



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving People With Sight Loss
(707) 523-3222 ebc@earlebaum.org

February 2011 Volume 11 Issue 1

In Memoriam

EBC co-founder, Larry Swenson, passed away on December 21, 2010 after a long illness. Larry was an inspiration to many. Blind for much of his adult life, Larry shared his great insight and passion around all issues of the blind. His dedication to the greater blindness community of the Redwood Empire, helped realize the dream of Earle Baum: That his 17 acre farm on Occidental Road would one day be a hub for those with sight loss.

An attorney by profession, Larry presented himself as calm and easy going, but behind this unruffled exterior, he was focused and determined. His aim was to see the completion of the EBC, a place where people who are blind and visually impaired could learn skills, share ideas and mentor one another. Through his own experience, he knew that with appropriate skills and attitude, blindness is mostly an inconvenience. He passionately talked the talk and walked the walk and never let his sight loss keep him from doing anything, including traveling throughout India by himself.

Larry was true to his ideals and values and was always willing to share stories, help people through difficult periods and give generously of himself. Larry will be deeply missed. He was a dear and special man. His memory lives on in the good work of the Earle Baum Center.

From the Center

Since our last newsletter in November, a lot has gone on at the Earle Baum Center. I need not tell anyone that these are dynamic and turbulent times so it is no surprise that our experience at the EBC mirrors what is going on everywhere.

We recently faced a big loss with the death of Larry Swenson, one of our founders. For many years, Larry dedicated himself to the establishment and growth of the EBC and in recent years he spent valuable time with his family and friends. Larry was a fearless man and an inspiration to many. His passing makes me sad but I think back with optimism to Larry's involvement with the early days of the EBC. Eleven years ago, with our doors officially open, we started serving those with sight loss. Much has evolved since that time. Looking back, I clearly picture Larry leading the weekly Thursday Thinkers Support Group, and in my experience, I have never seen a more dynamic and exciting group devoted to issues of blindness. I have many memories of those nascent days, especially of the people. I feel the loss of so many no longer with us who were good friends and great believers in the EBC. How fast the time has passed; I think of the many years in terms of the number of holiday parties we have held before



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closing for the year. Yet with this reflection of the past, it is also a time to look forward, knowing that the work of the EBC must continue its work with a vengeance. We owe our best effort to ensure that Earle Baum's dream lives on, far into the future. The EBC is not about any one person but about the collective energy of our dedicated staff, volunteers, clients and supporters. No organization could ask for a better start or sustenance than ours. We continue to muster our strength and work together for the organization's long term health.

Recently, staff member Dale Godfrey and I spoke to Sonoma County Supervisor Shirlee Zane about the condition of our local government. She stated what we all know, that the County has made very deep cuts in the budget to try to meet the dramatically reduced tax base. Shirlee is optimistic that things will improve over time but the reality is that we continue to face very tough times. Governor Brown has announced his proposed State budget. For far too long, the decision-makers have passed on the deficits with the magic of accounting gimmicks but there are few tricks left. Unless the tax base improves, the only solution is huge cuts to services in California. The same is the case at the Federal level. I and many others predicted this several years ago. This was a time in which I made a plea for greater support from our stakeholders as well as Congress members and Senators. My concern was that the government would not continue to serve the needs of the people at the required level. Now, it is up to us all; the staff of the EBC together with our clients and supporters to find solutions to our needs.

Surprisingly towards the end of 2010, we had some success in dealing with the short-

comings. In an unexpected contact, one of our generous foundation donors, the Feldman Foundation of Pittsburgh, PA, talked to me about ways to have a longer term impact on our programs. Under the direction of foundation board member David Rothbart, who just passed away, the Feldman Foundation committed money to the EBC for the next five years to support various activities. At a time when activities are in jeopardy due to funding, the foresight of David Rothbart was touching and very special. We may not have the funds to build a significant activities program but we have a good beginning from which to build a long term funding stream. We need more supporters to step up to ensure the sustainability of EBC programs.

