



## Annual Expo Brings Out the Sun & Hundreds of Attendees

Sunshine and blue skies over Humboldt Bay set the stage for another successful TCIL Annual Lost Coast Assistive Technology Expo & Disability Awareness Fair on Friday, October 6. The event was, once again, held at the Adorni Center in Eureka and major sponsors included Broadway Medical, the City of Eureka, Eureka Times-Standard, and the Red Lion Inn.

Hundreds of attendees enjoyed a day filled with both information and fun. About 40 vendors, including local social service agencies as well as assistive technology equipment providers, were on-hand. Returning to the Expo to do popular demonstrations were the students from Arcata's Health & Karate Center, as well as Norman Peterson and the dog, Flyer, from Guide Dogs for the Blind. Guest speakers included California State Assembly Member, Patty Berg, who represents the 1<sup>st</sup> Assembly District, as well as the dynamic Consumer Advocate, Jene McCovey of Arcata. Berg offered useful perspectives on some

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California State legislative issues, while McCovey focused on encouraging people with disabilities into action and how to become effective advocates. Another useful presentation was made by Attorney Mark D. Potter of The Center for Disability Access in San Marcos. It touched upon court cases relative to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability issues.

Another highlight was the ongoing drawing for items generously donated by numerous area businesses. The biggest prize was a one night stay at Garberville's Benbow Inn. Once again, TCIL volunteer extraordinaire, Bob Lazelle, was instrumental in soliciting donations for this drawing. Thanks Bob!

The next Expo may be just 9 months away, but TCIL staff are already making plans on how to make the 2007 edition the best yet! We welcome any comments that you may have on how to accomplish this (call 707-445-8404). We're hoping to add many more activities to the agenda, including music, an art show, gardening demonstrations, kayaking and more.

Also, many thanks to our contributing sponsors who included Bayside Bookkeeping, Bear River Casino, Coast Central Credit Union, Consolidated Management, Eureka Chamber of Commerce, HCAR, Humboldt Radiology, Bob Lazelle, McClellan Mountain Spring Water, Mercer-Fraser, Northwest Committee, Patterson-Conners Insurance, Simpson Timber and the Sun Valley Group.

# RespectAbility

**RespectAbility** is a publication of Tri-County Independent Living (TCIL) and is intended for all people with disabilities and their families. It provides news and information on disability issues and services provided by our Center.

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# E

2006

## Third Annual Lost Coast Assistive Technology Expo & Disability Awareness Fair

# EXP OP



*Norman Peterson of Guide Dogs for the Blind offered another demonstration with help from the trusty dog, Flyer.*



*Consumer Advocate, Jene McCovey of Arcata, gave another inspired talk.*



*Attendees had the opportunity to talk with representatives from 40 local service providers and out-of-town (or local) assistive technology vendors at the event.*



*TCIL benefitted from the help of many volunteers at the Expo, including Lynn Navarro.*

# Feds Created Contradictions With ADA in No Child Left Behind Act

Talk about a “Catch-22.”

A recent article in the *San Diego Union-Tribune* (“Left Behind? Feds Label Winning School A Loser”—by Helen Gao) highlighted the problems that can arise when one Federal law doesn’t quite jive with another. It can result in some unexpected—and undesirable—consequences.

Unfortunately, in this instance it’s the “No Child Left Behind” Act (NCLB) that doesn’t square with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). And those left paying the price may be students with disabilities and schools that are working hard to do the right thing for those students.

The school examined in the *Union-Tribune* article is Wangenheim Middle School in Mira Mesa, California. It achieved a score on the Academic Performance Index that was well above the State target and which placed it in the upper echelons for performance in the San Diego Unified School District. However, it was judged as failing according to the standards of NCLB. This will potentially subject the school to penalties that could eventually include replacement of staff and programs if the school fails to meet NCLB standards again.

How can this be?

