



Don't Fall Through the Cracks



Sidewalks, Accessibility & Safety for the Mobility Impaired



A curb cut leads onto a sidewalk at an intersection. Ten feet beyond, bushes grow across the concrete, a telephone pole is planted in the middle of the sidewalk, and twenty feet further, a pick-up is parked so that it blocks the pathway. In the other direction, the sidewalk just dead-ends.

People with mobility issues, who use wheelchairs or walkers, are familiar with such scenarios. They encounter them every day. How they deal with getting from Point A to Point B, and how various levels of government handle accessibility problems involving streets and sidewalks, brings up a number of issues.

Sidewalks are an important component in creating equal access to communities for people with disabilities. If sidewalks are non-existent, in need of repair, or blocked by ob-

See *SIDEWALKS continued on page 9*

Humboldt County Pressed on Accessibility Through DOJ Agreement

It seemed to slip under the local radar, except for a brief article in the *Eureka Times-Standard*, but Humboldt County reached an important agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice back on July 23 relative to disability access. It's no coincidence that the agreement came just 3 days before the anniversary of the signing of the ADA.

Access, has been working towards ensuring that people with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in civic life. It seeks to do so by bringing state and local governments into full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Compliance reviews have come about at the initiative of the DOJ

The DOJ, through its **Project Civic**

See *DOJ AGREEMENT continued on page 14*

Warm Line Meeting

Efforts continue to develop a "Warm Line," peer support and harm reduction program for Humboldt County. Such programs have been successful in other parts of the country and help prevent problems from reaching the crisis stage for people with mental illness. If you are interested in providing input about a potential "Warm Line," would consider volunteering for such a program, or seek more information, consider attending the next organizational meeting on Wed., Nov. 19 at 2933 H St. in Eureka (in the modular building).

More Pie in '09...

Mark your calendars and dig out those old pie recipes! TCIL has scheduled its Humboldt Pie II (squared?) fundraiser for Saturday, March 14, 2009 at the Baysde Grange. Be sure to watch for further details.

TCIL Open House

Tri-County Independent Living will hold its Holiday Open House from 3 - 5 p.m., Thursday, December 4 at our offices at 2822 Harris Street, Eureka. Please stop by and see our facility, meet the staff, enjoy some refreshments, help us to recognize our agency volunteers and consumers, and toss out ideas for how we can make 2009 a better year for people with disabilities in TCIL's service area!

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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TCIL Happenings

Linda Arnold On-Board at TCIL (and in Kayaks)



Linda Arnold of Kneeland has joined the Tri-County Independent Living Board of Directors.

Arnold, grew up in Palo Alto, California, and received her Bachelor's degree from the University of California at Davis. There she pursued her lifelong dream of studying marine mammals, which led her on to obtaining a Master's degree from Sacramento State, where she studied the cooperative behavior of river otters at the Sacramento Zoo.

"I was always interested in conservation and in educating people about the animal world and how to preserve habitats," she says. That passion also led to a love of outdoor activities such as hiking.

Arnold moved to Humboldt County with her husband, Jack Bellinger, back in the 1980's. Over the next decade or so she worked for such organizations as the Hospice of Humboldt and the Humboldt Senior Resource Center.

Arnold's working and recreational

activities were sidetracked by a stroke in 1999 that later led to a diagnosis of Moya Moya Disease. This rare condition is the result of the lack of a carotid artery and results in repeated strokes. Surgery, rehabilitation, another stroke, and more rehab followed for Arnold.

Then, she got involved with Making Headway and reconnected with her love of nature through kayaking (see March 2008 *RespectAbility*).

Arnold learned about TCIL when interviewed for this newsletter and at a presentation made by a TCIL staff member at the Eureka Adult School's TBI (traumatic brain injury) School.

"I felt attracted to the need to make more people aware of Tri-County and its services," she says. "It's an incredible asset for people with disabilities." She was also impressed with the *Respect for Abilities Day* event, held on July 25 at the Red Lion Hotel in Eureka.

"The energy there was amazing," she notes. "It was wonderful to see so many people with different abilities getting together. It was a powerful event."

TCIL would like to welcome Linda Arnold to the Board of Directors!

Shots From Tri-County Independent Living's 5th ANNUAL RESPECT FOR ABILITIES DAY



Ed Wrona (right), of the Social Security Administration, gave a presentation on PASS plans. Left: The raffle benefited TCIL's Residential Wheelchair Ramp Construction Program.

