



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

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

August 2013 Volume 13 Issue 3

ARMSTRONG WOODS By Jean Lake

The sun was beginning to break through the fog on the morning of June 6 as a dozen people were settling into the two vans that would take them to Armstrong Grove to spend a part



of the day. Armstrong Grove is a Redwood grove that is part of the California State Park System. This beautiful area was donated to the State of California by the Armstrong family about a hundred years ago so the redwood trees would be protected from the logging industry.

Everyone in the group realized right away that it didn't matter about vision loss. The environment of the redwood grove is full of all the sensory stimuli that one can imagine. The smells, the sounds, the air itself, the huge redwood trees some laying on the ground to touch and to feel. The group



walked along the Braille Trail which, is especially designed for low vision folk. There was a rope to hold

onto and plaques with information written in Braille, which several members of the group were able to read to the non braille people. Everyone brought their own lunch and ate together at picnic tables under the huge redwood trees. The sounds of the birds and the gentle breezes added to the wonderment of the occasion.

Another trip is being planned by the EBC Vision Group. We meet at the Earle Baum Center on the first and third Thursday of each month. Come and join us!

Eye Care

If you are 65 or older, you may qualify to have a volunteer ophthalmologist perform a comprehensive medical eye exam and provide up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost. Visit:

www.EyeCareAmerica.org.

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EBC's Low Vision Clinic Optimizing Our Vision

I need a really good magnifier. How do I get one? If this question has not come up for you, dear reader, it probably has for someone you know. Therefore, it is not surprising that, for those individuals losing partial vision, having access to high-quality vision aids is a strong desire felt by most. And for many, out of a feeling of desperate need, purchasing a magnifier or other device hastily is tempting. Unfortunately, this often leads to disappointment. It is not uncommon that a person will find out that they have wasted money on a device that does not work as well as was hoped or that there is a superior device available through a professional clinic, such as the one at the EBC.

But, the Earle Baum Center's Low Vision Clinic is *not* a store; we have no inventory available to look at on a drop-in basis. The clinic is a process, the first step of the process is getting one's needs established and setting an appointment. During this appointment we offer the opportunity to examine and purchase low vision aids with confidence, including but not limited to magnifiers, lamps, and glare shields.

Our clinic is available for those looking for low vision aids, and it is also the gateway service for those clients looking for more of what the Earle Baum Center offers. Why is it the gateway service?

Whether it is assistive technology training, orientation and mobility training, or working on one's cooking skills, having the right aids is essential for every client. For instance, when wearing good glare shields cane training is both more comfortable and more effective.

In order to ensure that patients are receiving aids that work well and fit both their lifestyle and training needs, the EBC's Low Vision Clinic has been designed as an in-depth two part process. The first part is an evaluation of the patient's functional vision performed by a low vision optometrist. The second part is a tailored demonstration of the aids that best match the needs of the patient performed by a low vision therapist. The goal is to have each person feel that when they have been seen in the clinic, they have had an opportunity to enhance their vision to do what they need and want most.

Anyone considering making an appointment can do so with confidence, as everyone on the Low Vision Clinic staff works as a team in order to best serve each patient. Dr. Janet Caddell is the low vision optometrist who sees patients in the EBC's Low Vision Clinic. She comes to us with over twenty years of low vision rehabilitation experience. Dr. Caddell attended Southern California College of Optometry, graduating with distinction. She gained further specialized training in her field at the Center for the Partially Sighted in Santa Monica. And she is recognized by the local medical community as a doctor who provides exceptional commitment and care to her patients. In addition, our low vision therapists have years of training and education in their specialized field. Being seen in a low vision clinic with a more thorough process or a more experienced staff is unlikely.

To schedule an appointment, please call the Earle Baum Center's main office and ask to speak to the Low Vision Clinic coordinator. (707) 523-3222.

SPOTLIGHT: Cindy Zook **Finding a Way**

Cindy Zook is a strong woman, a courageous and inspiring woman. Whatever life tosses in her direction, she will find a way through it. Perhaps a new and different way, but she'll find a way to do whatever she has done in the past. For example: glare during the day is a huge issue with Cindy's eye condition. She didn't stop gardening; she carried a floor lamp into her yard before dawn or after sunset to enable her to tend to her beloved flowers. Did her neighbors wonder what she was doing at 4:30 in the morning dragging a floor lamp around her yard? Maybe. But she had found "a way" – her way. (She has recently upgraded to a head lamp and the floor lamp is back in its home in the garage!)



Kaiser Permanente referred Cindy to EBC in September of 2011 when it was determined that she was legally blind. In 2009 she was diagnosed with Uveitis

in her left eye and then six months later, she developed Glaucoma in her right eye. Cindy had surgery in June 2013 on her right eye and she is slowly regaining a bit of vision in that eye. She's been simultaneously dealing with other health issues, but again, with her determination, she seems to be resolving those issues as well.

Cindy doesn't know what she would have done without that referral to the Earle Baum Center. Once she visited the Center and started classes, she found direction and a way to begin living as – suddenly – a person with low vision. Cindy is a regular at EBC. She started with the Introduction to Vision Loss Class with Denise, the Living with Vision Loss Group Class with Susan, the 24

week Independent Living Skills Class with Denise and on Tuesdays and Thursdays (depending on her health) she has attended the Exercise Group. She's started learning Braille with Denise and that is the current mountain Cindy has started to climb. Lora has been Cindy's mobility instructor and has helped her navigate her neighborhood and travel to local stores and restaurants. A few months ago, Cindy launched into Computer Technology with Jeff and started working with Patricia to refine and adjust magnifiers to best serve her vision requirements. In the last couple of months, Cathy M. has taken over the computer training from Jeff and has been introducing Cindy to C-Desk and lots of bells and whistles to make the computer an amazingly useful tool.

Cindy worked for IBM in San Francisco for thirty-three years and read avidly on those bus rides every day. Now she's discovered Books on Tape and is fast and furiously digesting those. She raised a son who is taking her to her forty-fifth high school reunion in Healdsburg in a few weeks. Cindy loves music and will probably come to EarleFest this year since it doesn't conflict with the Russian River Blues Festival that she has attended for years. She recently discovered Described Plays, attended the Lion King at the Orpheum Theater and is keeping track of future offerings. Cindy is a shopper and has a wide group of close friends who share her passion! (The good news is that she sold her BMW900 a few years ago!)

For her entire life, Cindy Zook has been an active, contributing member of her community. Without the Earle Baum Center, her vision issues could have changed her life dramatically. Her advice to anyone experiencing low vision? "Go there right away. It's the best thing you can do."

The Sixth Annual EarleFest!!

On Saturday, September 28, Earle Baum Center of the Blind will be magically transformed into the Sixth Annual EarleFest – A Celebration of Americana music! Typically quiet and serene, the Center will experience a sudden influx of volunteers, vendors, musicians and music lovers. Sausages will start sizzling, kegs will be tapped, the first guitar riff will fill the air and the Celebration will begin!



The Lineup this year is very exciting – probably the best yet! Headliner **Robert Earl Keen** is revered among Americana aficionados and EarleFest is very lucky to have him this year. **Ray Wylie Hubbard** weighs in heavily in the Americana world as well – especially following his recent album, *Grifter's Hymnal*. **Sonny Landreth** is a guitar player extraordinaire and we are thrilled that **Cindy Cashdollar** will be joining him on stage. Cindy is a phenomenal steel guitar and Dobro player – some of you may remember her from *Asleep at the Wheel*. **Frankie Boots and The County Line**, recent winners in the Americana category of the Bohemian's Nor-

Bay Awards, will open and get Fest off to a roaring, great start!

This year we have the addition of a second stage – **Hopmonk Tavern's Best of the Open Mics!** The cream of the crop will perform starting at 11:30 and then between each act on the Main Stage. This is a great addition to EarleFest and we are grateful to Hopmonk Tavern for contributing this feature to the festival!

Our loyal Lagunitas friends will return with their trailer brimming with beer and Rodney Strong will be providing their award winning wine. Please bring your appetite to EarleFest! To satisfy your gnawing hunger, there will be the BBQ Spot, Fork Catering and The Lion's Sausage sandwiches. Sunshine Coffee will be pouring their finest blends and for a sweet tooth, we'll have Real Cool Frozen Treats and Snapdragon's wonderful cupcakes! Hopmonk is bringing their awesome West County Lemonade and if you are the slightest bit tense, you can try a serving of Thai Yoga Massage!

EarleFest is a massive project, involving the time, energy and passion of a huge number of people. Each year, the reputation of the event grows and the community becomes more involved. The increased awareness of EarleFest brings the spotlight to shine directly on the fabulous work of the Earle Baum Center of the Blind.

Please visit www.earlefest.com for more information about EarleFest! The music will be from 11:30 to 6pm (Gates open at 11am). Tickets may be purchased on the website, at The Last Record Store (Santa Rosa), Tall Toad Music (Petaluma), or People's Music (Sebastopol).

We look forward to seeing you at EarleFest 2013!

SPOTLIGHT: Manuel LeFort

Manuel LeFort started having difficulty with his vision in 1993. At the time, he was running a family-owned bakery in Los Angeles, specializing in Mexican desserts. For a man who was used to being on the go, driving places and meeting people, this was a tough pill to swallow.

The family moved to Sonoma County and Manuel's eyesight continued to deteriorate. About a year ago, his doctor said, "I'm sorry to tell you this, but there's nothing more we can do" and he referred Manuel to the Earle Baum Center.

Manuel began his first classes at the Center: Introduction to Visual Loss with Denise and Technology with Jeff Harrington. He learned to use an iPhone and a Milestone device for downloading books and movies and keeping a calendar, agenda, and phone contacts all in one place. That immediately helped with day-to-day activities.

Brianna paid Manuel a home visit and taught him how to use a cane to walk to the mailbox and to a nearby bench. That one small lesson gave him back some independence and joy. He no longer had to rely on his wife for the mail and could now sit in the sun and read. To Manuel, that meant freedom.

As is so often the case, a family issue arose at an inopportune moment and Manuel learned he was needed in Mexico. They hadn't yet covered travel tips in class but no matter, Denise gladly met with him one on one for a quick tutorial. She taught Manuel how to handle money, so as not to make mistakes, and how to use an ID cane—a very light, thin cane that helps strangers identify someone as sight challenged. She also showed Manuel how to mark his luggage for easy identification, by wrapping it in a plastic bag or attaching a piece of fabric to the handle.

The Center's flexibility in working with Manuel's life events really impressed him. Though he had to interrupt his studies, he was informed he'd be welcomed back as soon as he was able.

When asked what he likes best about Earle Baum, Manuel says he appreciates the fact that it's an organized and well-run place. The staff is very qualified and the teachers make everyone feel comfortable and engaged in learning. "There's no boredom here!" he notes.

There are a few changes Manuel would make, if he could. He'd like to see more music classes and would welcome the chance to learn guitar or piano. Until such time as those classes come to the Center, he plans to try his hand at drumming. (Tap dancing probably won't be added to his repertoire.) Manuel would also like to see more social events at the Center. People with visual loss, he says, don't always participate like others, and need more opportunities to get social. He really enjoyed helping with the BBQ; the Summer TGIF Picnics the second Friday of each month are lots of fun.

A pragmatist, Manuel understands that adding classes and socials requires funding. Part of the reason he was glad to be interviewed here was to share his passion for the Center and to make an impact on others. He firmly believes the Center deserves additional government funding so it can grow and assist more people. He'd like local radio stations and businesses to advertise the Center pro bono to spread the word to the community about the much-needed services offered by Earle Baum.

Next up for Manuel? He'll return to his Independent Living Skills class and will add a computer class. He'd like to learn to use

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public transportation and be trained for a new career. He wants to be an airplane pilot or a detective, but since that's probably not possible, he'll settle for anything that doesn't have him stuck behind a desk. He's considering becoming a massage therapist. After that, the world is his oyster!

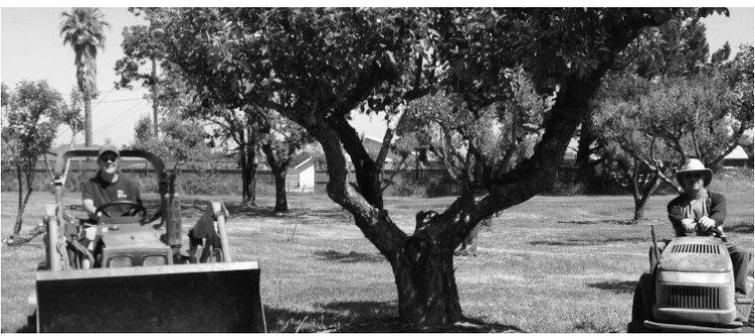
OUTSTANDING IN HIS FIELD

The Earle Baum Center's campus has been getting even more beautiful as we have been replacing old lavender plants with new ones and planting vibrant and fragrant flowers all around our grounds.

We now have approximately one mile of walking trails around our property. These trails are turning out to be popular. The staff, clients and even the guide dogs find the trails easy to follow. If you decide that you would like to take a walk, be sure to wear good footwear as the trails are hard packed dirt.

Many of the improvements to our grounds have been done by volunteers. The Petaluma Paddlers, a local kayaking group, has been instrumental in this effort and helping us with EarleFest parking and other duties. Bill Verran, of the Petaluma Paddlers, has been especially valuable, as he lends his landscaping expertise in helping us repair our irrigation system and prune our fruit trees.

**Ray Thompson
Facilities Manager**



From the Center



It's summer and the Earle Baum Center is busy with classes, training, activities, facility repairs and improvements and making future plans. The energy and enthusiasm at the EBC is infectious. Our

grounds are amazing. The grounds are fragrant with newly planted flowers, and sweet apples and pears in our orchards. We enjoy the bounty of this year's vegetable garden thanks to the hard work of the volunteers.

Our new shade structure in the courtyard is nearly finished. The creative design by Ken Coker adds a new point of interest to the courtyard. We are also set to begin installing moisture barriers and drainage systems under our three classrooms to prevent damage during the rainy season. Finally, Spring Hills Community Church is generously painting the exteriors of our building as a community project.

Installation has begun on a sculpture garden, the brainchild of artist Aaron Poovey. He is constructing it and contributing incredible sculptures for our enjoyment. As for the solar power system, we are pleased to report that it is working beautifully and providing an abundance of electrical power.

Our calls for support are unending and unless something dramatic changes, will not end. Even though it gets boring to hear the pleas for financial support, it is the only way we can adequately stress that you are the reason the EBC is able to serve so many people facing sight loss. If only we had the genie that would magically fund our programs in perpetuity! So, from deep within the hearts of many, we thank you for caring and sharing with the people served at the Earle Baum Center.

Allan Brenner, CEO



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YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS MUCH APPRECIATED**

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FOR THE BLIND**

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

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**Set up a recurring donation,
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provide services to those with
sight loss.**

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and in-kind donors!!**

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