

Adult day care cuts imperil seniors

By Dawn Myers Purkey

SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger recently announced another \$3 billion in cuts that include eliminating all adult day health care centers in California, displacing more than 36,000 beneficiaries. Given the frailty of the adult day health client population, institutional care will be the only option left for thousands just as the demographic trends and national policy are driving toward home and community-based care.

The overwhelming majority of those cared for in these programs (80 percent) are entirely dependent on Medi-Cal support for this care. Without adult day health care, many would

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deteriorate and have to move into a nursing home at four times the cost to the taxpayer.

"Those who are served by these programs are poor, frail and in ill health," says Lydia Missaelides, executive director of the California Association of Adult Day Services. "Families and caregivers turn to the professionals of adult day services to provide a level of community-based care which not even well-to-do families can easily provide on their own. These families and caregivers rely on the state and those who lead the state, and they have been abandoned."

Closing these facilities is nothing less than a disaster for every

California community, and Yolo County is no different. The loss of these vital health care services is inhumane at best.

Yolo Adult Day Health Center, a community service of Woodland Healthcare in collaboration with the Yolo County Department of Health, serves more than 70 frail adults who average four chronic health diagnoses, take multiple medications and are dependent on others for many personal and household tasks.

The impact on families who rely on these centers as their only affordable source of safe, secure, reliable supervision is equally devastating. Working caregivers will be forced to give up paying jobs and face their own impoverishment. Yolo

County families are going to face economic hardships while those they love and care for face medical, mental and psychological consequences.

Eliminating adult day health services is turning back the clock 30 years. Our programs serve those who are medically frail, cognitively impaired, suffering from a traumatic brain injury or have a chronic psychiatric condition that makes independent living challenging.

We are able to minimize emergency room visits, hospital stays and nursing home placement. Can California afford not to keep these programs open?

— Dawn Myers Purkey is program manager of the Yolo Adult Day Health Center, at 20 N. Cottonwood St. in Woodland.