

NO LIMITS



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving the Blind and Visually Impaired

From the Center

It feels unbelievable to me that 2005 is almost over. The EBC has had quite a year. We are growing, serving a larger population, expanding facilities, increasing staff and volunteers, having a greater impact on the community and experiencing the joys and struggles of maturing.

The Year at a Glance: We hosted the ongoing master degree program in Vision Rehabilitation of Florida State University which will have an important impact to services throughout California; We increased the staff to accommodate the additional demands for training; We expanded services within the community that include group classes, individual training and support groups; We began a capital campaign to build an office building and a multi-purpose building; We expanded our barbecue grounds to meet the demand of social gatherings; We began new recreational activities including regular tandem rides hosted by Santa Rosa Cycling Club, a ceramics class, a singing group and Spanish lessons; We offered our facilities to several disability groups including the Christopher Reeves Spinal Injury Support Group and MS Yoga group. We entered the Santa Rosa Rose Parade and won a trophy for our float featuring described movies; Began serving veterans through the Veteran's Administration; Re-certified all services for the Department of Rehabilitation; Supported the effort of our instructor Denise Vancil to send cases of supplies to sister center in Honduras; Col-

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lected donations and gave surplus equipment to blind centers in disaster areas. Etc.

What is in the works: We broke ground for the office building with active community participation; We are in a job search for a Development Director to help us raise funds; We will be trying to find a way to fund a Program Manager who will oversee daily classes and activities; We are evaluating and implementing improvements to the volunteer program by focusing on process; We are working with the City and County to improve transportation, address crime to seniors and disabled and help develop a disaster relief program; Etc.

Giving, Given Gone: A Word on Donor Fatigue: The catastrophic events and subsequent tragedies of the recent past have been heartbreaking. Billions of dollars have been raised in this country and elsewhere to help relieve pain and suffering at home and around the world. Unfortunately, donor fatigue has set in and is effecting many smaller organizations offering help to the quiet suffering of ordinary citizens. Such is the case with the EBC. The EBC does so much with so little but still we still need help. How does one decide whether to support those who have lost homes verses those who have lost sight? There is no right answer to this dilemma.

The EBC must rely more on private donations to serve those facing vision loss at a

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time when other kinds of support are drying up. Please; carefully consider where to offer your support and know that if you choose to donate to the Earle Baum Center, we will continue to touch the lives of those in-need, and do our best to make you proud. Thank you for being a part of the Earle Baum Community, have a Healthy, Happy New Year.

Allan Brenner
Executive Director

Presidents Message

My name is Aerial Gilbert, and I have been a member of the EBC Board of Directors since its inception. It is a true honor to have been elected as the Board President, and I realize that I have some pretty big shoes to fill following Tony Candela. I look forward to continuing the momentum and growth of the EBC while increasing services and support.

I lost my sight 17 years ago suddenly from eye drops that unbeknownst to me had been tampered with and contained lye instead of eye drops. The assistance I received in learning living skills and mobility gave me the first inkling that I could lead a normal life again. This was an amazing gift at a time in my life that I had felt reduced to ability level of a toddler. The EBC has been a way that I can contribute back to others going through similar experiences Prior to loosing my sight I was a pediatric nurse and an athlete. I have been on staff at Guide Dogs for the Blind for the past 11 years as the Director of Volunteers and recently was promoted to Outreach Manager. I have continued my enjoyment of rowing, and taken it to a competitive level, having rowed for the past 4 years for the US national adaptive team. The sport of row-

ing was recently sanctioned as an official sport for the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing, and I have the hopes of being on the first team to represent the US.

Now for a bit of business. The EBC Board of Directors is recruiting members who can help fill specific needs. Our more urgent need is to bring on members who are well connected in the community and can help raise funds in this challenging time. We want serious and dedicated individuals who understand and believe in the mission and values of the EBC. If you are qualified and interested, please get in touch with Allan Brenner.

I am proud to be affiliated with the EBC and am looking forward to being more involved and especially in meeting many of you.

Aerial Gilbert
EBC Board President

EBC's TGIF BBQ's A GREAT SUCCESS

The BBQ season is over and thanks to a great group of volunteers, it was a resounding success. It was all of our wonderful volunteers with support from the office staff that made it possible.

