



• EARLE
: BAUM
•• CENTER

LIMITLESS

TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF PEOPLE WITH SIGHT LOSS

Together We Can Build a Safety Net

As we go to press, many of our friends and neighbors are being affected by the fires, evacuations and power outages. They are in our thoughts and in our hearts, especially those who have lost their homes. We are grateful for all the first responders who are helping to keep us all safe.

Here at Earle Baum Center, we are also concerned about the hundreds of people in our community who are blind or visually impaired. During

the horrific fires in 2017, our community stepped up to the plate to help those in need. We helped out with emergency supplies and counseling. And we are stepping up again.

In times of crisis, any kind of impairment or disability adds its own set of challenges. People who are blind or visually impaired depend on others for transportation. They depend on accessible devices, technology and equipment. Some are older adults or have health or physical

challenges in addition to vision loss. It is important that everyone gets the help they need, and that no one is left behind.

We'd like everyone to know that **EBC is offering counseling services for local residents who are blind or visually impaired** and their families affected by this emergency situation. Please help us spread the word.

We are calling each of our clients personally to ensure they are all right. We are a valued resource for first responders and other professionals. And we are partnering with suppliers and organizations that want to help people who are blind or visually impaired during this crisis.

In addition to having to close our doors for a week when we were without power, several of our staff and board members were evacuated and lost power and gas. We are grateful that no one lost their home or loved ones.

Together we can build a stronger, more resilient safety net. Thank you for helping us with your support.

– Earle Baum Center Staff



We are grateful for first-responders like Michael Marquardt. Michael is a member of the Moraga-Orinda Fire Department and helped fight the Kincaid fire using drones. He is also a friend and supporter of EBC.

Message from the CEO



It's Thanksgiving season, and we are thankful for so much here at Earle Baum Center. We especially appreciate your loyal support. Thanks for helping us spread the word about our services and our programs.

You're doing a great job, because we had a 40% increase in the number of attendees for our 20th Anniversary event. We made a lot of new friends! It was a beautiful, blue sky day. Our thanks to Herlinda Heras, Steve Jaxon, KSRO Radio, Hoby Wedler, our vendors, volunteers, and everyone who made the day a success.

Another community event this fall gave us an incredible opportunity to help shape tomorrow's leaders. We were honored to facilitate Scouts BSA

Redwood Empire Council's 100th Anniversary Camporee. More than 300 Scouts, counselors and family members camped on our grounds. The theme was "Disability Awareness." Boys and girls had the opportunity to walk our Labyrinth under blindfold, explore braille and ride tandem bicycles. They also learned about EBC's programs and volunteer opportunities. We have welcomed all Scouts and their families to return to volunteer as tandem cycling pilots.

Budding Eagle Scouts develop community projects that demonstrate leadership, commitment and dependability. EBC has been the beneficiary of three projects this summer: a new shed to house tools for our volunteer gardeners, beautiful landscaping around our sun patio and recreation area, and a senior-friendly, wheelchair/walker-accessible pathway from our parking lot to our buildings. We enjoy partnering with these young leaders. We believe they will be lifelong ambassadors for EBC.

Community partnerships like these help people of all ages recognize that we are "all in this together." It is a beautiful continuation of Earle Baum's original dream. Each of us has a role to play in creating a better quality of life for those in our community.

- Earle Baum was resilient: when he realized he was not going to be able to become a journalist, he found new purpose by taking care of his family's farm and his blind sisters.
- He was creative: finding different ways to do things, such as stringing up bailing wire so he could get around more easily.
- He lived life to the fullest: writing songs, going to dances and being part of the community.
- And he left a legacy: making it possible for people who are blind or visually impaired to have the tools, training and opportunity to improve their quality of life.

What part of Earle's story resonates with you?

I am Earle because, like Earle, I love connecting with people. And I, too, have found a home in EBC that allows me to embrace my vision loss and live my life to the fullest. I'm grateful to Earle for his vision. And I'm grateful to you for your continued support.

Happy Thanksgiving from your friends at EBC!

Bob Sonnenberg
CEO



Bob and Langley enjoying the 20th Anniversary celebration at EBC.