Where do we go from here? As an organization that benefited from great passion and expertise to build our vision and foundation, we have thrived. Now, we need to go to the next level. The budget of the EBC relies on the California Department of Rehabilitation fee for service reimbursements to pay for most training or instruction. It does not cover any of the expenses of operations but makes it possible to serve the thousands of people we see annually. The rest comes from donations. We have received some much appreciated small bequests and donations to balance our budgets. But we have not been able to get to the point where we can make financial decisions to meet needs by tapping into our own resources including a much desired endowment. If a portion of our budget was funded by an endowment, we could do so much more. Currently, we must rely on fee for services exclusively to drive our decisions.

We need your good suggestions and help to figure out how to best reach those who can build a significant endowment. Generally, endowments are built with bequests

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and planned giving. The EBC operates as a very lean organization and we have not had the benefit of a sophisticated fund development staff. It was recently pointed out to me that we need more discussion with our clients along with their families and friends who see the good work of the EBC on a day to day basis.

Please contact me or anyone at the EBC if you want to talk to us about long term giving. I welcome this discussion. Together we can make some big decisions about the future and long term needs of our community.

Allan Brenner, CEO

“Estate Planning in an Uncertain Time”

by
Kenneth S. Jacobs
Attorney at Law

Death and taxes are not anyone’s favorite subject. Recognizing, however, that both are inescapable, planning is needed to minimize their financial impact on one’s survivors.

The days to writing a simple Will and tossing it in a drawer are long past for most families. Ever-changing Estate Tax laws, fluctuating property values, increasing life expectancy and concerns with long-term incapacity, high costs of estate administration, varying and changing definitions of domestic relationships, and ever-complex inheritance laws make Estate Planning a “must-do” for just about everyone.

Estate planning in California essentially covers three topics: one, avoiding probate; two, planning for incapacity; and three, minimizing the tax impact of inheritance. Of course, this planning must be done in view of each unique family situation, estate size, and personal desires. There are no cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all solutions

when it comes to Estate Planning.

The new year brings sweeping changes to the Estate Tax Law. In the past three years we went from a \$3.5 million Estate Tax exemption (the amount a person can pass Estate Tax free) and a 45% top rate, to no Estate Tax at all in 2010, to the new \$5.0 million exemption and 35% top rate in 2011. This new law then expires on December 31, 2013, at which point the Estate Tax will revert to 2002 levels, with a \$1.0 million exemption and a 50% top rate. That is, unless Congress acts in time, and extends the current 2011 law, or creates something completely new.

In addition, beginning this year, estates can now apply the unused Estate Tax exemption left by a predeceased spouse who dies in 2011 or later. For example, under the new rules, if a man dies in 2011 and leaves \$2.0 million to his children, his surviving spouse can then apply the remaining \$3.0 million of his Estate Tax exemption to her estate, effectively allowing her to pass \$8.0 million Estate Tax free.

To make matters even more complicated, heirs of people who died in 2010 now have a choice of applying the 2010 Estate Tax rules (no Estate Tax, but generally limited to \$1.3 million of stepped-up basis on appreciated assets) or the 2011 Estate Tax rules (\$5.0 million Estate Tax exemption per person, but unlimited stepped-up basis on appreciated assets).

So, what should you do in 2011?

First of all, stick with the basics. A basic estate plan in California, appropriate for the vast majority, will include a Living Trust, Pour-Over Will, Durable Power of Attorney, and an Advanced Health Care Directive.

A Living Trust has been and will remain

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Estate Planning from page 3

the cornerstone of California estate planning. In short, a properly drafted and funded Living Trust will avoid probate, an extremely costly and prolonged court process to otherwise administer an estate. Note that Probate is required with or without a Will. The main difference is that a Will directs how an estate is to be distributed and who will be the executor. Without a Will, California law and the court makes this determination. In either case Probate is required, and a Living Trust is still generally the best way to avoid the expensive and time consuming probate process.