Many thanks to: Laurie Scardina, Rosalyn Ratto, Jim Kreig , Don Voss, Claudette Hunter, Nadine Beachamp, Linda Picton, Yvonne Huddleston, Lisa Greenfield, Iris Bezan, Sean Ryan, Helen and Ed Eisenstark, Emily Webster, and Lee Smith.

The "off" season finds our volunteers already at work on a manual for doing the BBQ's for an even greater season in 2006.

Congratulations on a job well done!

Introduction to Success

By Lisa Gerhardt

Now that I have been working at the Earle Baum Center for a while, I want to relate a tale of small proportions but amazing in its impact. I have one task (among many) that makes my whole week... taking role for our Introduction to Vision Loss Class. It is a twelve week class for the visually impaired who are just beginning their road to independence. The look of fear, uncertainty and curiosity are on many faces. Attendees are often beginning the process of adjusting to their vision loss and have found their way to the EBC. Most just want a way to make what seems like a monumental hurdle feel a little easier. Denise, our instructor, arrives and introduces herself. When the class finds out she is totally blind there are looks of amazement and surprise. If she can do it so can we! Denise has been teaching this class for a long, long time so it always makes me smile to see her ease, grace and intelligence coming from a knowing place. Her new students instantly feel that Denise is special. As I take role, students have a chance to introduce themselves and say a few words. Allan, EBC Director, comes over to welcome everybody to class. His good humor and confidence also puts our new class at ease. He has noticed over the years that the first class is so quiet but by the end of the 12 weeks, there is laughter, enthusiasm and the sounds of new friends sharing and caring. The subjects range from kitchen safety to managing finances to adaptive technology, and mobility. They even get to go shopping when the Lighthouse comes in with their array of adaptive products. The most amazing thing of all is to see the students, along with their family and friends, grow, change and learn on a weekly basis. Interacting with the students puts a human face to my job and shows me the importance of what I do.

Dog-a-thon 2005

On October 8, the EBC celebrated its' sixth anniversary with the Third Annual Dog-a-thon. The weather was perfect when the walk began at 9AM, lead by Martha Yates playing the haunting sound of bagpipes followed by the large group of walkers and their dogs. Upon arriving at the EBC, the Montgomery Village Lions Club served their famous pancake breakfast. Dog relays began minutes later which required the participants to go to various staging areas where they dressed their dog in a shirt, pants and a hat and returned to the starting line for the next teammate to begin. It was funny and spirited. Local Girl Scouts ran the children's play area with a jump house and art program, vendors and non-profit organizations set up tables in the patio to share with the participants and the best ever silent auction was held in two rooms. In addition, we announced the winner of the Zappy raffle, who rode her new Zappy scooter around demonstrating her skills and entertaining the crowd. Another successful Dog-a-thon. See more photos are on our web site.



EBC Staff and friends lead the DogAthon 2005 "Walk for Independence"

Oh, Mow is Me

The Center has a large acreage that requires mowing. Although the weeds/grass we mow is only a small fraction of our total property, it does represent a demanding mowing chore. This is a constant job, starting after the first rains and continuing through most of the summer. We have a mower, but it is a "lawn" mower, not a system that most people would use to clear the expanse of grass/weeds we desire to keep under control in the Center's orchards.

This current process works, but it demands too many volunteer hours. We need a new mower system, one that is designed for the large job at hand. We are seeking a small tractor with a power take-off (PTO) mower. This new mowing system does not have to be the top of the line big and powerful, Cal Trans type of system. We've looked at the small Chinese tractors affixed with a PTO mower, and they completely represent the type of upgrade we're seeking. They cut a wider swath. The power takeoff is not a belt-driven system, and it seems that our present mower is always awaiting a replacement belt!

And so we put out this request for a new mower system:

A small, but sufficient, tractor with a PTO mower. Can you help us?

Our Website now offers a way to make **SECURE** online donations to the EBC.

We have connected with PayPal for your convenience. Check out the home page for this and the latest news!

www.earlebaum.org



**Remember the
Transportation Complaint hotline:
(707) 636-2769**



 **HOLIDAY PARTY** 

**Come one, and have some fun,
Come all, and have a ball,
Bring a dish, and some cheer
Celebrate the holidays,
and the New Year!**

**There will be dancers and drummers
for your entertainment delight
Bring your songs and instruments
so we can do it up right
Friends sharing laughter, food and
fun is what it's all about**

**There will be a good time had by
everyone, there is no doubt.**

**WHEN: December 15, 2005
WHERE: EBC -Rms 3 and 4
TIME: 11.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.**

*** Pot Luck ***

RSVP as there is limited space.

