



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

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

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From the Center

Greetings from the Earle Baum Center. As I am writing, we are enjoying spring showers mixed with winter-like rain. It has been an interesting season. Our trees and flowers began blooming in late winter



followed by big storms, warm sun, warm showers, more cold rain and then sunshine. In addition, we discovered that a killdeer has nested in the gravel of our walking path with two eggs, which soon grew to 4 eggs. We set up barriers to protect the nest for the next couple of weeks. Apparently, they think it is spring.

As you will read in this edition of our newsletter, the EBC enjoys serving a very diverse population. We provide services to students and young adults, adults that work or are seeking the adaptive skills to become employed, and many older adults. We serve people of great means and those living with little. We serve people with a broad range of backgrounds including nationalities, race, religions, etc. It has taken a lot of work and time but it appears that we are finally seeing more acceptance of our services to people that have cultural barriers to accepting and dealing with sight loss. It feels really good to see more clients that, in our brief history, have avoided

what we offer because of the shame or discomfort in acknowledging their blindness. I hope the time will come when everyone living with sight loss will recognize the life changing services we offer. We believe that our mission is universal and no person experiencing blindness or partial blindness will be isolated out of fear, cultural barriers or shame.

If you have read my recent newsletter pieces, you might remember that I/we have been putting a big effort into raising funds to offset the large deficits we face in providing our services. It appears that some of the hard work is beginning to pay off. Although donations are down overall, we have received some very generous donations from some of our ongoing supporters. It not only makes a huge difference to us financially but inspires and motivates us to push on.

We were just notified about a nice grant from Celebrate Community, a collaborative effort of various businesses and the Press Democrat newspaper. The grant not only provides money for our Low Vision Clinic, it comes with very generous newspaper space so we can promote our services and activities. In addition to the Celebrate Community grant, we are ready to submit other grants which, if funded, will be more great support for our programs.

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Our planned giving efforts are seeing some results although they often come with a price of sadness. We have been named as beneficiaries in the wills of supporters and several have recently passed away. It is very moving that people see our efforts worthy enough to share in their legacy. Long term financial planning that includes planned giving makes a huge difference to the EBC. We also have been a part of planned giving while the donors are alive and well. Some donors have enough money to live comfortably, and are required by law to annually withdraw additional amounts from their IRA. They have the option of donating their IRA withdrawal to us and avoid paying income taxes on that amount as a tax deductible donation.

I hope that in addition to the grants and planned giving, the economy will strengthen and individual donations will increase to put the EBC into a much stronger financial position. If you are in a position to help with a donation, IRA withdrawal donation, or a legacy gift, please do so. We would be honored to receive your support. Feel free to call us if you have questions.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter, and let me know if you are as inspired by the articles of those interviewed as I. We want to share the joy of working with so many special people. Have a great spring.

Allan Brenner, CEO

Client Comment:

“Earle Baum Center has been a blessing in my life. I am very grateful for all the wonderful services received from EBC.”

B.L.

WELCOME DAN NEEDHAM!

Dan Needham recently joined the Earle Baum Center as its Chief Operating Officer. He is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Center.

Dan is a Sebastopol resident, an engineer by education, and an entrepreneur by career development. His father worked at the East Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center, and his family had many visually impaired friends.



Dan was the President of Brevidia, an e-learning company combining learning theory and on-line video to improve retention of employee training. He co-founded Tri-Access Technologies, a semiconductor company, which was acquired by TriQuint Semiconductor. He was Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer, and was responsible for overseas supplier development, manufacturing and testing. He also managed the HR, legal, and quality functions. His 18 years at Hewlett Packard and Agilent included leadership roles in program and project management, strategic planning, marketing, product development, manufacturing, hiring, and productivity. In addition to teaching college and industry courses for over 10 years, Dan has provided consulting services to companies in the legal, semiconductor, athletic events, medical billing, and wine industries.

Dan has engineering degrees from UC Berkeley and Cornell, as well as an MBA. He's a local, having graduated from the

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Santa Rosa Junior College and Analy High School. A community leader, he has served as the president of the Rotary Club of Sebastopol Sunrise and the Sebastopol Optimist Club. He has served on the boards of directors of Brevidia, TriAccess Technologies, RenCon Energy, the South End Rowing Club and Actors' Theatre. For recreation, Dan is an avid open water swimmer, and he knows risk management, endurance, attitude, and technique are as important in business matters as they are in the water.

Please welcome Dan to the EBC. I think you will be happy he is on board.

Spotlight: Ken Coker

Ken Coker is an architect who has contributed his professional expertise since the



earliest days of the Earle Baum Center. He has provided design, drawings, and advice on all of our new buildings. In addition, Ken has been a financial

supporter of the Center.

Ken has been a sponsor of Earle fest, and even helps park cars at the event! Ken's not afraid to get his hands (or boots) dirty to help.

Ken almost lost his sight years ago. He developed detached retinas in both eyes on two separate occasions and was al-

most out of business due to vision loss. He is thankful for the skill of Dr. Stephen Meffert in saving his vision. Ken also had cataract surgery in both eyes. He knows that he is fortunate to have his current level of vision.

Ken started in Sonoma County as an Architect with Lawrence Simons and Associates in 1975. Ken was a founding partner of TLC D Architecture prior to running his current solo practice.

He has designed numerous residential, commercial, tenant improvement and industrial projects over the last 35 years. He relies on repeat clients and referrals for most of his commissions and would like to hear from you if you are in need of an Architect. He has a broad range of experience, and is focused on providing service with a "hands on" approach.

Ken was also an active member of the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa Sunrise, an organization that has strongly supported the Center. He currently is involved in a local electric vehicle organization and has an all-electric Ford Ranger pickup. Maybe he will drive it to this year's EarleFest! If you meet him, please thank him for over 16 years of support for the Earle Baum Center.

Client Comment:
"The instructor's presentation of information about assistive devices and coping mechanisms was extremely helpful. Her manner is cheery and she is wise. Thank you !!!"

Ruth Pollard – A Treasure!

by Lynn Newton

Ruth welcomed me into her beautiful home in East Santa Rosa and though it was the first time we'd met, we talked and talked like long lost friends! Ruth is delightful!



A native New Yorker, Ruth still retains a hint of an accent even after years living in Baltimore followed by being in California for the last eleven years. She is well spoken, energetic, spritely and magnetic; filled with stories of her colorful past, quick with a joke and a ready smile.

Macular Degeneration (she calls herself an Immaculate Degenerate) brought Ruth to the Earle Baum Center a few years ago. She was first diagnosed at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore some years ago and received treatment there. More recently, Ruth has consulted specialists in Northern California, but she stresses that when she found Earle Baum Center, that was when things began to change for her. She contrasted the warm, human reception she received at EBC to the cold, unfeeling, mechanical climate she has experienced in other venues. After her first visit, she said she felt very reassured and left EBC feeling that: "There is really nothing to complain about. I'm so lucky! You walk into that place and have the feeling that this is a fun place to be. They're not denying the fact that you have a challenge. But then, they set to work to improve your life – just as it is."

Ruth is very grateful to Regina Kutches ("she's top of the line and her love of life is contagious") and the continuing work

they are doing together. Describing the sorts of things she and Regina do together, she pointed out the reading machine that is set up in one corner of her bright and cheery kitchen area. She talked about some work that they've done with the cane. Suddenly, Ruth jumped up and returned from another part of the house with a recorder-like machine in tow. I had never seen anything like it and she gave me a complete tour of her portable, digital, Library of Congress books on tape player with it's color coded, molded-for-identification buttons. She says, "It's splendid! It's a big improvement over the older clumsy one I had!" She's just starting a "really good book!"

EBC has introduced equipment and skills to Ruth that have substantially improved living with her limited vision and she is very, very grateful. But, beyond the tangible help Ruth has received from EBC, the recurring theme in our conversation is how much Ruth values the support, empathy and encouragement that she has received. "They are all so nice there. I haven't met anyone from Earle Baum that I haven't wanted to adopt!"

Ruth attended the University of Wisconsin for a year, arriving by train and hitchhiking back home to New York with a friend. She says the return trip took three days and cost \$1.35. She had a career as a graphic artist when the latest software/hardware wasn't the issue. Sprinkled here and there in our conversations were references to classical concerts she attends in her community, dinners with friends, happenings with and about her two daughters. Yes, there is quite a bit more to Ruth than her low-vision!

During a week filled with many friends and lots of family visiting from all parts of the

country, Ruth Pollard celebrated her 100th birthday in January. I asked Ruth if she had any secrets to living such a long life. Uncharacteristically, there was a long pause and she said she didn't know how to define it, but that she doesn't have any rules. She eats when she's hungry and if she wants a piece of chocolate, she has a piece of chocolate. She considers it possible that it might be her genes – some of her family members were very long-lived. I think it just might be her infectious enthusiasm and extraordinary attitude – Ruth is a jewel!

Adriana Prado: A Bright and Shining Star!

In just over two short months of instruction and classes at EBC, Adriana Prado has acquired skills and confidence that ensure quite a promising future for this very personable young woman!

Originally from Michoacan, Mexico, Adriana has been in the US for about six years and came to Sonoma County via Georgia.

She began losing her sight at 15 and when she was about 21, she was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa. Now 36, Adriana sees only shades of gray. She explained that there were no services available where she lived in Mexico and that people with sight loss or disability are kept close to home and discouraged from being a part of the community. She is thrilled to finally find an organization like EBC that more than encourages people with sight loss to be fully participating members of the community and provides just the excellent assistance and training to make that happen.



This is the first time Adriana has lived close enough to a resource providing any sort of training and she has jumped into EBC offerings with unparalleled enthusiasm! She is learning Independent Living Skills and studying Braille with Denise Vancil, Orientation and Mobility with Regina Kutches and Technology with Jeff Harrington. She had also started an Exercise class with Jeff. She has a very full schedule!

In the short time she has been riding the Paratransit from her home in Forestville to EBC in Santa Rosa, Adriana says that she already feels much more independent! She doesn't have to rely as much on other people and she has much more confidence in herself. A key for Adriana has been realizing that her cane is a tool for independence rather than something that marks her as a compromised person. Learning Braille is much easier than she expected and it has brightened the possibilities for her future in school and in the job market. Adriana is courageous, very bright and very motivated – she enjoys the classes she is currently taking but always wants to learn more!

Adriana's dreams for the future? She is a US Resident, but she'll be starting an English as a Second Language class in August to master enough English to become a Citizen. She wants to hone her Technology and Braille skills to enable her to get a really good job. (Given her sparkling personality, we hope that Adriana will find a position that also involves working with people!) She hopes to expand the work and involvement she has with her church. Adriana currently lives with her sister and her family, but when her two sons leave home, Adriana plans to live independently in Sonoma County.

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We know that Adriana will certainly realize these dreams and more!

Adriana's advice to a person with low vision is to come to EBC or if out of the area, to find a similar Center. She said she would advise: "Come to the Earle Baum Center because it will change your life."



Sonoma State Environmental Biology Class at the EBC

The Earle Baum Center recently welcomed Caroline Christian, a professor at Sonoma State University, and her students of Environmental Biology. Hattie Brown of the Laguna Foundation led students around the vernal pools on the west side of EBC.

The Laguna de Santa Rosa is the largest freshwater wetlands complex on the northern California coast. It is a major contributor to Sonoma County's biological diversity.

EBC Library is Growing!

Thanks to a recent generous donation, EBC's library is growing! We have now expanded our library and feature a much wider selection of books on CD's. Volunteers are busy putting Braille titles on the books. Additionally, there is a shelf with **6** The Great Courses. Check it out!

Summer Barbecues are Back!

Clear skies, warmer weather, delicious smoky aromas, and celebratory feelings await us all, as our annual barbecue season approaches. May 18th kicks off our first of eight barbecues. Each barbecue will take place on the first and third Friday of the month, from noon until one o'clock. The price is \$5 with an RSVP and \$7.50 without. Please call the EBC office by noon on the Wednesday before each barbecue, in order to RSVP.

Each barbecue meal will include a vegetarian option. Desert will not be included, but will be a potluck opportunity. If you so choose, please bring deserts that are ready to be served, such as cookies or brownies. We can not cut and plate deserts.

We are seeking volunteers to help with our barbecues. If you are looking for a rewarding teamwork experience, and are available from 10:00 until 2:00 on any of these dates: 5/18, 6/1, 6/18, 7/6, 7/20, 8/3, 8/17, 9/7. Please call 523-3222 and ask to speak with or leave a message for Ahlia Warren, the barbecue coordinator.

We look forward to seeing each of you and sharing fun, food, and a sense of community this barbecue season!

Santa Rosa Transit Mall is on the Move!

Beginning June 1st, the Santa Rosa Transit Mall moves up the street to First Street between Santa Rosa City Hall and the City Hall Annex while the current Transit Mall closes for renovation. It is expected that the renovation time will take three to four months.



**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS!
YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS MUCH APPRECIATED**

**Carmen McReynolds—Ken Coker—Spencer Marcil—Paul Mouzakis
Frances Hall—Margaret Lowery—Donald Davis
Virginia Craig—Barney & Lorna Adams**

Yvonne Aimo
Maryetta Andre
George & Rosemary Barlesi
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David Sweet
Gladys Vice

**NEED HELP WITH YOUR NEW IPHONE
OR IPAD?**

New iPhone or iPad? Are you struggling with all of the features and how to adapt them to your needs? The new iPhones and iPads have many new features that are beneficial to both low vision folks as well as sighted folks. EBC's technology experts now offer one-on-one training to help you understand how to maximize the features of your new iPhone or iPad. Call 523-3222 for details and to arrange an appointment.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

Becoming Independent is sponsoring a special Art Show that will be featured at the Gallery of Sea and Heaven from October 13th to November 24th. Artwork from Sonoma County adults with disabilities will be featured. This is a juried art show and all media are welcomed. Deadline for submission is July 10th. For further information please call 524-6634.



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

RAY NEEDS HELP!

Ray Thompson, EBC's Facility Manager, needs additional volunteers to help with general maintenance and landscaping. Please call 523-3222 for further information on how you can help.

Friday BBQ's Start May 18th

RSVP by May 16th to 523-3222

**BBQ's are the 1st & 3rd Fridays
through Sept. 7th**

RSVP by Wednesday noon prior

Want to help? Call 523-3222

VOLUNTEERS BUSY TRANSCRIBING



Volunteers Kat Aby, Beryl Brown, Nancy Turner, and Gina Milton have been busy at the Visitor's Center learning Braille and transcribing printed matter into Braille. Interested in learning Braille? please call 523-3222 for further information.