Wagenheim achieved 35 of 36 performance criteria this year, but got a failing grade on having 95% of its students with learning disabilities take standardized tests. About 9% of Wagenheim’s 1,300-plus students are classified as disabled. Actually, almost **all** of these students **did** take the tests in both English and math.

Come again?

Well, the government only counted 77% of students with learning disabilities as taking the tests because NCLB disqualifies those that use a calculator. Hmm...but ADA says that schools **must** accommodate special-education students with devices such as....you guessed it: CALCULATORS!

U.S. Department of Education spokesperson, Jim Bradshaw, was even quoted in this article as saying that special education children who take tests with modifications aren’t held to the same standards as others. Thus, their participation should not count.

This is certainly not the message of inclusion, equal access, and respect for their abilities that the government should be conveying to stu-

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# Non-profit in Puget Sound Region Helps Meet Need for Low-Cost Ramps

## *Can A Similar Program Be (Re-)Developed Here?*

by Glenn Reed, TCIL

A little determination can go a long way...and make a big difference. Fortunately, Jerry Otis of Mountlake Terrace, Washington has far more than a little determination.

“Someone once told me ‘*you can’t*’ and I don’t like that word,” says Otis, the co-founder and driving force behind the Regional Access Mobility Project (RAMP) in the Puget Sound Region of Washington State. “I prefer a four-letter word,” he dryly notes, “which is ‘*will*.’”

For Otis, who is 60 years old, that translates into *will* do it, *will* help people with disabilities get out of their homes, and *will* build the wheelchair ramps that *will* enable them to do so.

Otis and Everett, Washington’s Bill Smith started RAMP in March of 2002 through that force of *will*. Its purpose is to build wheelchair ramps at a low cost for those most in need and it has been highly successful in this goal.

Otis’s own health problems are one reason for his understanding of the need for a can-do approach that fo-

cuses on the person in-need. A carpenter by trade, and former sawmill worker, he experienced medical difficulties beginning in 1985 that included partial paralysis. He’s endured numerous surgeries and now needs to use a wheelchair some of the time, though he can walk (and work) with a cane. Doctors determined at some point that his difficulties were probably related to a high school football injury that occurred in 1963. Sometime in the late 1980’s vocational rehabilitation therapists told him that he would never work again. Big mistake!

“It kind of made me mad for somebody to tell me that I would *never* work again,” he says. Fortunately, Otis responds to the word “*never*” much as he responds to “*can’t*.”

The RAMP program is one positive result of this challenge to Otis. Though entirely a volunteer endeavor for him, it’s been more than a full-time job because of the tremendous need. Early in its history, the RAMP effort was operated by Otis and Smith out of their  
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own vehicles and using their own tools.

“We just did the best we could,” notes Otis. “I’m motivated by doing something to help a lot of people and I enjoy doing it.”

Both men are members of the Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters, Local 131 and they asked other union members to volunteer their services. This labor force—the carpenters in particular—have remained crucial supporters of RAMP throughout its history. They contribute both volunteer hours and financial assistance, to help cover costs to the organization.

RAMP was initially under the auspices of another Everett non-profit and served clients in Snohomish County, Washington. When Otis sought to expand the services elsewhere and the governing Board said “*you can’t*,” he simply found a way, again focusing on the need for the service. The end result was RAMP becoming a separate, 501 (c) (3) non-profit in 2004.

“There was a client in Monroe (Washington) who needed a ramp for his wife in order for her to live at home,” he says. “I was under orders by the Board not to do any more work until the liability issue was resolved, so I just had the husband sign a non-binding agreement not to sue and I built the ramp by myself in 12 hours.”

The family was so happy with Otis’s



work and dedication that they invited him to supper. This, in fact, has been the response of most all of his clients.

“People just need a little help to be more independent and that’s what we’re all about,” says Otis.

