

## Joy, gratitude, thanks

Joyce Hayes/For the Times-Standard

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Those of you who have followed and participated in a yearlong battle to save Adult Day Health Care services from elimination can breathe a sigh of relief and gratitude. The tremendous work at the state and local levels to preserve this critical program in California has brought this battle to a positive end for all clients, families, staff and others involved in Adult Day Health Care.

It's been a long year. Starting in January 2011, Governor Brown proposed the elimination of all Adult Day Health Care programs as a Medi-Cal benefit. This started an aggressive advocacy campaign at local and state levels led with expert skill and organization by the California Association for Adult Day Health Care (CAADS). During the following six months, the advocacy followed many paths, including promises by the state legislature of a redesigned ADHC program which never came to pass. In July, the governor vetoed a bill passed by both houses of the legislature to redesign the current ADHC program and allow Medi-Cal dollars to continue to support this critical service. With this action, all Medi-Cal funding for ADHC was scheduled to end on Dec. 1, 2011. The state's mandate was to develop a plan to transition the 37,000 ADHC clients with complex medical and cognitive needs to other existing services in the community. For the next five months, the evolution of this plan became known to clients and staff as the "transition plan to nowhere."

At the same time, a federal class-action lawsuit was filed by Disability Rights of California against the state of California claiming that the elimination of ADHC violated the Americans with Disabilities Act. This lawsuit was scheduled to be heard on Nov. 17, just two weeks before sites were prepared to lose all Medi-Cal dollars. The morning of Nov. 17, it was announced that a major federal court settlement was reached between the state of California and Disability Rights of California. "This settlement makes it clear that the services provided by center-based adult day health programs are irreplaceable in preventing or reducing use of higher-cost institutional services such as nursing homes and hospital emergency rooms, and honors patient dignity and the Americans with Disabilities Act."

Under the settlement, ADHC will become a new program called Community Based Adult Services (CBAS). This program will have some different rules for participation and provider eligibility. Eventually, CBAS will be offered primarily through managed care organizations in geographic areas where Medi-Cal managed care is available. Humboldt County does not have Medi-Cal managed care, so the settlement will allow our local programs to directly contract with the state. We know there will be challenges as this process unfolds and more details become clear, but it appears that our clients and their needs are very well represented. We anticipate that most of our current clients will be able to continue being served.

While we are thankful for the settlement, we are acutely aware of the human toll paid by thousands of clients, families and staff throughout the state and most definitely here in Humboldt County. They have endured a year of stress, living in fear that there would no longer be Adult Day Health Care centers providing an important safety net and that jobs would be lost.

It is clear that the successful end result would not have happened without the incredible work by both CAADS and Disability Rights of California along with the immense outpouring of letters, phone calls, petitions, and meetings from clients, families, senior service agencies, board members, advisory council members, board of supervisors and our local, state and national legislative representatives. The Humboldt Senior Resource Center thanks you on behalf of our clients, families and staff.

Joyce Hayes is executive director of the Humboldt Senior Resource Center.