



## **Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services**

Phillip R. Crandall, Director

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## **Health and Human Services department wins ACLU Patriot award**

The Redwood Chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union presented its 2009 Patriot Award to the Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services' Crisis Intervention Team. The award was given Monday night at the chapter's annual membership meeting.

The CIT is a partnership that creates and sustains close and effective interactions among law enforcement, mental health care providers, individuals with mental illness and their families to safely and appropriately assist people experiencing a mental health crisis.

DHHS Director Phillip R. Crandall accepted the award on behalf of the CIT, and said his department had worked hard to implement an interagency approach with local law enforcement to avoid or de-escalate crises in incidents involving the mentally ill.

"Humboldt County can be proud of the mutual efforts of law enforcement, NAMI and DHHS's Mental Health Branch to develop this joint response capacity for successful engagement with the mentally ill," said Crandall.

Mental Health Branch Director Karolyn Rim Stein said it was rewarding to see how well accepted the program is within the law enforcement community.

She specifically acknowledged Eureka Police Chief Garr Nielsen, Arcata City Manager and former Police Chief Randy Mendosa, Mental Health Board Chair and National Alliance on Mental Illness representative Tim Ashe, and Humboldt State University Police Department Lt. Lynne Soderberg, who serves as the CIT training facilitator.

"This partnership has made our community safer for all of us," Stein said.

The CIT is frequently called on by law enforcement to assist with stand-offs and other incidents mental health professionals can help to safely resolve. Another goal of the CIT

is to help mentally ill people access medical treatment rather than being put into the criminal justice system for illness-related behaviors.

“When someone is having a mental health crisis, they cannot stand up for their constitutional rights, such as the right to due process,” said Redwood ACLU Chair Greg Allen. “The CIT therefore gives mental health staff and law enforcement personnel effective tools to defend the rights of others when they are at their most vulnerable.”

Redwood ACLU Vice-Chair Christina Allbright said, “We are really pleased with the success of this program and hope that resources continue to be dedicated to it.”

Allbright added, “We hope that other communities can use this collaborative model to protect the constitutional rights of some of our most vulnerable citizens.”

Since 2007, DHHS has provided crisis intervention training to more than 200 community members, including 160 law enforcement personnel. The trainings have been jointly supported by the National Alliance on Mental Illness and local law enforcement.

The ACLU chapter gives the Patriot Award annually to the community member or members who have demonstrated a patriotic commitment to defending and preserving Constitutional rights and liberties. The award is now in its sixth year.

The CIT was developed and supported by DHHS, the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, the City of Eureka, the Eureka Police Department, NAMI, the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office, the Mental Health Board and numerous other local law enforcement agencies throughout the county.

