

## Services too distant from those they serve

Monday, Nov. 21, 2005.  
Just an ordinary day.

A senior citizen in her 80s is trying to find home care providers, figure out the new prescription drug plans, access healthcare, and not be isolated by lack of transportation.

A Vietnam veteran, after all these years, is still trying to get assistance from the VA for a variety of ailments related to agent orange.

A distraught mother of a bi-polar son searches for a safe and appropriate place to house her adult son who has been in the county jail for three weeks after another "incident."

A young single mom attempts to find job training, placement, childcare and stability after a tumultuous



breakup of her marriage.

A local teen, turning away from substance abuse, looks for a home, job and transportation.

Another single mom, facing a cancer operation and financial hardship, is trying to find a place for her kids while she is in the hospital and is hoping to get the water and heat back on when she returns.

A woman has been battered again by her

"boyfriend" and decides to seek a restraining order, shelter, and counseling.

Just an ordinary day in Calaveras County.

These people, a tiny percentage of the day's health and human services clientele, went to 14 county departments, three utility agencies, four community service organizations, one church, two attorneys, one state agency and one member of the county Board of Supervisors for remedy.

Almost all of the meetings, appointments, phone calls and other contacts were long distance. Most of the services are housed in San Andreas and Sacramento.

Many of those trying to get help describe the effort as baffling, remote, unnavi-

gable, and (sometimes) with less than positive outcomes. One person said the experience was a "gauntlet which only the strong could get through."

The stories challenge governments, service providers, community and faith-based organizations and policy makers to rethink the way we provide services.

Does it make sense to have hundreds of people from remote communities going to multiple appointments with various departments in San Andreas? Could some of these services be coordinated? Could they be performed in the communities where the

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## Accessing services not for the faint-hearted

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needs arise? Could we save gas and tax dollars with a more consolidated and localized approach?

Can all the parts of the system of care work together across bureaucratic and

funding barriers?

A number of innovative department heads, staff, community organizations and leaders are determined to find out. Drafts of a pilot project are being circulated to create a Community

Service Center or Family Resource Center in remote parts of the county.

The operative theory would be to hire an advocate (part community organizer, part case manager, part ombudsman) to work out of a local office.

This person would have links to all the government agencies, community organizations and services, and assist people in coordinating specific and multidisciplinary responses to their needs.

Relationships between service providers and citizens could improve as activities became more community-based. More community resources could be available by developing local partnerships. Will such an effort find its way into practice? I certainly hope so. And I can't imagine a better place for the pilot project than District 2.

What do you think? Leave messages at 293-7907.

## Lumberjack Day a success for paraders, skilled loggers

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### Logging Competition Winners

**Businessmens Stock Saw** – 1. Larry Winfield.

**Jack & Jill Hand Bucking** – 1. George Harrison Sr. and Tina Harrison.

**Women's Axe** – 1. Tina Harrison.

**Men's Stock Saw** – 1. Larry Winfield.

**Speed Axe** – 1. George Harrison Jr.

**Choker Setting** – 1. Nathan Hodges.

**Women's Stock Saw** – 1.

Sherry Antill.

**Businessmen's Axe** – 1. Chris Rohwer.

**Double Hand Bucking** – 1. Mike & Aaron Morrow.

**Men's Axe** – 1. Mike Morrow.

**Limber Pole** – 1. Mike Rupley.

**Hot Saw** – 1. George Harrison, Sr.

**All Around Logger** – 1. George Harrison Sr.

**All Around Logger Runner Up** – 1. George Harrison Jr.

**All Around Logger Second Runner Up (tie)** – 1. Tina Harrison and Mike Morrow.