Why I Give: Eli Sanchez



Eli at his computer.

“I remember hearing the story of Earle Baum as a kid,” Eli Sanchez said. “He lost his vision at 16, and became a farmer. His story resonated with me because my parents and grandparents farmed, too. It was something I understood.” Blindness is something Eli understands. He lost his vision when he was 8 months old. His connection to EBC continues to grow.

When Eli was a teenager, he brought his first computer to EBC. Jeff Harrington, EBC’s Director of Technology, equipped it with JAWS screen-reading software, and Eli learned how to use the keyboard commands in a single day.

Eli helped his Santa Rosa Junior College classmates with their assistive technology needs. “I began writing guides,” he said. “I got interested in creating voiceover key commands to make a music software program accessible.”

Four years ago, when Neal Mckenzie, an assistive technology specialist for the Sonoma County Office of Education, started the EBC Hang Out Night for children with sight loss and their friends and families, Eli found a friend and mentor. “We collaborated to make games and programs accessible,” he said. “One day, Neal said to me, ‘You’ve been volunteering and writing guides



Farhad and Eli.

for free for a while. Why don’t you get certified to work in this field?’ So I did.”

Soon after, EBC offered Eli a position as a technology instructor. His work is challenging and fulfilling. “If Google Chrome or Firefox make changes, we have to figure out how we’re going to teach it to our clients,” he said. And Eli makes sure that we do.

In addition to working and volunteering with the technology group, Eli finds other ways to give to EBC. He’s concerned about older adults who are adjusting to vision loss. “If an older adult has a stroke and loses their vision, their medical and physical therapy bills will be covered by insurance and Medicare,” he said. “But they’ll have to pay out-of-pocket to get training in the skills they need to adapt to vision loss. And that’s hard for many seniors.”

Eli puts all of his talents to good use. “I used to do manual labor. When we needed a concrete slab poured for EBC’s 20th Anniversary event, I volunteered. We were able to set up a big tent on it!”

Earle Baum’s story resonates personally with Eli. “I am Earle because I believe in being adaptive. Earle used a bathtub to feed his cows – that cracks me up -- but it worked. I’ve taken car engines apart and put them back together. You have to commit to finding a way to make something work. It doesn’t have to be pretty, as long it gets you the result you want.”

The Start of a New Chapter in Life



Bruce and Ed Barwick at a Napa High School football game.

When vision loss strikes, the Earle Baum Center is there, helping older adults throughout the North Bay Region find new ways to retain their quality of life. Just ask Napa resident Ed Barwick.

Ed retired after 41 years in the auto business and 40 years as a stadium announcer for the Napa High football team. He values his connections to friends and community. His Rotary Club just surprised him with a party to celebrate his 93rd birthday; he has been a member for 70 years.

Recently health issues are having a serious impact on Ed's quality of life. He survived a brain tumor, and after the gamma knife

operation, his vision started to deteriorate.

Ed's son Bruce searched online for services that could help his father. He found EBC's website and called. "The low vision optometrist assured me that she would work in concert with Dad's eye doctor in Napa, and that was comforting," Bruce said.

"My dad has always been a voracious reader, and it is important to him," Bruce said. EBC offered a variety of possible solutions. Because Ed's vision loss is progressing, reading glasses soon became unusable. Ed tried using a desktop video magnifier, but he found the new technology too challenging. EBC

set him up with the CA State Library System. "Now, he gets books on tape – the types of books he likes to read," Bruce said. "It's a great system, and it's free for him. He can take out four books at a time."

Bruce has a new appreciation for what his father is experiencing. "I think a lot of people are good at hiding the extent of their vision loss, so those around them don't really understand how it affects them," he said. "Sometimes, the roadmap is set. You can't change it; you just have to adapt. I appreciate everything EBC does to help people make that transition from being able to see to living with vision loss." Bruce hopes that more people will hear about what EBC offers so they can learn to use new technologies before they need them.

"My dad and I support EBC and we would like to see their services continue to grow in Napa," Bruce said. "They help people in a very tangible way with a very solution-oriented approach. We like that."



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