The positive response to that bit of help can be as immediate as when the ramp is being constructed. Otis tells of another man, just out of the hospital for brain surgery, who was discouraged by his prospects. Seeing Otis, who has had 19 brain surgeries in his lifetime, outside his door and working inspired this client to get out of the house for the first time.

Safety, of course, is a priority with RAMP and Otis notes that all ramp construction by RAMP abides by ADA and building code regulations. The non-profit also must carry liability insurance to the cost of about \$1,800 a year. Otis got a used van a few years ago that must be insured and RAMP asks clients to sign a waiver before ramp construction begins.

RAMP has helped all types of people in its history, from children to senior citizens, from those with cancer to individuals with multiple sclerosis. The organization constructed 53

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## ***RAMP continued from page 6***

ramps in the Puget Sound region in 2004 and about 31 last year (fewer in 2005 only because Otis had to deal with family health issues). He says that currently, there are about 20 people on the waiting list and with its present resources, RAMP just can't keep up with the high demand.

"We prioritize those individuals who need ramps in order to get out of the hospital or other assisted care facility and back into their own homes," he emphasizes. Otis would like to obtain further funding to better meet this demand and to expand services to the east side of Washington. He says that RAMP could easily employ two full-timers and keep two full crews busy for 40 hours a week.

RAMP asks its clients to pay what they can for a ramp in order to help cover material costs. This can be up to about \$1,000, but he notes that clients can end up paying much less. This still amounts to a considerable savings as ramps built by private sector businesses can cost up to \$8,000 or more. RAMP does receive its lumber from BMC West of Everett at contractor prices, which is a savings.

Otis also emphasizes that it's vital to include the person who will be using the ramp in the process. If there's a family member available, that person is also asked to help.

"I know from my own experience

what it's like not to be treated as a whole person," he says.

Jerry Otis's efforts have inspired the creation of similar ramp building programs in Tacoma, Washington, Portland, Oregon and in Missoula, Montana. A comparable program was run out of TCIL back in the 1980s /1990s, when the organization was called the Humboldt Access Project, and was largely driven by volunteers. Could it be revived? Certainly there is a need.

We at Tri-County Independent Living would like to know what consumers out there could benefit from the development of such a program, as well as who might be available to volunteer for this type of effort. Please give us a call at 707-445-8404 if you are interested or have any suggestions.

## **Board Members Wanted**

Would you like to have a say in the operation of your Independent Living Center or make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities? Do you have some time to give to promote the philosophy of independent living?

TCIL needs dedicated and motivated Board members to help us grow in new directions and better meet the needs of our consumers. Are you willing to join us and take up this challenge? Call Tri-County Independent Living at (707) 445-8404.

# Trend or Just Trendy?

by Brett Pritchett, A.T. Advocate, TCIL

A big part of my position involves having some familiarity with the new assistive devices that are available, or that soon will be.

I was checking out some new products on a website recently. This was a newer company, and they had a product line of 7 or 8 devices, all of which appeared somewhat useful. But after some more study, I placed them on my 'black-list' of device vendors to ignore. Now, *why* would I do such a thing?

Well, each device had a short description next to it, explaining what it was, and the sort of disability for which it was intended. They certainly *looked* striking, with bold colours and racing stripes. Yes, racing stripes. But the very first line of the very first description used the words "stylish and trendy" to describe this product.

Now, there's nothing wrong with an AT product being stylish, attractive, or even trendy for that matter, but as I studied these products I got the impression that somehow "stylish" and "trendy" were *the*

main selling points here--NOT function!

If there is one thing I have learned from my friends and clients who have disabilities, it's that an AT device, first and foremost, needs to *work*. Reliably. And in a way that is easy to use. The next most important feature is almost always *price*.

I bring this topic up for a reason. If you have a disability, you are part of a group of people whose numbers are growing. In fact, in about 15 years, those of us with a disability will belong to the *majority* of the population!

