

Back in 1979, Vector Health Programs, a small non profit organization was established by Dr. Terry Knapp and Karen Angel, the original Executive Director. During those early years of the organization, the primary purposes were to educate the public and medical professionals, to sponsor research and improve delivery of health care and rehabilitate the physically and functionally challenged to return to an active and productive life.

During the 1980s and 90s, the north Coast economy was based primarily on the timber and fishing industries. Due to an unfortunate number of accidents affecting the upper extremities, Vector was known as the regional hand center.

Finally along with Dr. Jerry Wheeler, Vector began the Craniofacial Anomalies program on the North Coast. Working with local physicians and health care providers, the program provides assistance to children with cleft lip and cleft palate; the only program of its kind north of San Francisco.

Now FAST forward to 2010! In May of that year, Easter Seals organization closed its warm water pool after serving the community for over sixty years. The community jewel was valued as a critical resource. The 92 degree pool provided a crucial safety net and resource for people with disabilities, as well as many other community members.

Facing imminent closure, community leaders acted to find a new home for the pool. With help from both Humboldt Area Foundation and McLean Foundation along with community support, Vector stepped in as the best fit to provide ongoing and expanded services.

Now in 2014, Vector continues to meet its organizational mission; to provide physical therapy and other services to our community, regardless of a person ability to pay. Vector continues to provide support and assistance to local children and their families born with cleft lip and cleft palate with special feeding kits and travel stipends for surgeries in the bay area

And now with the additional benefit of the warm water pool for physical therapy services already provided, Vector is positioned to become the premier wellness center. The scope of individualized warm water and land based programs include; orthopedic and sports rehabilitation, strength and gait training. Our Certified Hand Therapist continues to provided hand therapy and custom splinting. The vision of the Vector Aquatic Center has expanded to include a medical equipment loan program, where community members can check out medical equipment (walkers, wheel chairs, crutches) for short periods of time at minimal cost or no cost.

Many community members benefit from our warm water pool by participating in our community pool classes. These classes include; aqua arthritis, aqua yoga Ahi Chi, aqua stretch and going solo. Adults are not the only ones who benefit from the warm water pool. Glen Paul School uses our facility for their students and earlier this year Vector began swimming lessons for all ages including mommy and me classes. Both have been very popular.

So after 35 years, Vector continues to meet its mission as a non profit. And as the community health needs change, Vector will be right there, regardless of a person's ability to pay.

This has been Bill Ruff for Community Comment