

NO LIMITS



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving the Blind and Visually Impaired

From the Center

On Saturday February 14, I had the pleasure of accompanying our Tap Dance and Drum Groups to the monthly meeting of the Blind and Vision Impaired of Marin (BVIM). Aside from putting on a great show, I was very touched in being able to witness the spirit of giving and sharing by the EBC participants. The groups frequently entertain others, particularly those who are blind and visually impaired; however, it struck me how fortunate I was to watch the metamorphosis of our clients to entertainers. Throughout the day and those following, I thought a great deal about what I was observing. These groups, led by very talented and caring teachers and performers, Patricia Hatfield and Denise Vancil, consist of people who have practiced together to develop their skills and want to share them to brighten the days of others. Most came to the EBC to adjust to their sight loss or blindness, whether it was to once again become gainfully employed or find the strength to move ahead. All want to live fulfilling and independent lives with dignity. Some are very new to the EBC; others have been here from the beginning. There were young adults performing next to seniors. Some have slowly lost sight and others traumatically. But clearly on Saturday, I spent the day with a fun group of entertainers. Their blindness was not an issue.

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Following the performance, we burst into a small coffee shop unannounced. There were no issues or problems, the restaurant was very pleased to serve this large crowd and it appeared that everyone had a good time. It struck me that the vision of the EBC was alive and well...to facilitate activities and programs that give people the opportunity to live normal lives. The EBC shared in some of the logistics but the day was completely driven by the participants.

As with most of the performers and participants of the Center who knew little about dealing with sight loss when first coming to the EBC, we all have grown together to make a much bigger difference than if we attempted to adjust to the life changes alone. After four years, I believe the EBC, through its participants, have developed its own spirit and energy and the power of "togetherness" is an amazing force. Our backgrounds cover the spectrum but we share at least one important similarity. We all want our sight loss to be an inconvenience and not a life defining and limiting condition. I thank the participants, clients and staff and all the individuals and organizations that make the EBC so special.

A quick update on the EBC. In addition to all the center based programs, we are

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A FINAL HALE TO THE CHIEF

Hale Harrington

6/21/1991 to 2/24/2004

By Jeff Harrington

This is in tribute to my great leader Hale. We met in February 1993, so it is fitting that he would leave me in February 2004. For 11 years he was extremely dedicated and led me through many life adventures. Hale was the senior dog at the EBC and this past year guided me during the annual Rose Parade.

He lived in the rental house with Amy & I when we were first married and moved with us when we purchased our first home. He saw Megan into our lives and he was the first to guide us down the street when she was only a couple of months old.

Hale guided me for the last time on Monday November 17 when he met Charlie at the park. He was gracious in passing the harness to Charlie. He only lived in retirement for 3 months before his passing, but he loved to work for me and that was his life.

NOTE: For those who do not know of Hale, he was our Senior Adaptive Technology Specialist Jeff Harrington's guide dog. A regal German Shepherd with a gentle disposition, he will be missed by all who had the honor of his acquaintance.

Drumming Group

The Drumming Circle, led by Patricia Hatfield, will take a break during the month of March. The next Drumming Series begins the first week of April—a Beginning Drumming Series. Call Patricia at 579-1348 Time, Fee, etc.

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now actively teaching classes and programs in four counties and have limited involvement in two others. Our staff of nine is likely going to increase to ten or eleven in the near future and we have hired about 30 contract employees in the last few years. Our gatherings are exploding at the seams and we need a much larger new building to accommodate the groups and programs. Our architect is working to get the permits approved. Thus far, we only have the dream of construction since we have collected only 10% of the funds needed. We are also looking for new Board Members who bring specific skills, connections and experience to the organization so if you or someone you know feels qualified, Board applications are available. The EBC is in a period of transition from infancy to adolescence. Together, there is so much more we can do.

Finally, there are a few upcoming events to remember. We will have our second **Cinco de Mayo Celebration** on **May 5th** (See Denise Vancil and Cristobal Leon to help). We hope to reach more visually impaired Latinos at our fiesta. The **Human Race** on **May 8th** will see the CCB Chapter based at the EBC raise money for scholarships and assistance (See Bill Gillespie to help). We will have a float at the **Santa Rosa Rose Parade** on **May 15th** with the theme, "**Go for the Gold**" (See Beryl Brown or Pat Jefferson to help). We will feature and display blind sports with their participants. And please keep in mind that on **October 9th**, the **Second Annual EBC Dog-a-thon** will be a bigger and better fundraiser than the first. We will look for lots of corporate and individual support. We need active volunteers for the committee to make the event a success.