***"If there is one thing I have learned from my friends and clients who have disabilities, it's that an AT device, first and foremost, needs to Work. Reliably."***

To many of those running a business, this is actually good news, because to most it means money, and lots of it. Already, many manufacturers are starting to see you *not* as a group of people with disabilities, but as just another demographic.... Another segment of the population that can separated from their hard-earned cash, and they are starting to come up with clever ways to do it.

Now, I am *not* trying to say that anyone who manufactures or sells products for people with disabilities is *only* in it for the money. Some are,

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some aren't. What I **am** saying is that like any kind of business, marketing experts will see particular groups as 'susceptible' to certain kinds of marketing schemes and ploys, and people with disabilities are increasingly being targeted as a lucrative cash cow.

This *is* a real trend. And while I am seeing technology coming up with faster, lighter, more impressive, and even more useful products for this group, I see very little of this effort going towards making products more **affordable**.

I doubt if many of us really have much more money this year than we did last year. Yet, I am seeing prices of AT products rise constantly--along with most everything else--and of course things like alternative funding sources are becoming fewer and fewer.

So, what can we do about this? Some of the answers are obvious – **caveat emptor**- (Latin for 'Let the buyer beware.') Good advice for anyone, anytime. But doubly so for those living with a disability.

But also consider this; many of you are already active in the Humboldt disability community. Some of you are involved with peer-groups, advocacy, civil rights, and more. And some of you reading this probably know others with a disability similar to your own and, thus,

you can share experiences and lessons learned about overcoming barriers, tips and tricks, *and good (or bad) products*. A short chat with someone can change a life.

Never be afraid or hesitant about calling Tri-County with questions about a product or a device you think might be useful to you. If we don't know about it, we can probably find out.

Also, do some research on your own before getting out that wallet. If you use a computer, the internet can be the most useful tool of all when it comes to finding out the positives and negatives about something (and not just AT!) and again, you can call us at TCIL. Its part of our job to assist in finding information.

Something else you can do on the internet: **SHARE** your experiences. There are forums, like our own at: [www.tilinet.org](http://www.tilinet.org) (click on the forums link), groups, and other sites to go to and let everyone else know what you find useful, and what you found to be a waste of money. Even if you have had a bad experience with something, putting it out there just might save someone else from having to go through the same thing.

So what all this will do is not only help you spend your money wisely, it will send a message to these sellers and manufacturers that people with disabilities are **NOT** 'easy marks' and, in fact, expect value for their money. **Demand** well-built, well-designed, and *affordable* products!



# TCIL Unveils New, Improved Web Site

Do you have internet access? If so, then be sure to check out TCIL's newly revamped web site at [www.tilinet.org](http://www.tilinet.org).

Our site contains loads of helpful information on TCIL services and programs, as well as information for businesses on Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance, a member forum page, copies of the TCIL quarterly newsletter, a classified section, lists of support groups and educational workshops, news on political happenings and issues relevant to those with disabilities, and a huge listing of links to other web sites.

We recognize that the areas served

by Tri-County Independent Living (TCIL) are largely rural and that the internet may be the most effective way to reach out to those living with disabilities who can't readily access our offices in Eureka.

We also know that many of you may not have computers and encourage you to contact us regarding our Computers for People with Disabilities Program. We may be able to hook you up with a computer so that you can get on-line and readily access useful information. Give us a call at (707) 445-8404 to find out more!





***SQUEAKY WHEEL continued from page 11***

serving. So, why not write them a letter, give them a phone call or an email?

Sure, you say, they get dozens...or HUNDREDS (or thousands) of such communications each week. Why would they have time to look at yours? Well, there are a few tricks here.

First, numbers do make a difference. If there is an issue important to you and many others, if you all send a letter or email to the elected official, they'll say *"Wow! All of these constituents see this as important, so maybe I should look into it more."* Often an advocacy organization will create such a "form" letter (or post-card) on an issue for lots of people to sign and send to elected officials. Okay, they lack the personal touch but numbers flooding into an office DO get noticed.