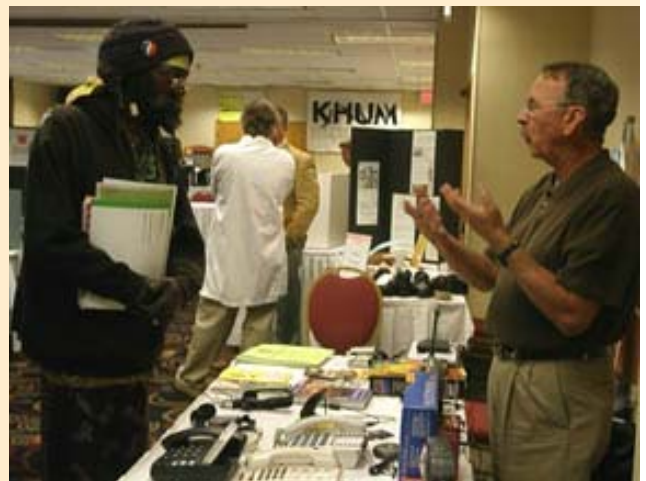


Above: Zuretti "Zuey" Goosby from Senator Pat Wiggins' office and Nancy Starck, from Assembly Member Patty Berg's office, attended the Legislative Session Review. Below: Wesley Chesbro addressed the luncheon gathering.

Tri-County Independent Living's *Respect for Abilities Day*, held in recognition of the anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act back in 1990, attracted about 300 people to Eureka's Red Lion Hotel on Friday, July 25.



Above and below: Attendees talking with vendors.





Tri-County Independent Living (TCIL) received a grant this year from the California Assistive Technology Exchange (CATE) that helps people with disabilities sample different

assistive devices in which they may have an interest.

The CATE funding allowed TCIL to purchase many assistive technology items. TCIL was one of ten community based organizations in California to receive a technology loan program grant through CATE.

Some of the items on-hand include speech software, communications boards, hearing amplification devices, bed-shaking clocks and much more.

*We hope to feature at least one piece of equipment in each issue of **RespectAbility** so that readers have a better idea of what we have available. Here is the first:*

One of the many new and exiting pieces of AT equipment we now have available for loan is the RoboTron Reading machine. It is truly a wonderful device that could change the life of a person with low vision/ blindness.

The RoboTron is a scanner, with a set of speakers, although you can also use headphones with it. It is also light-weight and easy to use.

Plug it in, place almost any written material on it, and in just a few seconds, RoboTron will read it back to you, with amazing accuracy!

Introducing...the RoboTron



Tri-County now has this and MANY other devices that can be of help to people with

many types of disabilities. They are all available to our consumers to come borrow and explore for up to 12 weeks at a time! In addition, if a device is right for you, but too expensive, C.A.T.E. also offers very low interest loans that can be applied for, as well as a reutilization program to connect people with previously owned devices.

So what are you waiting for? If you are someone who could benefit from something in our library, or if you know of someone who might be, just give us a call !

Social Security Benefit Increase for 2009

CA State Budget Cuts Will Wipe Out Gains for Some

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits for more than 55 million Americans will increase **5.8 percent** in 2009. The 5.8% increase is the largest since 1982.

The 5.8% Cost-of Living Adjustment (COLA) will begin with benefits that over 50 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2009. Increased payments to more than 7 million Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries will start on December 31, 2008.

The standard Part B Medicare premium will remain the same at \$96.40 per month – however **due to a change in the California Budget, the California Department of Health Care Services will stop paying Medicare Part B premiums in November if your Medi-Cal Share of Cost is \$501.00 or more.**

The Federal Social Security Administration will deduct your Medicare Part B premiums from your Social Security check beginning with the check you receive in November if you have a Share of Cost of \$501.00 or more.

What is Share of Cost? The Medi-Cal program best known to the public as the Medically Needy (MN) program is the Share of Cost Medi-Cal program. For a senior or disabled person, the countable income minus \$600.00 equals the monthly Share of Cost.

A single senior receiving \$1200.00 Social Security Retirement insurance benefit per month would have a Share of Cost computed as follows:

\$1250 - \$20 any income deduction
= \$1230 - &600 maintenance he/she paid = \$630/month Share of Cost.

The State of California will send you more detailed information about the change within a month – if you have any questions, call 1-800-952-5294.