Allan Brenner, Executive Director

Transportation & Our Community

The single biggest issue facing most people who are blind or visually impaired in our region is transportation. We have seen dramatic cutbacks in public transit including paratransit, taxis are very expensive and particularly in rural areas, there are no options besides personal rides. As a consequence, people with low vision are very reluctant to give up driving even when they are a danger to themselves and others. Constantly asking friends and family for rides can be demeaning and demoralizing and can be an inconvenience and burden to those asked. Thus, those with visual impairment lose one of the most important aspects of independence...the ability to get around and make personal choices guilt free.

The EBC is looking into ways to help with this situation. One possibility is to create a volunteer driver system with safe, reliable and committed drivers. Coordinating this is very difficult and dealing with liability, insurances and oversight is expensive. We need good ideas and help. It will likely not take place quickly but if the EBC is to really make a big picture difference in peoples lives, we must find a way for people to be able to deal with normal life activities including shopping, socializing and of course, participating at the EBC. Please be in touch if you have ideas, a willingness to be a part of a driving program or can share in the funding.

Blood Drive at EBC

Our next Donation Drive will be Thursday March 11th from 9am to 1pm in Room 3.

PLEASE DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS PRIOR TO DONATING, and eat breakfast prior to giving blood.

Please RSVP if bringing others with you!

Out and About

**By Laurie Scardina
EBC Client/Volunteer**

A group of us who are blind and visually impaired and met at the EBC have been wandering the community in search of interesting and fun places to have a meal, chat, and just get out and about.

This day's adventure finds our crew at Kings Buffet, which is close to Coddington Mall in Santa Rosa. We were all able to get rides on the paratransit service which made the logistics easier. The restaurant is a self-serve Chinese buffet of huge proportions. There are three tables with steam trays for hot dishes, two dessert tables and an ice cream sundae stand. The food was very good and plentiful. A large crowd of diners were there at the time (6pm), but the food was kept stocked and hot. All you can eat for about eight to ten dollars. Very Reasonable!

There were many wait staff available to assist us in various ways. Some of us were directed to the dishes we wanted, others received hands on assistance in helping serve food. Although the staff seemed a bit uncomfortable and "caught off guard" to have a group walk into the restaurant with white canes, they were very friendly and willing to help.

I think we were not an everyday group with our canes and booming laughter, but the staff did a good job and we had a ball! The consensus of opinion is that we would certainly go back. In addition to our restaurant adventures, the dynamic group of folks goes to the movies, malls and more, but that is for another review.

BEGINNING YOGA

Dara Richter, a Certified Yoga Instructor has started a Beginning Yoga at EBC. There will be lots of individual attention. 6 weeks/\$12 3:15pm- 4:15pm Rm 3

BOARD MEMBER WANTED

The Earle Baum Center of the Blind is seeking qualified individuals to apply for board positions. A commitment to the mission of the organization and willingness to be an active member is essential.

The Board is looking for people well connected in the community and/or bring to the organization the following skills: fund development, marketing, public relations and business management. Qualified people who are visually impaired or blind are strongly encouraged to apply, but visual impairment is not a requirement.

Upcoming Events

Adjusting to Vision Loss

New class starts May 5, 2004

Living with Vision Loss

New class starts March 24, 2004

Art History—May Class

Rose Parade—May 15th

Call if interested in Joining

Tandem Bike Ride - July 10th
EBC / Santa Rosa Cycling Club Event

Dog-A-Thon 2004 - October 9th
SAVE THE DATE!

Contact information: www.earlebaum.org email: ebc@earlebaum.org

Tel: (707) 523-3222

Info line: (707) 636-2769

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**FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND**



**EARLE BAUM CENTER
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MISSION STATEMENT

The Earle Baum Center was conceived and established by the blind to provide facilities and foster programs in such areas as education, technology, rehabilitation, health, fitness and recreation, to improve the personal, social and economic condition of the blind and vision impaired.