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## **EARLE BAUM CENTER EMPLOYEE RECEIVES HIGH HONORS FROM COUNTY OF SONOMA**

*Santa Rosa Resident Denise Vancil Will Receive  
Employee Initiative Award from Sonoma County Mayors*

**January 22, 2018 (Santa Rosa, CA)** -- Earle Baum Center is pleased to announce that Vision Rehabilitation Specialist Denise Vancil will receive the 14th Annual Employee Initiative Award sponsored by the Sonoma County Mayors' Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities for her exemplary work in the field of vision rehabilitation. The awards breakfast will take place Wednesday, January 24, 2018 at the Flamingo Conference Center Resort and Spa in Santa Rosa.

Vancil, who has been blind since age 13, works as a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist and Instructor at the Earle Baum Center in Santa Rosa. She teaches a variety of skills to others with vision loss, including braille and household independence skills such as cleaning, cooking, managing finances and matching clothes. She also leads groups in tap dance, tandem cycling, exercise class, ukulele and birding by ear. Vancil was selected to receive this award for her leadership, enthusiasm, leading by example and going beyond the call of duty to make her students feel empowered to live full, engaged lives.

“Denise truly embodies the Earle Baum Center mission and spirit, and we are so proud of her for earning this high honor” said Earle Baum Center CEO Dan Needham. “Earle Baum Center is not only a school and community center for people with any level of vision loss, but also a beacon of hope for others, and proof that life is not over after vision loss. Denise’s enthusiasm and zest for adventure make her a natural leader and instructor for those new to vision loss as well as more experienced students who are out looking for fun. She is an incredible role model for our students, and we feel quite fortunate to count her as part of the EBC team.”

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Vancil was born and raised in Oakland, California. She was diagnosed with a rare eye condition in kindergarten that led to total blindness by age thirteen. After graduating with a B.S. in Recreation Administration from Sacramento State University and an M.A. in Special Education from San Francisco State University, she began her teaching career working with people who are visually impaired to enhance their independence and enthusiasm for life. She has been working at Earle Baum Center for 17 years. "It's my calling to teach others with vision loss that life is still a beautiful, fun, joyful adventure," commented Vancil. "For me, it's enough just to know I am making a difference in people's lives, but being validated with this award is a wonderful honor." Vancil has a passion for dance and travel, and leads a full busy life with her husband, two children and Guide Dog Caesar.

The purpose of Sonoma County Mayors' Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is to encourage and promote the hiring, retention, and promotion of people with disabilities by creating a strong, friendly collaborative partnership between employers, human services agencies, local government and elected officials, individuals with disabilities and the general public in Sonoma County. To register for the awards breakfast, visit <http://sonomacountymayorscommittee.com/2016-events/>

**About Earle Baum Center**

Earle Baum Center is a non-profit organization that serves people with all levels of vision loss in Sonoma, Napa, Lake and Mendocino counties. Headquartered in Santa Rosa, California, Earle Baum Center serves approximately 450 clients annually, and has served over 11,000 clients since 1999. As a school and community center for anyone with any level of visual impairment and their families, EBC transforms the lives of the sight-impaired through technology, skills training and social opportunities. With a passionate, professional staff, volunteers, and specialists, EBC is a haven that helps folks with vision impairment get back to leading full, happy lives. To learn more or to schedule an appointment, visit [www.earlebaum.org](http://www.earlebaum.org) or call (707) 523-3222.

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