

NO LIMITS

Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center of the Blind Winter 2001 Volume 2 Issue 3

From the Center

We continue to be very busy at the EBC. We were just funded to add more services to seniors in the region both near their homes and at the Center and we hope to reach more people with unmet needs. We are now providing Adjusting to Blindness classes to seniors in Sonoma, Oakmont, Petaluma, Windsor and Healdsburg. We are continuing this outreach effort and look forward to establishing more classes over time. Exciting new additions to come ...

Come see the newest assistive technology for the visually impaired at our technology lab. Jeff Harrington, our Adaptive Technology Specialist, is excited to introduce the Freedom Box. Using voice commands, you can now use the Internet and send and receive E-mails by listening and talking. Keyboarding knowledge is not required nor is previous computer experience.

A huge thanks and well wishes go out to Laura Beausoleil, who has been a rehabilitation teacher in Sonoma County since 1989, and has been involved with the Center since inception. She will be departing July 1st to begin anew in the Pacific Northwest, specifically Olympia, Washington where her parents live. She plans to continue her work with the visually impaired community in her new locale. Thank you Laura, for all you have done.

Thanks as well to everyone who has contributed so generously to the EBC. We are now seeking for the following "wish list". Please help if you can.

Braille Typing Machines repaired - \$110

Rack for brochures - \$90

Funding for beep baseball program - \$2000

Storage shed - \$3500

Funding for walking trail - Total cost: \$10,000

Additional volunteers to help beautify and maintain the property

As a final note, for those who want information sent in alternative formats such as disk, Braille and cassette, please let us know.

From the Center Activities & Meetings

For more information please call our info line at (707) 636-2768.

Adjusting to Blindness - Twelve-week class introduces information, techniques and equipment. Wednesday's, 9 to 11 AM.

Living with Vision Loss - Twelve-week adjustment to blindness counseling group. Pre-approval required. Wednesdays, 11 to 1 PM.

Braille Instruction - Learn labeling of foods, files, games, more.

Drumming - Six-week series with skilled musicians. Wednesdays 9:15 to 10:15 AM.

Nutrition and Cooking - Twelve-week class provides information on good nutrition and adaptive cooking. Tuesday's, 9 to 11 PM.

Physical Fitness - Stretching, strengthening, and aerobics. Monday's & Thursday's, 11 to 1 PM.

Tap Dance – Beginning tap class in a six-week series. Ongoing Thursday's, from 2 to 3 PM.

Technology Training - Learn adaptive techniques for use with computers, Notetakers, magnifiers, and more.

TGIF BBQ's - During warm weather. 1st and 3rd Friday, 11 to 1 PM.

Thursday Thinkers - Drop-in, self-help and mentoring support and activities group. Thursdays, 9 to 11 AM.

Blinded Veterans Association - 2nd Thursday of the month, 12:30 to 1 PM.

VA Support Meeting - Sponsored and run by the Veterans Association. 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month, 11:15 – 12:30 PM.

Family and Spouse Support Group - Open to all. 2nd and 4th Thursday, 12:45 to 2 PM.

Petaluma Senior Center Support Group - 2nd Friday, 12 to 2 PM.

Sebastopol/Santa Rosa Macular Degeneration Support Group - Information, support and activities. 2nd Saturday of the month, 1 PM.

Redwood Empire Chapter of California Council of the Blind - Focus on advocacy and issues. 3rd Friday of the month, 11:30 to 2:30 PM.

From High School to College

A critical period occurs in the lives of blind and visually impaired (VI) students when it is time for them to transition from high school to college. If these students are fortunate enough to have had a strong support system in high school of parents, teachers and other professionals with expertise in the vision loss field, they may be prepared for this transition. However, the culture shock can be like moving from a small town to a large city.

There are many complex issues to be considered when planning for success in higher education for blind and VI students. These special needs students must be encouraged while still in high school to become aware of challenges they will encounter when attending college. For example, where there may have been one book per class in high school, in college, there may be ten, all unavailable in Braille or large print. Much as their sighted peers, blind and VI students will face many more decisions at the college level, and in most cases receive much less assistance.

It is essential that blind and VI students learn many skills for creative problem solving and self-advocacy. To overcome the obstacles to success, they must develop high levels of motivation and learn to plan strategies that will aid them in accomplishing their educational goals. They must take extra care in choosing colleges, ascertaining which institutions for higher learning will best meet their special needs. They must learn to explain necessary accommodations such as arrangements for test taking to professors who may never have encountered a blind or VI student before. These students need to know how to obtain textbooks well in advance of class start dates and how to have them reproduced in accessible formats. They will also need to learn how to hire and instruct readers who can assist them in studying.

Many colleges and universities have disabled student centers to assist those with special needs. However, blind and VI students must be proactive in all aspects of their curriculum planning and management in order to achieve success. All the assistance and expertise in the world cannot accomplish what an individual's personal commitment and desire to achieve can.

For more information a good reference is **A GUIDE TO A SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE EDUCATION**, compiled by the Blind Students of California, a special interest affiliate of the California Council of the Blind.

Center of Attention

“The Earle Baum Center is the greatest place for people with vision loss,” says Mary McCulloch. Mary, who is originally from Alabama, has been a resident of Santa Rosa for two years. Mother of a son and daughter, a grandmother of three, Mary has macular degeneration. Fifteen years ago she began experiencing sight loss and has been completely without sight for the last five years.

Mary has been a participant at the EBC since it was established in 2000. Her participation has been in various courses: Adjusting to Blindness, Living with Sight Loss and the Thursday Thinkers. She also walked in the Human Race to help raise funds for the Center and has participated in various outings and social events.

Her daughter Pat, who plays a major role in her mother’s life, accompanies Mary to the EBC. “Because my mom is blind, my life has become enriched,” says Pat. Pat volunteers at the EBC when a bus driver is needed for field trips. She also assists other participants visiting the Center.

Mary has come a long way towards accepting her blindness and the challenges that accompany it. “The Earle Baum Center gives me an interesting place to go,” says Mary. Her warm presence is an inspiration to us all.

KEEPING THE BEAT AT THE EBC

We got the BEAT and it’s CONTAGEOUS! The drummers got the beat and the tap dancers got the beat and now it’s time for both groups to meet. The drumming class, taught by Patricia Hatfield, meets Wednesday mornings from 9:15 to 10:30 a.m. The focus is to learn about a variety of percussive instruments, drumming techniques, enhance creativity while making rhythmic music. The tap dance class, taught by Denise Vancil, meets Thursday afternoons from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. and focuses on developing dance vocabulary, learning basic steps, improving balance and coordination, and combining rhythm patterns while moving to music from around the world. The drumming group, more commonly known as, Queen Candace and the Blind Beat, and the tappers, more commonly known as, Rhythm and Shoes, are currently working on rhythms and beats separately and then on a date to be announced they will combine their talents for a fun-filled rhythm jamm session. You can be assured to chase your woes by beating on a drum or tapping your toes. Come join in either or both groups and have a great time. No experience is necessary.

We thank the following for their literary skills in generating this newsletter: Nicole Novi, Sheila Styron, Jeff Harrington and Denise Vancil. We encourage everyone to submit ideas or articles for future newsletters. We also welcome all suggestions for improvements to the Center