Problems with your Medi-Cal? Contact: Senior Legal Services (707) 443-9747 or Legal Services of Northern California (800) 972-0002 or (707) 445-0868 Ext.301



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Yoga Can Offer Host of Benefits

A Gentle Exercise Option for Those with Disabilities



Do you have a chronic disease, experience chronic pain, or have some other disability and are looking for a gentle, relaxing form of exercise with a host of benefits? Consider yoga.

The many benefits of yoga have been time-tested through thousands of years of practice. Yoga can increase fitness, energy levels and flexibility, result in greater mind/body awareness, reduce stress and make practitioners feel more peaceful. There is even evidence that it can lead to a host of specific benefits, including such things as lowered pulse rates, increased respiratory efficiency, better hand-eye coordination, and decreases in depression and anxiety.

“Our lifestyles mold us and shape our bodies through repetitive motions and postures,” says Melissa Bukosky-Boodjeh, a local yoga instructor. “So much illness is caused or exacerbated by stress and the way we think. Yoga teaches us that you can’t heal yourself until you learn to relax.”

The more gentle nature of yoga as a form of exercise also makes it ideal for

people with health issues, including chronic diseases.

“I came to yoga due to my own health issues,” notes Bukosky-Boodjeh, who began practicing yoga in 1992 and who currently offers yoga classes at the HealthSport facility in Arcata. “Yoga allowed me to do something for my health that didn’t just involve taking pills, but working with my whole body.”

Yoga also doesn’t require a lot of expense or elaborate facilities. “You can practice yoga anywhere, just by lying down and practicing breathing and relaxation,” she says.

Ten years ago Bukosky-Boodjeh began teaching yoga to people with multiple sclerosis (MS), partly inspired by a grandmother who had MS and by local physical therapists working with MS clients. Her current classes at HealthSport include Yoga for Chronic Pain on Mondays, from 3-4:25 p.m. and Yoga for MS on Wednesdays, from 12:15 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. She notes that a sliding scale fee is offered for people who are low-income and that she needs to keep class sizes limited.

“I can teach 3 to 4 different levels at once, with 5-8 people in the class, but I

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can go up to 10 people,” she says.

A professional Environmental Scientist by training, Bukosky-Boodjeh is a certified yoga instructor with over 1000 hours of training and study. Her initial training was from the Nosara Institute and she has since achieved certification in Anusara Yoga. Additionally, she has gained certification in Yoga for the Heart/Cardiac-Cancer, and from the Multiple Sclerosis Society in Yoga for MS.



“I train people to do what they need to do to stay healthy and then they need to continue the practice themselves,” she emphasizes. “Yoga won’t work unless you actually do it. The more you practice, the more benefits increase.”

“I’ve worked with people at all levels, from quadriplegics to people who can do handstands,” she notes. For people with MS, she says that the biggest benefits seem to be for those in the early stages of the disease. “Yoga won’t reverse the disease, but can help with symptoms and participants can experience a lot of other benefits as well.”

There is some scientific evidence in support of this. For example, a 2004 study by the Oregon Health & Science University found that yoga significantly reduced fatigue—a major MS symptom—among those with the disease.

Also important are the more subjective reports by participants of benefits. For example, a study of 2,000 MS patients in Oregon and Washington found that 30% had tried yoga and 57% of those reported it to be “very beneficial.”

There is more research indicating that yoga can reduce chronic pain as well. A 2004 Massachusetts study, for instance, found that just a single session of yoga relieves muscle soreness. A more recent (2008) University of Washington study indicated benefits for those suffering from chronic back pain while a University of Pennsylvania study showed significant increases in functioning for those with arthritis as a result of yoga.

Another 2004 study, at Yale University, found that those who practiced yoga and meditation at least three times a week had reduced blood pressure, lower pulse rates and may have reduced their risk of heart disease. Another study, conducted in India, found lower cholesterol levels and a slowing or arresting of the advance rate among participants with coronary artery disease.

Local yoga class participants can attest to the benefits.

“I’ve been coming to her sessions for

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stacles, this reduces accessibility and creates safety issues. It can also lead people with disabilities to seek alternative routes to destinations, on roads or bicycle paths, which brings forth a host of other issues, including what is legal and what is not.

This past summer T.R. Wilson, a Eureka resident who utilizes an electric wheelchair, was traveling in a designated bicycle lane on a city street. He was doing so even though a sidewalk was available. Why?

“Because of the dips in driveways in that area, my wheelchair tips and it’s not safe,” he says. “There are also spots with telephone poles and other obstacles.”

Wilson says that a policeman pulled up beside him and “chewed him out.”

