

# CAIRS

NEWSLETTER

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CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

## Conference Wrap-Up

by Jan Coen and Ned Cooney, Conference Co-Chairs

WELL, THIS WAS A BANNER YEAR for the CAIRS Annual Conference. We had our biggest attendance at a conference ever! The Hanalei Hotel in San Diego was a beautiful setting for this year's gathering. From the poolside Welcome Reception on Thursday evening, to the last workshop on Saturday morning, conference attendees had a range of activities to choose from including Hot Topics and User Groups as well as 25 different workshops.



The overall Conference Evaluation forms indicate that everyone found the topics presented and the Keynote presentation to be useful as well as timely. If you have any suggestions for topics you would like to see covered at future Conferences, please contact any one of your Board members with this information. We were also able to offer CEU's for most workshops for the first time, and will continue to do so at future Conferences.

We were glad to see all of you this year, and are looking forward to seeing you all next year at our Annual conference in Northern California. □

## 211 and Taxonomy — Compatible Partners

by Betty Creary

AS 211 — WHICH IS ROLLING RIGHT ALONG IN OUR STATE — becomes a reality, we can almost see ourselves on the Information Highway as all those great little roadside stands, offering our Information and Referral wares to all callers. Better yet, we will be able to easily refer to each other. Just thinking about how much easier it

*cont. on page 3...*

## 1999 CAIRS Election

YOU WILL RECEIVE, or have already received, the ballot for this year's Board election. I encourage you NOT to set it aside when you get it, because we all know that two months from now you'll find it, bop yourself alongside your head and say, "Oh, man. I should have done this two months ago." Instead, open it up, make your choices and place it in your mail bin that same day.

Why is this so important? Primarily, you are selecting people within our profession to represent you in the association. So, for Pete's sake, get with it and mail in those ballots!! □

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## Letter from the President...



If you didn't attend our annual conference in San Diego in September, you really missed a good one. We had over 100 attendees, the most since I have been on the Board. The workshops were informative and well-attended. Our keynote speaker, Lori Warrens from United Way 211 out of Atlanta, gave us an update on the 211 process nationally and answered questions later at a state-wide meeting.

What I think is most powerful, most important about our conference, or any gathering where like-minded individuals come together, is the opportunity to network, to communicate, to exchange ideas and practices. Throughout the conference I heard people introducing themselves, asking where they lived and worked and how they practiced I&R. I heard exchange of ideas in workshops and in hot topics and people sharing their best practices with each other over breakfast and lunch with an exchange of business cards.

The Board of Directors spends the entire year planning and preparing for the conference, dealing with issues such as workshop topics, presenters, exhibitors, sponsors, working with the hotel and much more. Yet, it all really comes together when you arrive. Because you bring with you excitement, anticipation, and experience. When all of that mixes up well, the result is an astonishing creation. So on behalf of the Board, I want to thank you all for attending this year's conference and really being there.

If your agency/program would like to be spotlighted in a future edition of the CAIRS Newsletter, please notify Trish Draper at 408.243.0279, ext. 201 or e-mail her at [draper@iandrinform.com](mailto:draper@iandrinform.com).

You may have a question that just can't seem to be answered sufficiently for you. Send those questions to "Ask Ira and Irene" at [ira&irene@hotmail.com](mailto:ira&irene@hotmail.com).

When you receive those ballots in the mail for the Board Election, please let your voice be heard by selecting the folks you want to represent you in this association and returning it quickly.

Here's to a happy and healthy holiday season and we'll see you next year in the 21st Century.

*Linda Beth Swan,*  
President, CAIRS

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# CAIRS

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and Referral Services

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## Welcome to a New Board Member:

JT SIMKINS was appointed to the CAIRS Board in November 1998 and began his service in January 1999 at the annual CAIRS Board retreat. JT was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah and attended the University of Utah pursuing an education in Social Science and Therapeutic Recreation. From 1994-1998 JT managed the Access Utah Network, a state-wide I & R, specializing in issues and services related to people with disabilities. He left Utah in June of 1998 to accept an Associate Director position with the Information and Referral Division of the United Way of San Diego County.