It is also a good idea to review a Living Trust now and then, to address any changes in one's family, assets, and the law. In particular, many couples have "AB" Trusts (or "ABC" Trusts), which require the family trust to split into multiple and generally irrevocable shares upon the first to die. While there are perfectly legitimate reasons to have this type of trust, many couples, especially those who bought trusts from the so-called "trust mills" who peddle trusts at "free seminars", would be better served in light of the new Estate Tax laws with a simpler trust that doesn't require division upon the first to die. Once the first spouse dies with an "AB" Trust, it is too late to undo this potentially devastating consequence.

In addition to a Living Trust, Californians need a Pour-Over Will which acts as a back-up to the trust in case an asset is inadvertently left out of the trust. A Durable Power of Attorney is needed to appoint someone to make financial decisions in case of incapacity, potentially avoiding court supervised Conservatorship. An Advanced Health Care Directive, available from many doctors offices, hospitals, and

on-line, gives direction regarding medical and personal care decisions (including end of life care), and appoints a health care agent to make decisions and supervise care in case one becomes incapacitated.

Any review and update to an Estate Plan should be done with the new 2011 Estate Tax law in mind, but also with the consideration that it is a temporary law, set to expire in two years. Politics aside, does anyone really want to bet on what Congress and the President might do in 2013? In that sense, Estate Planning has become a guessing game, balancing what is happening now and what might happen in the future.

Finally, charitable giving should still be encouraged, and not just for the internal satisfaction we all feel by being charitable. With the uncertain future of the Estate Tax laws, charitable giving is still an excellent way to minimize potential estate and income taxes. Charitable gifts can be leveraged through mediums such as Charitable Remainder Trusts to take advantage of certain tax laws, preserving an income stream, while at the same time benefitting one's favorite charities.

These days the only certainty in Estate Planning seems to be further uncertainty. The best advice is to keep in touch with your professional advisors, keep your Living Trust up to date, focus on basics, and plan for the present with a wary eye on the future.

**Sebastopol Attorney Ken Jacobs is certified by the State Bar of California Board of Legal Specialization as a Certified Specialist in Estate Planning, Trust & Probate Law. For more information please call (707) 829-7303, or find us on the web at www.kenjacobs.com.*

“Get involved with EBC.”

That’s what David Fuchs of Ukiah, very hard working former Transportation Supervisor for the County of Mendocino, advises someone facing vision loss.

Fifty-eight year old Fuchs has never let grass grow under his feet and is quick to tell you that he prefers being outdoors. As a weekend cowboy, Dave did it all: Rodeos, team roping, hunting.



Then an ATV accident in December of 2009 drastically changed his life. He had to be flown by helicopter out of the hills of Mendocino County to the hospital. David adds, “Without my son Jordan’s immediate help I would have died.” He was in a coma for a month and spent six weeks in hospital. The accident left him with permanent damage to his optic nerves resulting in partial blindness. He required months of physical therapy and refused to use either cane or wheelchair.

One day during a therapy session at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital the therapist recommended calling the EBC. This proved to be yet another major turning point for Fuchs. “Coming to EBC was admitting to being blind,” says Dave. Facing this reality is never easy and was especially difficult for this busy, active outdoorsman. David categorically states, “I don’t know where I would be without EBC!”

Like many people who are suddenly faced with vision loss, giving up driving was tough. “Driving was so much a part of my life.” And there were other adjustments; Dave’s family life changed too. Carin, Dave’s wife, took over a lot of things to keep the family household running smoothly. Carin admits that Dave’s accident was life-changing for her too and that it was tough to keep from feeling “guilty.”

Even though Dave had to make changes to his lifestyle, he remains the same active outdoors guy only with new projects: Building nesting boxes for his chickens, raising rabbits, even splitting the six cords of wood he uses every winter to heat his home. Dave also regularly grooms his team horse “Bob”. “It’s not always easy, but I have to do it.” And that he does, always with gusto! Recently Dave and Carin learned about a regenerative treatment for his damaged optic nerves. So with “lots of hope” he and Carin are making plans to go to Germany where doctors will harvest bone marrow to use in stem cell treatment. It will take 2 to 6 months to see if this treatment will work. Both are very optimistic. Dave explained that the stem cells are injected under the eye next to the optic nerve. Dave and Carin heard about this procedure through Stem Cells for Hope, an organization representing an international network of clinics that provide leading edge stem cell treatments.

