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### Adult school struggles to thrive after budget cuts



When Bill Garvine got moved into a new job at Alameda Municipal Power, he decided he needed to build his computer skills. So he signed up for three classes at the Alameda Adult School.

What he learned in just six months at the school helped him at work and also made him a passionate advocate for the services the adult school provides – services some fear may become a victim of ongoing budget cuts.

“I’m scared that it’s an easy target. And it’s not one that has an advocacy base,” Garvine, a former Alameda school board member who has advocated for adult ed at recent school board meetings, told The Island.

He said the classes provide everything from job training opportunities to people who have been laid off and need new skills to basic English for non-English speakers. The school serves about 4,000 people a year with a host of low-fee classes, at historic Alameda High School, Mastick Senior Center and local churches.

“These are critical lifeline programs,” Garvine said.

Money for adult education has traditionally been separate from other funds a school district uses to pay its bills. But that all changed in 2009 when the state decided to allow districts to use some of their so-called “categorical” funds – money set aside for specific programs like adult ed – to balance budgets in the wake of massive state cuts.

Last year, the district used \$800,000 from its adult education to balance its budget. If voters reject the Measure E parcel tax, adult ed could see another \$350,000 cut from its \$1.1 million budget.

“I think everybody’s just kind of on pins and needles,” said Jackie Krause, senior services manager at Mastick Senior Center, which is home to 15 adult school classes. Krause said Alameda is fortunate to have the adult ed program it has and that it surpasses what’s available elsewhere in the Bay Area.

Garvine said he understands that the district is in rough financial waters and that its priority is to educate children. But he said the cuts are a tough pill to swallow at a time when the adult ed program has been improving, under the direction of its new principal, Thomas Orput, who outlined plans to improve the school’s services for the school board in December.

Orput recently implemented a series of fees for adult school programs in order to close a \$200,000 budget gap. Seniors pay a \$15 fee for “lifelong learner” programs this January through June, while others pay \$30 a year for adult basic education, adult secondary education and other courses.

Superintendent Kirsten Vital said she doesn’t want to take money from adult ed or to implement fees. But she said the state budget crisis has put the district in a tough spot.

“It’s pitting one group against another,” Vital said. “But sadly, that’s our reality.”

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## 5 to “Adult school struggles to thrive after budget cuts”

1.



*zackotomato* says:  
[1, May 19, 2010 at 2:11 pm](#)

Mr. Garvine is a well paid employee with Alameda Municipal Power. He can easily afford to pay for his own continuing education and not ask the tax payer to foot the bill. This is why companies, including power companies should not be publically owned. There is too much temptation to play politics. What we see above is simply you scratch my back and I will scratch yours.

2.



*Teri* says:  
[1, May 19, 2010 at 3:42 pm](#)

Mr. Garvine paid the fee, just like everyone else. He took his own time to go to school board meetings to advocate AGAINST cuts in adult ed so that everyone will have the chance to take great classes, conveniently located, at a low cost. Don’t understand how