This is true of emails (need a computer? See page 8 of this issue) or phone calls as well. If there's an important bill before the State Assembly, then a hundred phone calls or emails from constituents (voters!) has to be noticed. Often an advocacy group will create a form email letter that you will simply have to fill out with your name and address, then one click will send it to your elected officials. The address is necessary so they can be sure you live in the area they serve.

Phone calls may be a little more uncomfortable for some people. However, what usually happens is that you will be

provided with a script of what to say, such as *"I'm a constituent of Senator Smoothtalk's and I'm calling to urge his support of Bill #007 regarding mandatory testing of secondary school children on James Bond trivia."* You'll usually reach a staff person, who will thank you for your call. Hopefully they'll then run into Senator Smoothtalk's office and exclaim *"That's the 99<sup>th</sup> call we've received today on that bill. Maybe we ought to reconsider it!"*

This is not to say that the individual effort isn't always appreciated. What can also stand out in a pile of post cards or form letters in an official's daily mail could be a colorful envelope with a photo card inside featuring a moody, Lost Coast ocean scene. *"How nice,"* the Senator's aide might say, and bring it in to the good Senator. When he/she opens it, there's a nice handwritten and signed note from you...with a reminder about Bill #007. A note on our reps in DC: since 9/11 and the anthrax scare, letters are not the best way to reach them. Emails or phone calls (often there are toll-free numbers or they have local numbers to call) are preferred.

Okay, many pols may have pretty definite stands on issues that influence how much attention they'll pay to their constituents. That's where the media come in. Love 'em or hate 'em, they do serve a purpose and everyone wants their attention.

***See SQUEAKY WHEEL continued on next page***

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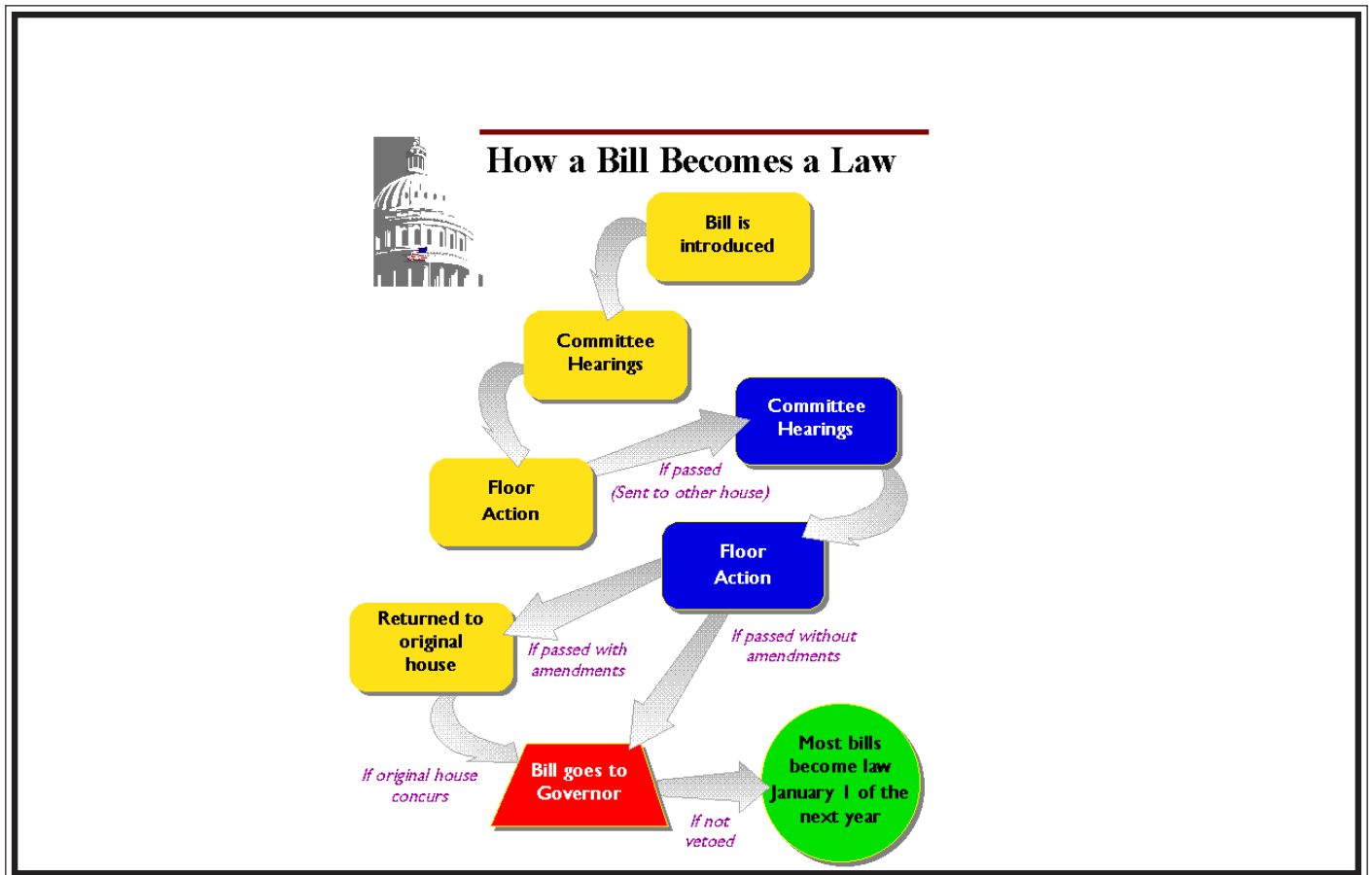
So.....send a letter to the editor once in a while or give that talk radio host a call. Don't be discouraged if your letter doesn't get printed this time or the next time. Keep trying because if an issue surfaces enough, and a lot of people write in, then the newspaper is likely to run something eventually. Better yet, it may plant the idea of a good story in the editor's head.