“He said I was supposed to be on the sidewalk because I’m a pedestrian and not allowed in the bike lane,” claims Wilson. “I’ve been riding in the bike lane for years.”

Was this an isolated incident due to lack of understanding of the law? According to Captain Murl Harpham of the Eureka Police Department, probably so.

“It’s okay for someone in a wheelchair to be on the street in such instances, unless they’re doing something dangerous or breaking some other law,” he says. “If there’s no place to go but the street or a

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YOGA continued from page 8

four or five years,” says McKinleyville’s Rick Boman, who experiences chronic pain from arthritis and a shoulder injury and who attends Bukosky-Boodjeh’s Yoga for Chronic Pain sessions. “We practice breathing and staying calm and it helps me forget about my pain. I’m more content with being where I’m at as a result of these classes.”

Bukosky-Boodjeh has specific training in cardio rehabilitative yoga and has tried to get classes going in the area, but has met with resistance from the medical community and insurance companies. “There’s also a need in this area for more yoga teachers who are willing to work with people with chronic diseases or various disabilities,” she points out.

Bukosky-Boodjeh notes that HealthSport allows walk-in fees for those who want to participate in the MS or chronic pain groups, so they aren’t required to be club members. She’s also offering classes at Health by the Bay on 1st Street in Eureka, where she’ll do individual training or groups, depending on the level of interest.

“I can add spots for people who are low-income if there are enough numbers,” she notes.

If you would like more information about the yoga classes offered by Melissa Bukosky-Boodjeh, give her a call at (707) 822-7259.

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bike lane, they shouldn't be cited." He adds that he can't speak for all of the Department's 50 officers, but says they are all taught to use common sense in such instances.

Eureka resident Charlie Bean, who uses a manual wheelchair, has had a different experience from Wilson.

"I have never had a problem with our local police here in Eureka," he says. "I've used the bike lanes along Myrtle, J and Harris Streets because it was easier for me to push and there are just not any sidewalks in some parts of the City."

Jene McCovey, an Arcata resident who uses an electric wheelchair, can only recall one negative incident involving the police when she was using the street.

"I was on F Street and a police car came up from behind and made that noise to get my attention," she says. "It really startled me and I lost control of my joystick. The officer told me I needed to be on the sidewalk and it was late at night and I explained to the policeman that there were no curb cuts on the sidewalk. He just repeated three times that I needed to be on the sidewalk."

McCovey notes that she regularly utilizes the bicycle lanes in Arcata without incident, and that cyclists are polite and communicative with her.

"I think the main issues are that people need to use wheelchairs that are equipped

to be outdoors and of whether there are curb cuts or not," she says. She also emphasizes that she understands that it's difficult to see people in wheelchairs at night when they're in the street. However, that certainly should not preclude them from going out in the dark if they need to.

State law, including California's, or local laws are not necessarily crystal clear on these matters. Hence, the numerous examples from around that nation of people in wheelchairs being killed or injured when forced to use streets and more disturbing instances of some of these individuals being arrested, fined, and found at fault for accidents. For instance:

A St. Louis, Missouri resident who used a wheelchair was killed in 2005 because she was forced to use the street due to a lack of curb cuts and broken sidewalk. Early police reports indicated that it was unknown why the woman was in the street.

Also in 2005, a wheelchair user in Laurens, Iowa was forced to go into the street due to a lack of curb ramps in the town. The police sought to fine him because the community banned "personal transportation vehicles" on city streets.

In the late 1990's, a Sandusky, Ohio woman was repeatedly cited and arrested for driving her wheelchair in the street. A lawsuit was later brought against the City for violations of the ADA.

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Just this year, a woman in Georgia was ticketed for using an electric wheelchair in the street and police threatened to impound the wheelchair. Georgia law only allows motorized wheelchairs on public roads in designated bicycle lanes.

Unfortunately, there are also many examples of California residents who use wheelchairs being killed and motorists not being charged. Once again, the issues were usually that the sidewalks were not accessible or were non-existent. In many instances, disability rights groups report that communities were not responsive to demands to address the accessibility needs. Organizations such as the Disability Rights Advocates (DRA) out of Berkeley have filed successful lawsuits against the Cities of Sacramento and Vacaville, for example.

Settlements have involved devoting a percentage of the city budgets towards addressing accessibility needs.

What do the laws say about wheelchairs in bike lanes or on the street?

