

# Skills Center offers businesses a bargain

By JENNIFER KOSS  
STAFF WRITER

Good work at bargain rates is what the Skills Center offers local businesses.

That's the word Steven Glenn, marketing manager for the Skills Center, gave to the Capitola Chamber of Commerce yesterday.

Glenn described the 30-year-old non-profit organization and told how local businesses can benefit from the activities there.

It encompasses five programs in Santa Cruz County, he said, involving 170 people with disabilities ranging from epilepsy to autism and varying degrees of retardation.

An activities program in Soquel involves 40 people; 90 work in a "factory/sheltered workshop environment" in Live Oak; 18 work in a commercial janitorial service; seven are employed in the community; and others work in an agricultural/horticultural setting near Watsonville.

While the Skills Center's main function is to provide job training and placement for developmentally disabled adults, Glenn said it is also a business.

"We feel that we have a product to offer, and our product is a good worker," he said.

Local businessmen are an

important part of the program, he said. "We consider the business community, next to our clientele, to be our most important connection."

The factory workers in Live Oak do packaging, heat-sealing, compiling of brochures and toy assembly.

When a businessman calls with a request, the first step is to determine if Skills Center workers can do the job. Then a study is done to determine how long the job would take and what the charge would be.

Glenn said a recent survey showed customers were most impressed with the cost and the turnaround time.

Unlike a business, the Skills Center tries to place its most efficient workers in outside jobs, he said. Many work in fast-food restaurants or as janitors.

Skills Center clients take pride in their work and satisfaction in getting paychecks. In addition, services are a bargain.

One bargain happens to be offered this weekend at the center's 4,500-square-foot greenhouse on Harkins Slough Road: There'll be a spring clearance sale of 2,000 houseplants and landscape plants for less than \$5 each.