



## Computer Skills

# South Bay Adult School STORIES



### Retooling

Ed Deery of Redondo Beach didn't think he would have to retool his job skills in his fifties. After all, he owned a successful furniture store in Riverside that had been a going concern since 1981. Then, in 2002, the city of Riverside decided that it needed the property as part of a large redevelopment project and by February of 2008, Ed was suddenly out of business and out of a job.

At first, Ed applied for work at other furniture stores, but found that they were "falling left and right" as the mortgage meltdown caused the economy to slump. He tried other retail areas, but kept running into the same problem: he had no computer skills. He had never even learned to type. "Here I was," he said, "with more than twenty years of management experience and prospective employers were asking, 'How fast can you type?'" That's when his son Brian read the South Bay Adult School brochure and saw the "At Your Own Speed" page in the Career section. Brian, too, needed computer skills. He had taken courses at Long Beach Community College, and he had a job waiting for him, but they told him he'd have to learn to type first.

Father and son enrolled in the course together. "This is the best possible class for me," Ed said. "It's completely self-paced, so I can come in when I want and as often as I want, and Don is here to help me through it." Don is Don Torluemke, the instructor and director of computer programs at the adult school. The class format was his idea. "People want and need these skills, but we have to offer instruction around their busy schedules. Some people looking for work can't afford to wait the 8-10 weeks a traditional course will take, but they are willing to come every day to get what they need." He recalls another student, who, like Ed, needed minor retooling. He was an electronics technician who was laid off because his job can now be done by a computer. He became certified as a pharmacy assistant, but failed the typing test at the job interview. After a few weeks in the SBAS program, his typing was up to speed and he's now working at his new job. "We fill gaps," said Don. "Many of our clients don't need an entire course on a computer application; they just need a specific skill. We can do that."

Don is constantly revamping computer classes to keep up with changing needs and interests. He's developing a "brain fitness" training program that applies new research in neurobiology to improve memory, a concept that's sure to connect with aging boomers.

Now Brian is working as a real estate appraiser and dad Ed is making rapid progress through the Microsoft Office Suite. "As I look back, this whole thing has been a blessing in disguise. I'm learning something new and looking forward to whatever comes next. You have to be prepared when the market is hot and be able to change when it's not."

*South Bay Adult School offers a variety of computer classes at the Edison Center in Redondo Beach. The entire brochure is online at [southbayadult.org](http://southbayadult.org).*