this proposed action with the World Health Organization's projections that the number of American seniors with cognitive impairments will double over the next 20 years, it seems obvious that funding for Adult Day Services should not only be retained, but enhanced." said Rancho Adult Day Services Program Director Pat Bedes.

In addition to direct services to seniors, the program staff has provided education and training to more than 3,500 interns and students, thousands of local community members, and professionals from local, national and international communities. Therapies include exercise, gait training/fall preventions, technological memory devices and other vital activities such as developing the outdoor garden where individual and group art, ceramics and music programs are conducted.

Each of these activities help enhance wellness and minimize agitation for persons with dementia.

"We are hoping the value of this program and others like it are recognized at the state and county levels so that our work to make life better for Betty and countless others like her will continue for many years to come," Bedes said.

Published: February 10, 2011 - Volume 9 - Issue 43

Read more: [The Downey Patriot - Critical Rancho program threatened by budget cuts](#)