According to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 467 (b): *“Pedestrian includes any person who is operating a self-propelled wheelchair, invalid tricycle, or motorized quadricycle and, by reason of physical disability, is otherwise unable to move about as a pedestrian, as specified in subdivision (a).”*

Also, according to CVC Section 21966: *“No pedestrian shall proceed along a bicycle path or lane where there is an adjacent adequate pedestrian facility.”* The key word here is “adequate,” as this
See SIDEWALKS continued on page 12

Obstacle Course?

Start here. Oops! False start due to no curb cut (near grocery store).  

OK, Start at....a nice curb cut!  

...or turn right. Advance 15 feet. Darn!  

Turn left and go 10 feet. Guess it's back into the street....    

You can always cross the street to the other sidewalk...I guess not here.  

Oh well. Got to go in the street again....  

Continue 10 feet.  

SIDEWALKS continued from page 11

can certainly be open to interpretation and lead to confusion. For instance, a sidewalk that may be negotiable in an electric wheelchair may not be for someone in a manual wheelchair, or a sidewalk with curb cuts may travel over driveways on which many people in wheelchairs may not feel safe.

Also confusing can be what government entity may have responsibility for sidewalks and roads in a given area. The lines can be especially blurred in a City such as Eureka, where a state highway (Route 101) runs directly through town and where City boundaries zig-zag with unincorporated areas. For instance, one residential block may be in Eureka, with the City responsible for sidewalks and streets, and the next may be in unincorporated Cutten, where the County is in charge. However, in all instances, ADA requirements apply:

ADA Title II—28 CFR SS35.150(d)(2)
“If a public entity has responsibility or authority over streets, roads, or walkways, its transition plan shall include a schedule for providing curb ramps or other sloped areas where pedestrian walks cross curbs, giving priority to walkways serving entities covered by the Act, including State and local government offices and facilities, transportation, places of public accommodation, and employers, followed by walkways serving other areas.”

Most likely everyone with a disability is aware of inaccessible sidewalks and roads in the areas where they live, work, shop, go to school ,etc. There are so many factors

that come into play in determining when they are repaired, not the least of which is the reality that resources such as money and personnel. Clearly, local governments are often strapped for such resources. Some problems may get fixed quickly, and others not.

The ADA requires that any programs, services and activities offered by public entities at the state and local government level be accessible for people with disabilities. The State of California also has codes relative to access to state government programs and facilities that can be stricter than the ADA's. For example, they require sidewalks to be at least 48” wide instead of the 36” required by ADA. However, in residential or other areas, different rules come into play.

In Eureka, the Public Works Department reports that aside from City of Eureka or other government facilities, it is up to the property owner for sidewalk maintenance. If someone encounters a problem such as a hole or crack, it should be reported to Public Works (441-4192), after which they will investigate and take pictures. The property owner will then be notified, by mail, of the problem.

“I took pictures of dips where I'd tipped over the past and complained to the City, but the spots have still not been fixed,” says Wilson of his experience in reporting problems.

Eureka's Charlie Bean says he's had a better response.

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“The City has identified many of these and I try to inform Public Works about problems I have come across,” he notes. “You’ll also notice that the City is trying to provide curb cuts in places that did not have them before.” He further notes that he does regularly encounter some sidewalks that do have curb cuts, that are blocked by plant growth or vehicles, and that have deteriorated significantly.

Property owners are also responsible for sidewalk maintenance in Arcata as well. Mark Early, of the Public Works Department (707-822-5957) says that people should report sidewalk issues to the Department. The procedure then is to write up a work order and send someone out to determine the specifics of the reported problem.

“If the problem is really bad, the City can fix it fairly quickly,” he says. If it can wait, Arcata sets up an annual sidewalk contract in order to get a better price for the large amounts of sidewalk maintenance that need to be done each year.

At the County level, staff at the Humboldt County Public Works Department say that sidewalk maintenance in unincorporated areas is the responsibility of individual property owners. It was also pointed out that developers are required to meet ADA standards in new subdivisions or other developments.

“If something is growing over the sidewalk, like a tree or other vegetation, then our Land Use Division asks the property owner

to trim it,” the staff person reported. It was also noted that if it’s another hazard, such as a major crack or hole, then it’s up to the property owner to fix it. It was also said that if someone has a complaint about the sidewalk, the property owner needs to be contacted first and if there is no response, then you should call Public Works.

“Public Works will then remind the property owner about their responsibility,” it was noted.

At the State level, Julie East of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District One notes that when a state highway runs through city limits, then Caltrans maintains the road and pedestrian signals.