Other professional pursuits include an adjunct teaching position with Salt Lake Community College, life skills instruction for adults with developmental disabilities and a teaching assistant position for intellectually disabled middle school aged children who were learning to mainstream into regular education classes.

JT lives in Temecula, southwest Riverside County, with his wife, Hollie and his step-daughter, Brittney. His youngest daughter, Brianna, still lives in Salt Lake. Favorite activities include camping, fishing, traveling, spending time with his family and last, but not least, watching the Oakland Raiders on Sunday.

We are very glad to have you with us, JT. ☐

## Taxonomy & 211...

...from page 1

will be for the users of I & R to access each and every one of us reminds me of the advantages of the AIRS/INFOLINE Taxonomy. The taxonomy standardizes our language, making our resource files much more efficient tools for researching the most appropriate services. Taxonomy definitions and descriptions help us to peel away the fundraising hyperbole found in agency brochures, giving us a much more accurate picture of essential services.

Universal use of the taxonomy also facilitates our ability to trade information and collaborate on projects. How so, you might ask. Let me give you an example. Several years ago a large utility company asked my agency for comprehensive listings of non-profit services in each of the Bay Area counties. This was very easy to do as we can refer users to an agency in each county which acts as a file manager for the resources available in that county. The file manager agencies have an agreement about how the resources are classified and what information each resource listing should contain. Because of this agreement, any of the information that we share with each other is compatible.

The utility company was very impressed with the system used in the Bay Area and asked us to assist them with 48 other counties because they wanted to set up year-round, local, county-based employee fundraising activities and wanted to offer county-based lists of agencies which would be potential recipients. It took two months and two staff to gather all the information, organize it and produce the county specific lists. Why did this take so long?

Because information management systems were so varied. We had to manually extract and reorganize most of the information we gathered. How much easier it would have been to offer the company each of the county-based primary contacts (part of the 211 system), assuring them that the information they would be able to request (and pay for) would be standardized to the taxonomy. Lists sorted by service type and records using clear and accurate descriptions of services would help employees to make careful, informed choices about how to financially support services in their local areas.

This experience has made a convert of me and my agency to 211 and to the taxonomy. If you want to market products such as lists and labels, customized directories or a comprehensive directory, database on disk or a web site, don't work in a vacuum. Look to the future of the

*continued on page 7...*



# Get Ready for Y2K!

## PART 2

by Burt Wallrich, INFOLINE, Los Angeles

*[This article was originally published in the Emergency Network Los Angeles newsletter, ENLA News, April, 1999. Part I of this reprint was published in the Summer CAIRS Newsletter.]*

### 2. Individual and Household Preparedness

Even if all your equipment is ready for the year 2000, you won't be able to provide service if your staff isn't prepared. Also, the more we help the community to prepare, the less serious will be the impacts of any breakdowns that do happen. So individual and household preparedness is something each agency should emphasize to its staff and to its constituents in the community.

Basically, being prepared for the year 2000 is the same as being prepared for disaster in general. Everyone, especially here in southern California, should always be prepared for emergencies. The main difference with the Y2K bug is that we know when it is coming. (More about the date question later.)

Both the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Red Cross and the City of Los Angeles have issued excellent Y2K brochures with checklists for household preparedness. The Red Cross one can be downloaded from their website: [www.arcla.org](http://www.arcla.org). The City's brochure can be downloaded from [www.cityofla.org/year2k/](http://www.cityofla.org/year2k/). It is also available at City libraries and LAPD stations. ENLA recommends that you distribute these to your staff and to as many of your constituents as possible.

Think about ways your agency can help your staff prepare. Can you buy emergency supplies in

bulk for resale to employees in order to save them money? Is it possible to distribute the last paycheck of the year early so they can deposit or cash it more easily than might be possible right before New Year's?