These are all easy ways, at home, to communicate with your elected officials and to advocate for yourself. But what if you want to take it a step further? After all, a person standing in front of you will always be more noticeable than a note held in-hand.

The possibilities to be more active when advocating for disability rights/issues are numerous. They include attendance at public hearings, regular meetings of elected officials, special events (such as a state legislative lobbying day), press conferences, and that favorite of visibility occasions: the PROTEST. TCIL will try to keep you informed of such activities, including through future editions of this newsletter.

In the next issue of *RespectAbility*, when the State Legislature is in full session and the dust has cleared locally and nationally from the November 7 elections, we'll look at these options in more detail.

In the meantime, get out your ballpoint pen and prepare to give your elected officials an earful. After all, it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease!



**CONTRADICTIONS** *continued from page 4*

dents with disabilities. And it's certainly not a way to engender self-confidence in these individuals. Seems that some people in the Federal government need to go back to the blackboard and write out, five hundred times, "I will not create laws that contradict each other, especially when they are detrimental to people."

San Diego school officials are pushing legislators to address these problems with NCLB but, unfortunately, they are currently having to pay the penalties for their supposed deficiencies according to the Act. Other schools may be in a similar boat, but it is not known by the California Department of Education how many. In other states, at least one case was noted in the *Union-Tribune* article—an Illinois school district that sued the U.S. Department of Education in 2005 due to this same problem.

The National Education Association (NEA) has also been pushing the government to address this and other aspects of NCLB that are detrimental to students with disabilities. At an August discussion by the Aspen Institute Com-

mission on NCLB, the NEA's Patti Ralabate outlined six areas that need to be addressed. These included "...more research, technical assistance, and professional development for all educators...about what constitutes valid and reliable assessments for the full range of students with disabilities" and "NEA also is concerned about the lack of guidance and uniformity on allowable testing accommodations for students with disabilities."