When asked about the EBC, the Fuchs loved Susan’s Hirschfield’s Living with Vision Loss class and “cried buckets” when they first started. Dave found Denise Vancil’s Introduction to Blindness class very helpful too. Now a white cane user, his mobility skills were greatly improved with instruction from Regina Perez and his computer skills sharpened with guidance from Jeff Harrington and Jacques Law.

Now, armed with an array of new skills and ongoing support from EBC, the Fuchs are continuing to move forward with increased zest and a renewed sense of hope and happiness. When Dave reflects on all that has happened since his fateful accident and then fortunate acquaintance with EBC, Dave says, **“This is real life!”**

Winking at the girls is his biggest challenge!

Ninety-two year old Dan O'Brien has been a lively member of the EBC community since 2007 when he enrolled in the Introduction to Vision Loss classes.



At the time he had been legally blind with macular degeneration for over ten years. Dan's joie de vivre however did not begin while at the EBC, it has been with him since boyhood.

The term "he has done it all, and then some" fits Dan to a tee. Born in San Francisco and raised in San Mateo County, Dan had a career as an aeronautical engineer with Douglas Aircraft. Dan is also a WWII Navy veteran. He was an engineer for the Food Machine Corporation, a heating and air conditioning contractor, and a realtor. He "officially" retired in 2005.

After his multiple and successful careers, Dan and his family moved from the East Bay to Sonoma County in 1994 with plans of growing and selling prized bearded irises. Two acres of their eight acre property in West Sonoma County remain dedicated to this ever growing iris business. Daughter PJ will tell you that her father is the "brains" of the operation and she is the "brawns".

Continuing education has always been a major part of Dan's life. Daughter PJ recalls that over the years her dad was always studying multiple topics and involved with various projects. "He was always taking a class on something, including his pursuit for creating good hot chocolate." Dan's eyes sparkle when hot chocolate is mentioned.

At age ninety he took up tap dancing at EBC. Instructor Denise Vancil sparked his

attention to tap dancing when she shared with him that people with sight loss sometimes have issues with balance. Dance can help promote good balance. Dan revealed that back in the day his two sisters used to drag him to dance school, where he took an interest in tap dancing but never signed up for classes. Then, after all these years, and after learning the benefits of tap dancing from Denise, Dan quickly said "Let's do it!"

The rest is history. Together with his daughter, you can find this graceful father/daughter



team hoofing their way through tap dance on Wednesdays. He compares today's hip hop or break dancing to yesterday's tap dancing. Go figure.

With his eye sight decreasing, Dan enjoys listening to audio books from the Library of Congress and enjoys time with family and friends. Being an active member of the EBC community has become an important part of Dan's busy life too. When asked what advice he would offer some who just found out they were losing their vision he replied "they need something to build up their confidence." When asked what has been his greatest challenge with his vision loss he winks and says "winking at the girls!" and then quietly chuckles. At age 92, there is no holding back Dan O'Brien. Filled with positive vibes and a zest for life, you can find him dancing through the hallways of EBC.

Tap Dance Class

Open to all
Meets Every Wednesday
1:00 pm to 2:00 pm
\$10.00 Fee per Class

EBC Holiday Party
GOOD MUSIC!
GOOD FOOD!
GOOD FRIENDS!



The Implantable Miniature

Telescope

by Patrick Caskey MD

As a retinal specialist, I see a number of patients with macular degeneration and other types of retinal disease where the central vision may be affected because of damage to the macula, the center of the retina. In these disorders, the peripheral or side vision usually remains normal but the central vision may be severely decreased in the most extreme cases. In recent years, the development of Lucentis and Avastin has enabled us to successfully treat many macular degeneration patients but there is still a subset of patients who continue to progress to central vision loss despite our best efforts.