### 3. Prepare For Immediate Impacts

There is good reason to think that whatever the Y2K impacts are they won't all happen right after midnight on January 1, 2000. Some may happen beforehand. For example, if your organization is on a fiscal year that starts July 1 or October 1 some of your computer programs will have to deal with the year 2000 starting then. There is also speculation that the dates of September 9, 1999 and October 10, 1999 may cause problems. And problems could last well into the next few years.

However, if there is going to be a widespread Y2K impact on the community, it will most likely occur around the New Year. If your organization has a role in post-disaster relief and short-term recovery you would do well to be ready for some emergency operations then. This might mean scheduling more staff to be on duty, or at least on standby, than would be normal during a holiday period. ENLA will have its communications systems operating over the holidays, using its website ([www.enla.org](http://www.enla.org)) and, if needed, phone, fax, and "sneaker net" to keep its member organizations informed.

### 4. Long-Range Recovery

The Y2K problem could have a long-range ripple effect through the economy for a number of reasons. For one, if transportation is disrupted some companies might close for lack of supplies or because they can't get their goods to market.

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## *CAIRS Board of Directors*

The CAIRS Board welcomes comments and suggestions from all members. Feel free to call or e-mail your nearest Board member to express your opinion or to volunteer for any CAIRS activities or events.

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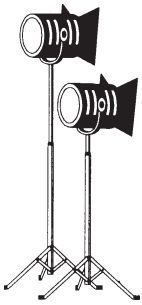
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## *Letters to the Editor*

As always, the Board of Directors is looking for your input. You can provide yours by contacting the editor of the CAIRS newsletter, Jerome S. Burstein. See his address, top of page.



## Spotlight on: INFOLINE Sacramento

by Patricia Draper

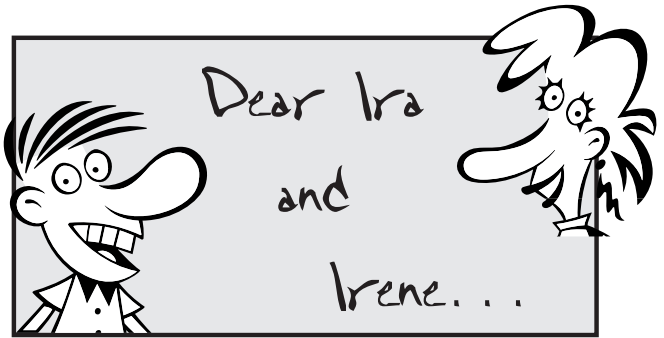
InfoLine Sacramento is a comprehensive, multilingual, telephone Information and Referral service that has been in existence since 1976.

InfoLine is a program of the Community Services Planning Council and is funded through the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency and donated office space through the Sacramento Public Library. InfoLine is also the senior Information and Assistance program funded through our local Area Agency on Aging.

Our Information and Referral Specialists assist 32,000 people per year. The top needs that our clients have include housing, food, financial assistance, health care, and employment and training. The hot topics that people are calling about this month include flu shots and Section 8 applications since our Housing Authority just opened the waiting list and InfoLine is the number to call for application distribution sites.

InfoLine Sacramento has a data base of over 1,500 community services. This data base is available as a Community Services Directory printed annually and as our Directory on Disk updated quarterly. InfoLine is partnering with local agencies to open seven Neighborhood Information Centers (NIC's) in six low-income Sacramento County communities that are in need of community resources. The NIC's will have a computer with the Directory on Disk for the public to use as well as printed resources materials. InfoLine I&R staff assigned to each community will do extensive outreach and training to facilitate information sharing and the use of available community resources.