“We delegate some maintenance, such as street sweeping with the City of Eureka and landscaping with some other cities” she notes. She adds that sidewalks usually fall under a city’s jurisdiction, but not always. If you have a question about County responsibility in this area, call (707) 445-6600.

Wherever responsibilities lie, it’s clear that sidewalk accessibility and safety for those with mobility issues requires diligence, cooperation and communication from all involved. This is especially apparent given the overlapping, and sometimes vague, responsibilities for maintenance and accessibility. Hopefully, the end result will more often be that no one falls through the cracks in the process.

DOJ AGREEMENT cont. from p. 1

and local governments chosen based on a number of factors, including a desire to visit every state, the population of the site, and in some cases, the proximity of the location to a university or tourist site. To-date, the project has reached 160 settlements in 147 localities, including Humboldt County. The majority of the compliance reviews occurred in small cities and towns, because they represent the most common form of local government.

In most of these matters, the compliance reviews were undertaken on the Department's own initiative under the authority of title II and, in many cases, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 because the governments receive financial assistance from the Department and are prohibited by the Act from discriminating on the basis of disability. Some matters were undertaken in response to complaints filed against the localities.

DRS requested and received data from these local governments, and conducted

physical surveys of facilities owned or leased by these governments; of polling places; and of 9-1-1 systems.

Local government officials have responded favorably and cooperated fully in the Department's reviews. They were timely in submitting records as requested, made themselves available to answer questions during the on-site visits, and escorted investigators throughout their communities so that facilities surveys could be accomplished quickly and efficiently. Most importantly, these officials have indicated a willingness to effect changes to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities.

During the investigations, staff of the Disability Rights Section reviewed compliance with most ADA requirements. The Section has found that the vast majority of communities are aware of their ADA obligations and have made progress in meeting them. Settlement agreements resolve the balance of outstanding issues. Typical issues addressed during the Department's investigations included physical modifications to facilities to improve accessibility, physical modifications to polling places or provision of curbside voting, establishment of ADA grievance procedures where none existed before, permanent and conspicuous notice to community of ADA rights and government obligations, acquisition of TTY equipment to improve communications, including 9-1-1 services, and more.

See DOJ agreement cont. on p. 15

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& October 23, 2008**

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DOJ AGREEMENT cont. from p. 14

The agreement reached by the DOJ specifies that Humboldt County comply with the following by October 23, 2008:

- Make physical modifications to its facilities so that parking, routes into the buildings, entrances, public telephones, restrooms, service counters, and drinking fountains are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- Post, publish and distribute a notice to inform members of the public of the ADA's provisions and their applicability to the county's programs, services and activities;
- Officially recognize California's telephone relay service and train staff in using the relay service to ensure effective communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing;
- Continue to ensure that 9-1-1 emergency service calls placed by persons with disabilities who use text telephones (TTYs) are answered as quickly as other calls, that such calls are monitored for timing and accuracy, and that employees are trained and practiced in using a TTY to make and receive calls;
- Ensure that the county's official Web site is accessible to persons with disabilities;
Develop a method for ensuring that voters with disabilities can vote independently, and making auxiliary aids and services available to the public upon request, including ballots in alternate formats;
- Ensure access to emergency management services for persons with disabilities; and
- Develop a method for providing information for interested persons with disabilities concerning the existence and location of the county's accessible services, activities and programs.

In an important election year, the DOJ found violations at many polling places NOT owned or operated by Humboldt County. It gave the County a deadline of October 23, 2008 to develop a written plan to remedy the violations and make the polling places fully accessible.

If you're interested in the full agreement reached between Humboldt County and the DOJ, it is available at http://www.ada.gov/humbolt_pca/humboldt.htm or you can look at a copy at the TCIL office.

Risk Management Oversees Effort

Humboldt County's Risk Management Division is responsible for coordinating efforts to comply with the DOJ agreement. Risk Manager, Jo Ann Gath, reported that the County is focusing on getting the low-cost do-ables out of the way first, while making long-term plans on how to fund more expensive items.

Gath further noted that the County "takes it very seriously" (the agreement) and is mapping out timelines in order to comply with the many requirements.

"We'll miss the first deadline relating to elections and have notified the DOJ of this," she said, noting staff were "mired down" in the current election process.

Gath also noted that there are many "generalizations" in the agreement, such as one referring to sidewalk repairs. "It assumes we maintain a lot of sidewalks, and we don't," she claimed.

As for community input, apparently the County isn't interested. "We're complying with the law and not what people wish they had," Gath emphasized.

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