Florida State University at Earle Baum Center

By Ali O. Lee
Vision Loss Services Coordinator
LightHouse of the North Coast

Ten Florida State University (FSU) students, from all over California, have held classes at the Earle Baum Center for two semesters: summer 2005 and fall 2005. The center is providing a valuable service—a place in which to meet, in-person, at least once a semester. The program combines face to face with distance learning. This is the first time that FSU has offered training in the West Coast which is of great significance since there are no equivalent vision rehabilitation teaching programs west of the Mississippi.

Thanks to a federal government grant for tuition, in cooperation with the Florida State University school of Special Education, ten people already working in the vision rehabilitation field are earning Masters Degrees in Visual Disabilities. Under the coordination and instruction of Professor Sandra Lewis and primary instruction of Lynda Jones, these Californians will earn this degree in two to three years.

There are approximately 18 known Californians currently working with this degree. The 10 FSU students will dramatically add to the numbers of professionally trained people able to better serve the blind and visually impaired community.

TELEPHONE VOTING

by Beryl Brown

State law requires that a method of accessible voting be in place for the 2006 election. Many types of touch screen systems have been tried and have been found wanting. Vermont has recently used a system of telephone voting in a mock election and found it quite promising, and will be used in next years election.

Members from the Registrar of Voters office in Sonoma County went to Vermont during this mock election and are now working towards doing a mock election here. The EBC has asked to be part of that election.

In the meanwhile the California Council of the Blind has provided us with a number to call to test this out. Several have tried it and liked it. The number is 1-888-661-6636. You will be asked for a poll worker ID number which is 1234 and an Access ID number which is 101. You will then be given a series of prompts to take you through this election process. There will be ample opportunity to change or review your vote before casting your ballot.

In an election, these phones would be set up at each polling place and absentee ballots would still be used.

Someone from the registrars office will be coming to the EBC after the next election to talk about this new voting tool, so give it a try in the meanwhile so you can have your questions ready when they visit.

A Ride of a Lifetime

By Leslie Bailiff & Jennifer Frazier

Jose has been a student at the Earle Baum Center for the past four years. Being deaf and severely visually impaired Jose uses American Sign Language (ASL) to communicate. When he began services at the EBC, his sight was quickly diminishing. Jose has worked hard as he studied Braille and Independent Living Skills with Denise Vancil, Technology with Jennifer Frazier, and Mobility with Leslie Bailiff. He has always been determined to do whatever he can to be both productive and live independently.

With the great improvements of adaptive technology, Jose discovered a new world. He is able to combine the use of a specialized note taking device that displays in Braille and uses a synthesized voice together with Sendero Group's Global Positioning System that offers information which was previously only a dream. He now knows where he is located at any given time, whether walking or in a vehicle, he can find out how to get to a store or destination which will be mapped out and spoken to him via BrailleNote, can be given a description of landmarks and towns when in a vehicle and can even have the notetaker speak to others after he inputs the words by typing them onto the unit.

One Saturday, Jose rode the bus from Santa Rosa to Cloverdale using his GPS (an adventure since he rarely travels long distances). In Cloverdale, at his brother's home, everyone gathered around to see his new machine. Jose played a typed message to his family. After hearing Jose's message

the family typed a reply which Jose read in Braille. This trip went so smoothly that Jose has developed a newfound confidence to travel on his own. We are very excited to see Jose learn so much that allows him to live a normal life. With technology and hard work, people who are deaf/blind are much less isolated and are able to integrate into life's daily activities.

In Jose's words (Jose's first language is ASL), he describes the process of getting trip directions to Community Resources for Independence using the GPS:

"GPS is great! I like to learn my Braille Note (note taking machine) with GPS and training. I typed to answer Control + S for address looking, State: California, City: Santa Rosa, Name street: Hopper Avenue., and number street: 980 entered, then press R and P for walking press Control + T left turn on Range Ave. to North then heading 1 miles and left turn on Piner RD to West. Then Right turn on Airway Dr heading to North, then on Hopper Ave. at CRI, 980 Hopper Ave. The End..."



The Braille Note (pictured above) has been specifically designed to provide visually impaired people a portable word processor, Internet access, email and wayfinding technology. This is a specially designed personal data assistant. The Braille Note provides both braille and speech feedback to a blind person.

