



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving People With Sight Loss
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From the Center



Spring is a beautiful time at the Earle Baum Center as the grounds turn green and flowers become vibrant and plentiful. We're so fortunate to have a glorious facility in such a special

location surrounded by vineyards, orchards, and open space.

For several years, I have been repeating the mantra that we can't rely on the state or federal government to assure funding that sustains local services for those facing sight loss. Unfortunately, the mantra has proven to be accurate and, month by month, we are informed of new cuts in our fee-for-service rates.

In a meeting at the end of March, one of the programs for which we receive federal pass-through funds to serve older adults was cut by 5% because the federal government cannot approve its budget. The 5% is not from this point forward but is retroactive to October, 2012. Future federal grants, too, may be in jeopardy, which could potentially cut another 15–25% from our budget. In addition, we were notified that the public transit system can't handle the influx of people needing rides and that service

may be restricted or cut altogether, making our Center far less accessible to those who don't drive. Sometimes, it feels like our system has become heartless and all the promises that "we will not balance the budgets on the backs of seniors, poor and the vulnerable" are just hollow words.

Much of my current effort is focused on finding new sources of funding and increasing charitable donations. That includes showing people about planned giving and the value of including the EBC in their wills and annual plans. With Dan Needham, our Chief Operating Officer, taking over many of the daily operations, I'm free to pursue more speaking engagements, meetings, and fundraising activities that will hopefully result in additional funding to offset our losses. It is a challenge, but I feel confident that our community will rally for the long-term benefit of the Earle Baum Center.

I'm thrilled to announce that our solar-powered system is producing energy every day and has reduced our energy bills significantly. On May 15, we will have our ribbon cutting ceremony commemorating the solar power system in Beryl Brown's name and we'd love to see you there.

Our 6th annual EarleFest is happening September 28, and the list of entertainment is exciting. Headliner Robert Earl Keen and renowned icon Ray Wylie Hub-

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bard top the lineup. We are seeking sponsorships and donations to support the benefit concert. If you know of potential supporters, please reach out to them or send us their information and we'll follow up.

We have remodeled our courtyard! Recently, we noticed the concrete was being pushed up by the roots of the trees located throughout the large patio. The bad news is that we had to remove the mature trees. The good news is that we replanted more compatible trees, set up umbrellas over seating areas, and are building a unique open shelter that will provide shade and a comfortable place to socialize and relax. We're well on our way to completing the new courtyard and all the raised concrete has been removed or repaired thanks to long-time supporter Gary Dahl of Devincenzi Concrete. The courtyard will be better and more functional than ever.

Finally, I just returned from the spring VisionServe Alliance conference in Washington, DC, where I spent time talking to congressional representatives and staff about the needs of Earle Baum and the entire sight-loss community. It takes a concerted effort to help enact changes that will improve the overall condition of people we serve but we are determined to be relentless in our pursuits. In time, we expect health care laws to include vision rehabilitation therapy similarly to the fields of physical and occupational therapy that are covered by health insurance. The meetings were inspiring and I came home with many exciting new ideas.

Have a great spring!

Allan Brenner, CEO

Bill Kuhn

“I'm Going to Enjoy My Life!!”

While the interviewer struggled with her electronics and a malfunctioning speaker phone, Bill Kuhn endured crackling, ear-splitting feedback and a blank line when he repeatedly answered a dead line. He remained stunningly cheerful! Fortunately, Bill is a very, very kind, patient and congenial man.

When he was just a teenager, Bill was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa, so he has been living with low vision for about 35 years – the majority of his life. Bill's condition has developed slowly over time and because the decline been gradual, he feels he's been able to adapt more easily than had he experienced a very sudden vision loss. He says he is blind in one eye and has poor vision in the other, but, with a chuckle, he says, "Other than that, I'm fine!"

Bill was an Insurance Broker and advised other agents with product knowledge and information about a number of different companies. His territory stretched from Crescent City to King City in Central California – a huge area involving a lot of driving. When he had to surrender his driver's license in his early thirties, though cumbersome, he hired a driver and continued working for another fifteen plus years.

The Earle Baum Center had been open for about a year, and in 2000 Bill came to the Center for a tour with Clarity Solutions. At the time, his wife, Joanna worked for the Video Magnifier manufacturer. He remembers thinking, "This is really neat." He thought about taking classes and people recommended that he do just that, but "I was stubborn and reluctant to do it because I didn't think I needed it. I was functioning around the house at a level that I felt satis-

fied with. It wasn't until a friend who took classes told me about it about a year ago. I thought there's no reason for me not to do this. That's when I finally decided to go ahead and I signed up and took Denise's class – it amazed me all the little things you can learn that enhance your life!"

Bill says that if you look at his desk now, you can tell that he's been to the Earle Baum Center! Thanks to Jacques Law and Jeff Harrington, Bill has 2 types of Magnifiers, a Wilson Recording Device, a Talking Book Machine and Zoom Text software on his computer. "There are all the things I can't imagine living without now. How did I get along before? I guess I just struggled through it."