In the event of a disaster, InfoLine is ready to assist with response and recovery efforts. Working together with the Volunteer Center and the Amer-  
*cont. next page, top right ...*



*Dear Ira and Irene,*

*I have heard so much about the AIRS/INFOLINE Taxonomy, what is it and do I need it?*

*Signed,  
Jenny in Eureka*

Dear Jenny,

In common terms, the Taxonomy is much like an insurance company's ICD 9 codes. If you break your leg in San Diego or in New York, the billing code is the same in each location. This common "language" makes communication between doctors and insurance companies uniform. The Taxonomy is designed the same way, enabling uniform communication between I&R's worldwide.

In technical terms, the AIRS/INFOLINE Taxonomy is a system used for the classification of resources disseminated to clients. The Taxonomy is built on a five-level hierarchy, enabling resource classification from a general broadest level to very specific. For example, Food will be listed by the following categories:

- Basic Subsistence
- Food
- Emergency Food
- Food Pantries
- Occasional Emergency Assistance
- On-Going Emergency Assistance

Searching by these levels enables the Specialist to access detailed, appropriate resources without searching first for food, then for emergency food,  
*cont. next page, middle column...*

## Ready for Y2K?

*from page 4*

In most cases this would be a temporary closure but companies that operate on a very slim margin could go out of business.

Another possible source of trouble is the fact that major corporations are pouring literally billions of dollars into Y2K mitigation. This is money that is not being used for research and development and the other things that lead to job development. So it is not unreasonable to think that new jobs will not continue to be created at the pace of the past few years. This also could increase unemployment.

If your organization serves low-income persons, you might expect an increase in demand for your services that could last for many months. Food pantries, homeless service agencies, and agencies that deal with the fall-out from economic stress, such as substance abuse and domestic violence, might all be affected.

### What about Civil Disorder?

There has been speculation that Y2K could lead to civil disorder either because people might panic out of fear that they won't be able to get basic necessities and/or fear that some people might try to use power outages or confusion from Y2K as a cover for criminal activity.

There are two answers to this concern: (1) The more we can help people in the community understand the Y2K issue and be prepared for it, as for any emergency, the less likelihood is that there will be any panic. (2) Law enforcement will be on a high state of alert to put an immediate end to any problems that do develop. It is possible that New Year's, 2000, will be the safest New Year's on record. □

## Ask Ira & Irene...

*from page 6*

etc. This takes you immediately to agencies that distribute emergency food.

Cordially,  
Ira & Irene

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### Got questions?

Write to "Dear Ira and Irene" in care of the CAIRS Newsletter editor, Jerome Burstein. Address on page 5. Or e-mail: [irandirene@hotmail.com](mailto:irandirene@hotmail.com).

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## Taxonomy & 211...

*...from page 3*

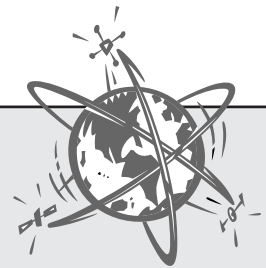
technology that 211 and the information super highway will offer. Remember that we are all partners in providing Information and Referral. Every step we take toward standardizing the work only enhances the over-all product, from phone work to resource management. □

## Spotlight on INFOLINE...

*from page 3*

ican Red Cross, InfoLine gives callers current resource information about sandbag locations and shelter sites, as well as coordinates volunteers. To serve our senior callers, InfoLine has the Disaster Reassurance Program for Seniors, a registry of frail seniors whom we contact in case of a disaster such as a flood or heatwave, to see if they are safe and refer to them to any resources needed, including volunteer sandbaggers.

Our up-and-coming projects include a satellite office at the Sacramento Superior Court Self-Help Center which we will staff full-time. Also we are working with other agencies to open Senior Information Centers to complement our Neighborhood Information Centers and focus on the older adults in the community. □



The CAIRS web page includes an on-line version of this newsletter.

The web address is:

[www.CAIRS.org](http://www.CAIRS.org)

*Add it to your bookmarks!*

Contact Lynda Lockhart at 909/596-1111 for any questions regarding CAIRS membership.

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