For this reason, the Implantable Miniature Telescope (or IMT) was devised to help provide this group of patients with a chance to improve their central visual function and to allow them to perform their daily activities more effectively. The IMT was developed over the past ten years by Dr. Isaac Lipshitz (VisionCare Ophthalmic Technologies) and after extensive testing was approved for use in macular degeneration patients by the Food and Drug Administration in July of 2010.

The design of the IMT is based on the idea that if the zone of apparent central vision loss in one eye of a macular degeneration patient can be reduced, the patient will be better able to disregard this loss of central vision and use their side vision in that eye to better effect. To accomplish this goal, the IMT is designed to provide up to 2.7 times magnification to the retina in eyes in which the device is implanted. In this way, a greater portion of the enlarged image that is created falls on the functional reti-

nal tissues which surround the area of damaged retina and the patient is able to see a bit better detail as a result of this larger image and the use of more viable retinal tissue.

Since the IMT is not a cure for macular degeneration, the patient will still remain with relatively poor vision in the eye with the implant but the greater degree of magnification allows that eye to work as a "telephoto lens" which can improve both near and distance vision in some individuals. The IMT is designed to be implanted in only one eye so that the fellow eye can still provide good peripheral vision for getting around; the peripheral vision in the eye with the IMT is reduced because of the magnifying optics of the device. For this reason, after the IMT has been surgically implanted there is a significant "learning curve" for the patient since afterward the two eyes will see distinctly different image sizes which can be quite disorienting for several weeks to months. In fact, before a patient will be considered for an IMT, a trial with a temporary external telescope which mimics the effect of the IMT is required and if the patient is able to adapt to it then the IMT may become a possible option.

The IMT is implanted much like an intraocular lens implant used for cataract surgery but because the size of the IMT is quite a bit larger than a lens implant there is increased risk involved with implanting it. The primary risk is to the cornea which can become hazy or cloudy after the surgical procedure. To help avoid this, tests are taken of the cornea prior to surgery to ensure that it is healthy enough to tolerate the IMT.

Currently, there are limited numbers of ophthalmologists in the United States who have been trained to implant the IMT and it requires a team approach to help retrain the patient to adapt to and use the IMT effec-

tively after the surgery. It is only recommended for patients over 75 years of age who are legally blind in both eyes from macular degeneration or other forms of macular disease and whose vision has been stable for several years. The prospective patient must also have a significant cataract since removal of the cataract is required to allow for the IMT to be implanted.

For more information, please visit the manufacturer's web site: <http://www.visioncareinc.net/technology>

EBC Informational Presentations

Clearlake and Rohnert Park

Are you or a family interested in learning what EBC offers? If so, please join us at one of our upcoming informational presentations conducted by EBC instructor Patricia Jefferson. Patricia will cover a wide assortment of informative topics about EBC and the services offered. These information sessions are very beneficial for both new clients and their family members. The sessions are approximately 1.5 hours long and will be held at the following locations in February:

Clearlake Senior Center
3245 Bowers Ave
Clearlake, CA 95442
Wednesday – February 23
12:30 PM

Merrill Gardens
4855 Snyder Lane
Rohnert Park Ca 94928
Monday – February 28
12:30 PM

Space reservation is required. Please RSVP by calling EBC at 707-523-3222 or by emailing to ebc@earlebaum.org

What is Vision Rehabilitation?

Vision rehabilitation cannot restore lost sight.

Our goal is to teach adaptive skills that make daily living easier and more enjoyable. By learning new techniques for housekeeping and personal care, receiving training in methods for safe travel, by developing and improving communications and job skills, and by participating in social and recreational activities, most people are able to resume full and independent lives.

This is Your Newsletter

Earle Baum Center's quarterly newsletter is dedicated to the community it serves. We encourage and welcome your input and comments. Please send us your thoughts and suggestions as to what you would like to see featured in your newsletter. Our mailing address is 4539 Occidental Road, Santa Rosa, CA, 95401 or email to: ebc@earlebaum.org. We look forward to hearing from you!