The Journey Continues

By Bill Gillespie

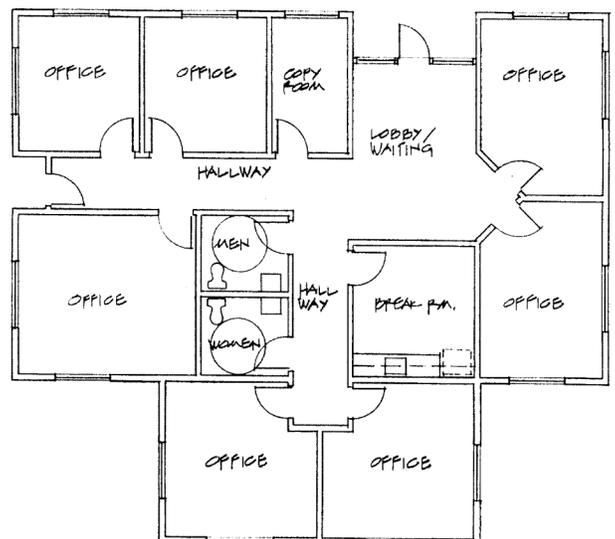
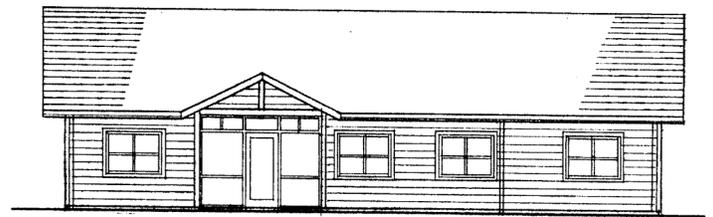
I cannot believe that On December 11, 2005 will be exact one year since I received Garrett my first guide dog. It has been a lot of work and a time of great joy. Garrett gives me the kind of unconditional love that only a dog can. It was difficult in the beginning, but with my regular routine settling down, we have adjusted. I receive many comments from people about Garrett's sweetness and what a good dog he is. This makes me very proud and being a people person he sometimes breaks the ice for me which can be so interesting at times. The deciding factor in wanting to pursue a Guide Dog was when I started coming to the Earle Baum Center. I am taking technology classes, mobility training, fitness and Braille. Some of my instructors have guide dogs and I saw how they interacted and work together. Coming to the EBC has not only given me the confidence and skills I need for my future endeavors, it has been a place I love to come and socialize. People do not hear sometimes about the socials activities that go on here. There are BBQ's in the summer, Tandem Bike Rides, and last but not least is the Thursday Thinkers. This is a group of people of all types and humors, getting together to support, advocate in the community, and mentor each other. We also plan some pretty fun activities such as trips to Doran Beach, shopping trips at the holidays, Halloween Parties, etc..

A little personal history about myself. I was born in Fairfield, CA on December 20, 1963 and soon my family moved to Fort Bragg. I was told at the age of five about my eye problems. Even though I have had eye problems all my life, it

has not stopped me from doing the things I enjoy. I love to go ocean fishing with my brother Tim, as he has a fishing business in Fort Bragg. I have taken Garrett out on the boat and he does very well out on the ocean. I also enjoy going cross-country skiing. I am also a big music lover and have made beautiful music a big part of my life.

If anyone would like me to come and talk to their group about my experiences at EBC, I would be more and happy to do so. I encourage anyone to go and visit the EBC for a tour and meet the staff. You will be amazed at the opportunities that open up to you when you have the proper training, and the support of the EBC!

Future EBC Office Plans



This is what all the construction noise is about! Well worth it we say!

Introduction to Vision Loss
12 week Series
January 11th - April 5th
9-11am Wednesdays
Please Call to sign up

Upcoming Events
EBC's
Annual Holiday Party
December 15, 2005
11am—3pm
PLEASE RSVP

There will be **NOT** be a
Veteran's Meeting or VETS
Spousal Support Group
November / December
See you in January!



December 17, 2005
to
January 2, 2006
Reopen January 3, 2006

EBC Closed

Contact information: www.earlebaum.org email: ebc@earlebaum.org
Tel: (707) 523-3222 Complaint line: (707) 636-2769 Fax: (707) 636-2768

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.

MISSION STATEMENT

EARLE BAUM CENTER
4539 Occidental Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95401



FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND