



# Earle Baum Center

Serving People With Sight Loss

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## LET'S GET FIT!

There is nothing like starting the New Year with a new program with motivation to get in shape.

The Earle Baum Center has joined with the United States Association of Blind Athletes for a 10 month fitness challenge geared toward participants who

are visually impaired and between the ages of 15 and early 40's. We currently have 21 participants who have all been fitted with a Nike Fuelband bracelet that monitors their movements and tracks their personal progress. Our 21 participants are part of 800 participants nationwide. The idea behind the program is to get hooked on fitness through use of a team approach and the use of technology in the Nike Fuelband combined with social media. The launch of the program was here at the Earle Baum Center where clients met each other, got fitted with the Nike Fuelband, and tested the results of how many fuel points were gained after walking the almost 1 mile trail. We are in the process of planning monthly exciting fitness activities. If you are interested in joining us, want more information, or would like to sponsor a fitness activity please contact Denise Vancil, Fitness Challenge Leader at 523-7832.



## **EBC Group visits the de Young Museum, San Francisco**

On December 9, 2013 seven of us from the Earle Baum Center went to the de Young Museum in San Francisco to see art by David Hockney. We were particularly interested in seeing this exhibition, as most of us in the group had recently been involved in an art history class, which was arranged by Patricia Jefferson and taught at the EBC by Deborah Littlebear, an art therapist who works mostly with seniors. The day we went to San Francisco was a Special Access day for people with all kinds of disabilities and there were docents who described some of his artwork. We had a docent tour at 10 A.M. for an hour or so and then looked at some of the artists' work on our own.

David Hockney is the best known British artist of his generation. This exhibit is the first comprehensive survey of his work since 2002. He uses new technologies in his art, such as the Polaroid camera, fax machine, and iPhone and iPad. The exhibition highlights his Photoshop portraits, digital videos that track the changing seasons, and bright landscapes created using the iPad. It also encompasses more traditional media such as oil paintings, charcoal drawings and the artist's first extensive exploration of watercolor.

## Just a Glimpse — EBC Client Phyllis Levitt

Born in New York City, Phyllis was married and raised two children while she simultaneously managed a very impressive career teaching everything from pre-school to graduate school. She and her family lived in New Zealand for ten years where Phyllis received her Doctorate in Education and Sociology. On the cutting edge of the Women's Movement in the early seventies, she was one of the original founders of the Dunedin Collective for Women in New Zealand.

When Phyllis retired in 1990 after a very fulfilling and rewarding career, she saw an opening to revive her girlhood dream of becoming an artist. Though she says after a lifetime in the academic world she thought she would never go back to school, she enrolled and completed three years of art training. But, as her vision declined, she found it more and more difficult to paint. "Losing the ability to paint was a very distressing thing – it took me away from that right brain kind of focus that I had come to cherish." Enter the DaVinci reader! Phyllis explained that a camera on the DaVinci can capture a section of a painting that she is working on. She can magnify what the camera has captured up to 14 times to see more detail and then go back to the painting and make a correction or revision. Her dream of painting has been revived – she is painting and she is thrilled!

For about twenty-five years, Phyllis has been very gradually losing her vision. She was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration when she was in her early sixties, but didn't find her visual limitation interfered too much until about six or seven years ago. Phyllis is a very strong and courageous woman, but she admits that when her husband died after fifty-eight years of marriage and her vision was diminishing, there came a point when she started "feeling alone, without any idea where to get some help." During that time, she was in a fabric store with a friend and someone offered her a pattern book to look at. She declined because she couldn't see well enough and the woman told her about the Earle Baum Center. She called the Center and says that her life began to open and unfold! She says that she was "ripe for something wonderful to happen and EBC was that wonderful thing!"

Phyllis began taking classes at EBC in May 2013 and she has taken both Susan Hirshfield and Denise Vancil's classes. She continues instruction with Regina Kutches and computer skills with Jacques Law who both travel to her home. She thinks she might be nearing the end of working with Regina, but given the major challenges with the computer, she thinks she'll be seeing Jacques for a while! She says all of the things she has learned have been "extraordinarily helpful!"

Phyllis lives in Healdsburg with her Springer Spaniel, Alfred. She has lived there for about twenty years, so she has garnered a true sense of community in her neighborhood and beyond. But she really values the community she has experienced at the Earle Baum Center and her relationships with instructors and new friends.

If Phyllis met a person with low vision, her advice would be: "Get in touch with the Earle Baum Center – there's no doubt about that!" She has referred at least two people to the Center and carries the EBC phone number with her at all times, just in case she meets someone who might benefit from the Center's services as much as she has.

Phyllis Levitt is an interesting, engaging and very articulate woman with a life story that can only be very peripherally recounted in such a short article. She is a member of this, your dazzling Earle Baum Center community. Hopefully, you will have the good fortune to cross paths with her one day!

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## **Art History through Touch and Sound**

EBC is sponsoring an art history class series using a program developed by Art Education for the Blind, Inc. This multisensory learning system for the blind and visually impaired uses textbooks that feature Braille, large print writing, and raised line drawings alongside the photographs of famous artwork and architecture. Using the tactile symbols as a guide, the students feel the variations of textures, shapes and lines that tell the story of each painting.

Currently we are studying European Modernism: 1900-1940. Discussions of the evolution of art through time and how it relates to the present.

Instructor Deborah Little Bear, a creative arts facilitator with degrees in fine arts, psychology/art therapy and gerontology. She brings her many years of experience teaching for the SRJC and elder care facilities to EBC and this art program.

Ten years ago a client herself, Adelyn Richardson and her family helped the EBC to purchase the first group of textbooks and art materials. With a master's degree in art history Adelyn taught the first series of classes.

Recently Jack Stuppin, who is a local artist, and his wife Diane learned about our need for financial support of this program. As one of the programs they support through the Community Foundation, they gave a sizeable donation of money for the purchase of textbooks and to pay for the cost of the instructor.

After her second day of class, Flora Crane talked about her experience saying, "we didn't have art in school when I was young and I didn't go to college because I was raising my family. I find this art history class just fascinating!" Another student commented by saying, "at the end of our first class, we drew in the air using a chopstick as we listened to music of the time by Artie Shaw playing 'Begin the Beguine'."

This is an ongoing art class. In the future we will feature; the Baroque Art of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century; The South Pacific and the Americas; and The Building Blocks of Art. For more information contact Patricia at EBC 636-2314



## From the Center

Recently, I have spent a great deal of time feeling concerned by the fact that we, and others serving the needs of people facing sight loss, have been experiencing an ongoing decrease in the level of support from the “system.” In preparing to write this article, I worried it would paint a bleak picture for future services for the visually impaired people in our community.

Then, a friend threw out a word to me that kept reverberating in my head: Gratitude. Memories took me back over 20 years when my work began with the Earle Baum Center (EBC).

In the early 1990s, I learned about the dreams of a blind farmer who left his property in trust to be developed into an educational and recreational center for people living with sight loss. That farmer was Earle Baum and little did I know how his legacy would impact me, and, more importantly, the many people living in the large region surrounding Santa Rosa. His foresight eventually led to the founding of the EBC.

Early on, I became acquainted and eventually became working partners with members of the Redwood Lions Memorial Foundation (RLMF), the trustees of the property. I feel grateful that the RLMF Board was committed to pursuing the establishment of a quality program where people could learn and grow regardless of their degree of blindness and for their wisdom in supporting and trusting members of the blind community to manage and operate EBC’s future. The long-term lease RLMF offered the newly formed Earle Baum Center of the Blind and the support from the Lions, Rotary, and Kiwanis clubs, as well as local developers, contractors and philanthropists helped make the EBC a reality. It was a team effort.

I am grateful for my partnership with Larry Swenson with his role of managing the legal work in creating the EBC while sharing his vision of a successful center. My focus was on administering and overseeing the development of the EBC. Later, much of Larry’s focus was in guiding people with sight loss in understanding the amazing power of learning from one another.

Being selected as the Chair of the first Board of Directors of the EBC—a group of some of the greatest visionaries in the blind community—was a great honor for me. Together, we built a well-conceived, impactful and sustainable model that shared the heart and passion we all felt for our mission.

For those instructors and volunteers who believed in the future of the new and untested EBC and were willing to accept the risks of building an organization, I’m thankful. Over the last 14 years, many other wonderful people were added to the ranks and became equally dedicated to the EBC. From the beginning, this organization has enjoyed an enlightened and committed Board of Directors that always looked at that which can be done rather than that which cannot.

So many clients have given us their trust and shared with us their fears, hopes, dreams, successes and love and for that, I am deeply grateful. We are fortunate to have been

allowed into their lives during very challenging, life-changing times.

I'm grateful, too, for the opportunity to serve clients of the Department of Rehabilitation, Veteran's Administration, schools and universities, businesses and more. The contributions of foundations and individual donors have shown their belief that the EBC is worthy of support. It is an honor to be the steward of their funds.

And last but not least, I am grateful for the incredible people who had roles in establishing and sustaining EarleFest as a benefit concert and a way to help the greater community become acquainted with the EBC. Over the last six years, their dedication has made EarleFest a premier event in the region, helping it evolve from a startup event to a real "happening."

On a personal note, I am honored to have been the CEO of the EBC since its inception. I give thanks for those who have touched my life, given me guidance and supported the EBC and me without doubt or hesitation. I have so many reasons to be grateful.

The times are not easy and there are still many challenges and hurdles to cross. However, looking back with gratitude at all that made us and looking forward to new possibilities puts all the hard work into perspective and makes the future feel much better.

Here's to everyone who has made a mark on the EBC.

**Allan Brenner, CEO**

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## **Flat Screen TV/Monitors Needed**

Since 2003, the EBC has been providing video magnifiers to those in need from a loaner program. Often, these devices are donated by clients who can no longer use them or the family donates the equipment.

We are in need of flat screen televisions for this program.

We now have several video magnifier models that use a television for the monitor screen. When the old style televisions fail, we do not have the funds to purchase new ones. This is very costly; video magnifiers that could potentially be used are left sitting on a shelf.

We now have several waiting to go to clients to help them read and see items they must see to live their daily lives.

If anyone has a late model flat screen television to donate or would like to purchase a new one for this program, please contact Patricia at EBC 707-636-2314

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## **Sonoma Access**

Sonoma County residents can find resources and trip planning services on the Sonoma Access website ([www.sonomaaccess.org](http://www.sonomaaccess.org)) or call 211 and work with the call center staff to plan their trip.



## THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS!

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FOR THE BLIND**

**EARLE BAUM CENTER  
4539 Occidental Road  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401**

**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.**

**SAVE THE DATE!!**

**September 27, 2014 EARLEFEST 2014**

**A Celebration of Americana Music**

**Contact us. email: [ebc@earlebaum.org](mailto:ebc@earlebaum.org) Telephone: (707) 523-3222**

**Fax: (707) 636-2768 [www.earlebaum.org](http://www.earlebaum.org)**

**New Tractor for Earle Baum Center**

The Earle Baum Center is on 17 beautiful acres. Ray Thompson, our facilities manager, keeps them in fine shape. The Petaluma Paddlers and many of Ray's other friends donated to help replace the used riding mower that finally couldn't be repaired. Would you like to help us too?

Click the **Donate Now** button on our secure website, [www.earlebaum.org](http://www.earlebaum.org), or choose an option below which you'll make your gift.



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Fill out the enclosed donation envelope and return to our office.

**In Person**

Drop by the Center. We would be thrilled to see you.

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Call us and we can process your gift right away.