EBC Looking for a "Jack of All Trades"

The Earle Baum Center is seeking of a special "Jack of All Trades" volunteer to help out with minor facility maintenance items on the EBC campus. Some of these duties would include maintenance of our fountain, minor carpentry tasks, replacing burned out light bulbs, and other general building maintenance. If you are interested or know of something who may be please contact EBC at 523-3222 or email to ebc@earlebaum.org.

Favorite Family Recipes

We all need a good and new recipe from time to time to share with family and friends. Do you have a favorite family recipe to share? In 2011, with each newsletter, we will feature a Favorite Family Recipe. Please mail to EBC or email to: ebc@earlebaum.org

Nancy's Chicken Wings

This is a tasty and easy recipe for small to large gatherings. Very simple to prepare and serve.

Great for those special family gatherings or potlucks as an appetizer or main entree!

Submitted by Nancy Godfrey.

4-5 lbs of FROZEN chicken wings
1 cup sugar
1 cup soy sauce
1 cup of any kind of wine (I used red)

Place the FROZEN chicken wings in a roasting pan.

Dissolve the sugar with the soy sauce and wine in a bowl and pour over the FROZEN chicken wings.

Bake UNCOVERED in oven for 3-4 hours @ 300 degrees

Serve and enjoy!

Still Time to Sign Up!

There's still time to sign up for our popular Matter of Balance Classes. The next series of classes will start on Thursday – February 17th. The class series is for 10 weeks and will be held in room four from 1:30 pm to 3:30 pm each week. Class instructor is Patricia Jefferson.

For further information and to enroll please call EBC at 707-532-3222 be-

Caregiver's Warning Signs

As caregivers, we wear many hats and must be aware of multiple signs in caring for our elderly family members and friends. Often there are signs or “red flags” that indicate extra help is needed. These signs are often subtle and are overlooked as we go through our daily routines as caregivers. Don't be blind-sided by some of these tell tale signs and try to recognize these subtle changes before your loved ones are in trouble. Here's a quick checklist of signs to be aware:

- ***Have they lost weight?***
- ***Are they staying busy with outside activities or are they becoming isolated?***
- ***Do they call you, your children, or friends by name?***
- ***Has their personal hygiene slipped? Is Mom's hair combed as usual? Is Dad shaved as usual?***
- ***Do they not seem to be “themselves”?***
- ***Are their plants thriving?***
- ***Are there any unpaid bills or bills in random places?***
- ***Is their clothing stained, wrinkled or appear worn?***
- ***Are there expired foods still being used or saved in their kitchen cabinets or refrigerators?***

If you start to notice that “things” are slipping, don't despair. Sonoma County is rich in agencies that can you help out. Call 2-1-1 and you will quickly be directed to the appropriate agency for help.



We thank our recent donors for their generosity

Anonymous Donor—Gary & Gina Dahl—Mary Friman—Eva Gold—John Russell—Coker Architects—Lutheran Community Foundation
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Fred Wallraff
Tim & Emily Webster
Gerdi Weidner
James & Anne Wellhouse
Barbara Westdorf
Creighton White
Maxine Williams
Cindy Woods

Our apologies if we've omitted your name. If you should have been listed and were not, please contact the Earle Baum Center at 523-3222.



EARLE BAUM CENTER
4539 Occidental Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide opportunities
for people who are blind
or visually impaired to
improve and enrich their
personal, social and
economic lives.

Contact us: email: ebc@earlebaum.org Telephone: (707) 523-3222
Fax: (707) 636-2768 www.earlebaum.org

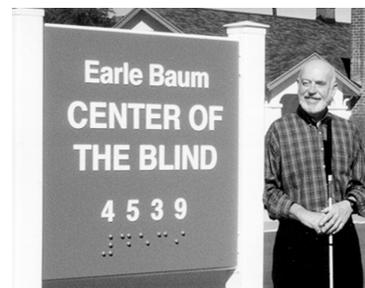
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**Check out Our Web Site
Each Week for New
Updates on
Classes and Activities**

Larry Swenson Memorial Service



**Saturday – February 26
11 am to 12:30 pm
Room 3
Earle Baum Center
4539 Occidental Road
Santa Rosa, CA**