Will the pols be responsive to these problems? Their feet should be held to the fire until they are because as Wangenheim Principal Robert Grano pointed out, not allowing modifications for disabled students is not only illegal, but also morally wrong. Stay tuned.

NOTE: If you would like a copy of the *Union-Tribune* article, contact Glenn Reed at TCIL, (707) 445-8404.

**Happy  
Holidays  
From TCIL!!**



***Annual Appeal***

Tri-County Independent Living has just mailed out its holiday appeal letter to area residents. We hope to raise money to support our services and to develop new ones. TCIL is a 501(c)(3) non-profit (Tax ID #94-2495540) so donations are tax-deductible!



# Your Elected Officials:

## *How to Contact Them*

### STATE



**Governor Arnold Schwarzeneger**--State Capitol Building, Sacramento, CA 95814; Tel.: (916) 445-2841; Fax: (916) 445-1633 ; web site: [www.gov.ca.gov](http://www.gov.ca.gov)

### STATE LEGISLATURE



**Senator Patricia Wiggins**--Newly elected to open seat. Contact information will be in the next issue of *RespectAbility*.

**Senator Sam Aanestad**--Local: 200 Providence Mine Rd., Ste. 108, Nevada City, CA 95959, Tel.: (530) 470-1846; State Capitol, Rm. 2054, Sacramento, CA 95814, Tel.: (916) 651-4004, web site: [www.republican.sen.ca.gov](http://www.republican.sen.ca.gov); e-mail: access on web site

**Assembly Member Patty Berg**--50 D Street, Ste. 450, Santa Rosa, CA 95404; State Capitol, Rm. 4146, Sacramento, CA 94249-0001, Tel: (916) 319-2001, web site: [www.democrats.assembly.ca.gov](http://www.democrats.assembly.ca.gov); e-mail: access on web site

### NATIONAL OFFICES



**Senator Barbara Boxer**--State Offices: 501 I Street, Ste. 7-600, Sacramento, CA 95814, Tel.: (916) 448-2787, Fax: (916) 448-2563; OR 1700 Montgomery St., Ste. 240, San Francisco, CA 94111, Tel.: (415) 403-0100; Fax: (415) 956-6701; National Office: 112 Hart Senate Office Bldng., Washington, DC 20510, Tel.: (202) 224-3553, TTY: (202) 224-4264, web site: [www.boxer.senate.gov](http://www.boxer.senate.gov)

**Senator Diane Feinstein**--State Office: One Post St., Ste. 2450, San Francisco, CA 94104, Tel: (415) 393-0707; Fax: (415) 393-0710, National Office: Hart Office Building, Rm. 331, Washington, DC 20510, Tel.: (202) 224-3841; Fax: (202) 228-3954, TTY/TDD: (415) 249-4785, web site: [www.feinstein.senate.gov](http://www.feinstein.senate.gov)

**Rep. Mike Thompson** Humboldt District Office, 317 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Ste. 1, Eureka, CA 95501, Tel.: (707) 269-9595, Fax: (707) 269-9598, National Office: 231 Cannon Office Building, Washington, DC 20515, Tel.: (202) 225-3311; Fax: (202) 225-4335, web site: [www.mikethompson.house.gov](http://www.mikethompson.house.gov)

**TRI-COUNTY INDEPENDENT LIVING**  
**955 Myrtle Avenue**  
**Eureka, CA 95501**



## **WANTED!!!**

Not dead or alive...but used and still working.....

Have you seen this computer?

Details: Pentium 2 or 3

Speed: 350 megahertz or higher

Status: Working



Don't throw those old computers in the slammer. Let TCIL rehabilitate them and offer them to our consumers through our Computers for People with Disabilities Program. If you have used towers, monitors, and keyboards/mice, or know of someone who does, please call us at (707) 445-8404.