He has really benefited from Denise Vancil's classes. Bill is a passionate cook, but he has learned a wealth of helpful tricks in Denise's classes. He says that the first thing people should be introduced to when they come to the Center is the Spill Tray. He explained how a simple baking sheet serves many purposes for a cook with low vision, including housing his cutting board when he's chopping things. Bill then demonstrated a Say When device that hooks on the side of a cup or glass and beeps when it's full! He talked about how helpful Sticky Dots have become in his life. His enthusiasm is infectious!

Talking about Denise's classes, Bill says, "Denise is such a marvel. Not only is she a good teacher and explains things very thoroughly and makes you feel comfortable with using various aids and such, but she also shows you stuff you probably should have thought of but didn't...I just admire her. She motivates me to try harder to improve myself and learn more about how to

deal with my low vision. She's inspiring."

Paratransit service and mobility classes with Geoff Perel have recently really improved Bill's independence. He walks to the grocery store and says he continues to improve his skills with the cane. He's learning to take city buses and he talked about the unbelievably great feeling it is to be able to shop independently.

Bill's advice to someone who is experiencing low vision is: "You should not walk, but run there! You will meet people who are going through the same thing and understand the frustrations of living with low vision. You have to want or be willing to go, but EBC classes will teach you how to improve your life in such a way that you'll wonder why it took you so long to get there. EBC has dramatically improved my quality of life. It's a really good thing – I wish more people knew about it."

Bill Kuhn is a huge fan of the Earle Baum Center and his life has been enhanced significantly in a very short time. He imagines continuing to come to the Center possibly for the Braille Class and certainly for the Support Group. According to Bill, there are many wonderful things about EBC but comradery is possibly the highest on the list!

Thank you EBC!

"I cannot thank you enough for the wonderful support I have received from the Earle Baum Center! Your follow up and efficiency is amazing! They have introduced me to new technology which is helping me to maintain some semblance of independence as my eyesight fails me." LJ

Remembering Mary Friman

In March, we lost a client, supporter and wonderful woman, Mary Friman. Mary was very proud of her family's deep roots in California that dated back seven generations. An amateur genealogist, she researched her father's descendants who came from the north of Spain, and her mother's descendants who came from County Kilkenny in Ireland. Throughout her life, Mary was very committed to community service, and was active in organizations such as Earle Baum and the Petaluma Garden Club.

Though Mary died at the age of 97, her death wasn't due to natural causes but rather being hit by a car when crossing a street at a crosswalk. Mary is not the first in our community to be hit by a car and the issue seems to be growing dramatically. Not many years ago, everyone knew that when a person was in a crosswalk, drivers were required to wait until the pedestrian was completely out of the street before continuing. Now, everyone's in a rush and it's hurting us.

Mary had the strength and courage to travel independently, studied proper mobility skills, used her white cane, did everything according to the book but was still killed. Unfortunately, the Earle Baum Center can't wave a wand and instill in the public proper behavior and values but with your help, we can continue to educate the community about safe driving. If this is an area of particular concern to you, please consider working on a committee with us to address the problem. Our clients shouldn't be in danger when engaging in the normal activities of life. Together, we can work to place a higher value on health and safety.

Jean Lake

"EBC – The Place Just Works!"

Many of the clients we meet at the Earle Baum Center are folks who began experiencing compromised or diminishing vision well into adulthood. Jean Lake says that she never really saw well. Though it's heartbreaking to think of a child who couldn't see the blackboard and struggled to read, Jean says she thinks it gave her a head start on developing coping strategies and living with impaired vision!

Though Jean says, "I never could really see," she has obviously met the challenges of poor vision. Using a magnifying glass to read her textbooks (before the days of the CCTV and computers with large print), Jean earned a Masters Degree from Sonoma State University and she has her Teaching Credential as well as a Special Education Credential. Jean's husband is also a teacher – they've taught in Sonoma County, spent two years teaching on the Island of Guam, and in Alaska in remote Eskimo villages for four years. Jean operated a childcare center for six years. The last few years before she retired, her vision was declining, but Jean continued to live her passion and taught pre-school children with language difficulties in San Francisco.

What made Jean check into the services at EBC? In the last few years, Jean's vision has gotten "rapidly worse." Jean lives with a combination of Glaucoma, Macular Degeneration and Retina Damage from laser surgery. "I've kind of had the whole spectrum," she says. Last summer she had a dramatic fall, which understandably made a very courageous woman suddenly fearful. She talked with her eye specialist who said "You need to enroll yourself in the Earle Baum Center." She decided to give it a try and says, "It's probably the

best thing I've done for myself in a very, very long time."

Jean has been coming to the Earle Baum Center for about eight months. She has taken Living with Vision Loss with Susan Hirshfield and Introduction to Vision Loss with Denise Vancil. She is now taking Denise's Independent Living Skills class and learning about cooking and safety in the kitchen as well as practical skills like dealing with money and finances.

The very idea of using the cane was something Jean strongly resisted. Today? After a Mobility Class with Lora Monemzadeh, Jean considers the cane her best friend and has named it Hope! She is currently taking the Technology Class with Jacques Law, one of EBC's Assistive Technology Specialists. Jacques works one-on-one with Jean on the computer she uses in her home. When she finishes her two classes with Denise Vancil, she is signed up to take Braille. She's particularly interested in learning Braille to be able to label things for instant recognition.

Jean uses Paratransit to travel from Petaluma to the Earle Baum Center every Tuesday and Thursday. She's so quickly completing classes, Jean will eventually have taken all of them, but that doesn't worry her, though she'll happily sign up for anything new that's offered! She says she'll continue to come to EBC. She and another client have started a book club that meets once a month (this month the book is No End in Sight by Rachael Scdoris) and she'll attend the Support Group that meets every other week.

If Jean were talking with someone with low vision, she would tell them that it is a "life changing experience and teaches you to live in the world and do the things you want to do *even though* you have very low vi-

sion. It's a place you can go and relax and just be yourself. It's a community and we really understand each other. Every teacher I've had has really impressed me. The place just works!"

Jean Lake demonstrates an enormous amount of tenacity and motivation – both through her past and in this very moment. She's an inspiration. She speaks very highly of EBC and the great change it has meant in her life, but there is clearly some reciprocity in the mix – Jean is bringing quite a lot to EBC!

Dear EBC Book Club Friends,

The April gathering in Room No. 4 was enthusiastically enjoyed in a quieter environment (Room 4 vs Visitor Center), conducive to our being able to hear each other with better clarity.

As usual our discussion of April's book "My Life as a Blind Iditarod Racer" brought us to an in-depth look at the life of the author Kristin Allison with thoughts about our own lives as a visually impaired group with an attitude of wishing to THRIVE and not linger in the boo-hoo corner!!

Our choices (Yes! We decided on two!!) for the next gathering on Tuesday May 28th are:

THUNDER DOG, by Michael Hingson, DB #73300 with Bard – This the true story of a blind man with his guide Dog, caught on the 78th floor of the World Trade Center on 9/11/2001.

PIGS IN HEAVEN, by Barbara Kingslover, DB# 35911 with Bard – The story of Taylor, a young lady, who is given a small American Indian child

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while she is at a gas station in Oklahoma. The child does not talk. Taylor names her Turtle and they have many adventures together.

See you in room #4 on Tuesday May 28th at 1 PM...we usually go to 2:30 PM for those of you who use Paratansit!

I will send out a "reminder" the week before, and bring the snack for the May gathering!! Please pass this onto anyone that you feel would like to join us!

Warm regards, Jan



Doug Shureen, Service Project Director from the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa Sunrise, presents a check to Dan Needham, COO of the Earle Baum Center

Many thanks go to the Rotary Club of Santa Rosa Sunrise. In addition to their recent monetary support, the club and their members as individuals, have been instrumental in providing roofing, volunteer labor, architectural efforts, and many other contributions to help EBC provide services to those with vision loss.

Vine Go Napa Valley Bus Transit

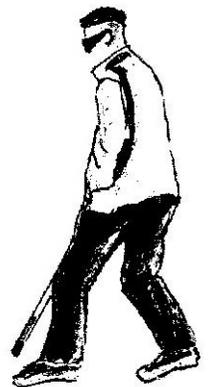
For those Napa County residents, the VINE bus system recently underwent the most extensive service changes in a generation. Routes have changed, service frequency has increased, new stops and buses have been added, and for many riders, fares have actually gone down. However, not everyone can ride the VINE Go bus. This special service provides door-to-door transportation to eligible seniors and persons with disabilities to anywhere in the VINE service area for any purpose during the same days and hours of operation as the regular VINE bus service.

The fare is \$3.00-\$6.00 per ride depending on distance travelled. VINE Go will not provide service to individuals whose transportation needs can be met by other local public transit services.

For more information call 707-251-2800 or visit their web site at www.RideTheVine.com.

Remembering Dr. Elizabeth Cooley 1928-2011

Her compassion, courage, and caring live on through her Scholarship Fund at the Earle Baum Center



“Jacques from EBC showed me how to use ZoomText Reader. This opened up a whole new world for me. I just let the computer do ALL my reading including newspapers (something I haven’t done for over 10 years!” - CS



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

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EARLE BAUM CENTER
4539 Occidental Road
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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

Summer Picnics at EBC!

June 14 - July 12

August 9 - September 13th

Please RSVP by Friday the week
before!!! We want to make sure there is
food available for everyone.

Lunch will be served promptly at noon.

EBC WISH LIST

Hand Weights for our Gym

Gently used sofa, loveseat, chair for
our Training House

IN KIND THANKS to the following
generous donors:

Larry Pietrobon/Casual Catering
Spring Hills Community Church

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Bill Verran

Devincenzi Concrete Construction

Spring Lake Village

H&M Landscape

Tim Byrd

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