



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving the Blind and Visually Impaired
WINTER 2007 VOLUME 7 ISSUE 3

Success Breeds New Beginnings

It wasn't the East Coast rain that turned Laurie Scardina into "a puddle'." Things were complicated enough on the island in Chesapeake Bay 8 miles from the nearest stores. When diabetes resulted in substantial vision loss and the inability to drive, she could no longer perform the tasks required of her as a Veterinary Technician. Her illness then led to the breakup of her marriage. With no job, no local services and an ever dimming future, things looked bleak.



A visit to a sister in California provided the impetus for a big change. After months of only traveling the distance from the couch to the fridge, Laurie was invited by longtime EBC supporter Linda Picton to come to the EBC for a barbecue. Laurie was hooked.

Attendance in the "Living with Vision Loss" class immediately began to change her outlook, while the "Adjusting to Vision Loss" class helped her regain her motivation. Then came Orientation and Mobility training and Laurie "began to get my life back."

See "Laurie" page 2

Joyfully preparing for their 25th wedding anniversary, Tim and Emily planned to invite all of the guests that had attended their 1981 wedding. Then came the devastating morning of May 17, 2005. Tim had suffered a stroke of the optic



nerve and for the next month, every morning brought more vision loss and more bad news. Advised by his doctor that the vision loss would be permanent, Tim's life came to a sudden stop. Without his eyesight, the future looked bleak for the self-employed road warrior, who had spent the last 35 years of his life as a traveling dealer in gemstones.

Life was put on hold as Tim prepared to wait the six weeks for his appointment with the Dept. of Rehabilitation. Not content to just sit and wait, Tim's wife Emily, made an appointment to visit the Earle Baum Center. The EBC staff immediately enrolled Tim in the 12 week Introduction to Vision Loss living skills course.

For Tim, this was "the perfect way to start to move forward" on this new chapter of his life. Inspired by his instructor,

See Tim page 2

(Laurie cont.)

With the help of instructor Scott Kies, Laurie gained the confidence to travel independently again. Within 6 months, she was off visiting her daughters and her ever-increasing brood of grandkids.

Laurie credits white cane training with helping restore her dignity. "With the white cane, I no longer have to look down before every step. You can walk with your head up and look people in the eye."

Knowing that her future rested on full time employment, Laurie began to volunteer at the EBC to acquire new skills. First as volunteer receptionist and office assistant, then as volunteer fitness instructor, she regained the confidence to enter the work world, while giving back to help others regain their lives.

But the road ahead had a few bumps in store. The day after meeting an employment counselor, Laurie was informed that she would need open heart surgery. Completing her 10 months of rehabilitation, Laurie was back on the job trail. After consulting the Department of Rehabilitation, Laurie was encouraged to apply for a class opening at the Lions World Services of the Blind School in Arkansas for 6 months of training that would lead to a taxpayer service representative position with the IRS.

Laurie (and all the rest of us at the EBC) hopes she will someday return to Sonoma County. Whatever the future brings, Laurie knows that she is prepared. "Because I have set a goal, focused on what I needed to learn and learned it, I am already a winner." We couldn't

(Tim cont.)

Denise Vancil, Tim calls her "the poster person of what you can do." After mobility training in his home Tim was finally able "to get my bearings and begin to plan for the future." Tim also enrolled in the Living with Vision Loss class, finding it "great to have someone to complain to other than family."

Working with the EBC staff, Tim got DOR approval for an evaluation at the Berkeley low vision clinic. Tim received new technology aids and training, including a new laptop computer loaded with accessibility software. Even after 8 years of maintaining his own website, Tim had to learn how to use the keyboard instead of the mouse. Not only was the training at the Earle Baum Center "great fun", Tim can now easily stay in touch with friends and family as well as staying current with his favorite topics. Using his head worn Jordy to watch TV and pay bills is "very cool."

After receiving job counseling, the EBC assisted in getting Tim enrolled in the National Statler Center for Careers in Hospitality Service, in Buffalo, N. Y., with a school scholarship and other assistance from the state. Tim has been named commencement speaker for his class, and is looking forward to graduating in mid-November and starting on an exciting new career path.

Tim has come to personify the "can do" attitude of the Earle Baum Center. "Every time I come to the EBC, I get charged up. It makes me feel that my world is not coming to an end. Just the opposite."

We gratefully acknowledge the following donors who have contributed to the Earle Baum Center between August 1 and October 31, 2007.

Our apologies if we've omitted your name. If you should have been listed and were not, please contact Phil Swetin at 523-3222.

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With your support, we can provide more programs and services to more of our friends and neighbors than ever before.

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Travel Tips



In California, the Unruh Civil Rights Act states that individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access to public accommodation. Public accommodation includes establishments such as hotels and motels, restaurants, and theaters. The law extends the right of a person with a disability to use public conveyances, as can their service animals or alternative accommodations.

The Air Carrier Access Act is a federal law that extends the right to equal access in air travel to individuals with disabilities. Travelers cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their disability. Air carriers are responsible for providing assistance for individuals with tasks such as boarding, deplaning, and in some instances cabin assistance.

If you feel that you have been discriminated against on the basis of your disability, recording names, dates, and times of events related to the discrimination is vital for filing a complaint. For questions or concerns regarding your rights under the Unruh Civil Rights Act, please contact the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing at: 1-800-884-1684.

For questions regarding air travel, contact the U.S. Department of Transportation's line for travelers with disabilities at 1-800-778-4838.

ICE is Nice

In Case of Emergency, or ICE, is a program that enables first responders, such as paramedics, firefighters and police officers to identify victims and contact their next of kin to obtain important medical information. It encourages people to enter emergency contacts in their cell phone address book under the name ICE; alternatively, if a person has multiple emergency contacts, they can be listed similarly to the following: ICE1-Mom, ICE2-Dad, ICE3, etc. The program is popular in Europe and has started to grow into North America.

Gomers Banana Pyle Bread

2 cups sugar
1 cup oil
4 eggs
5-7 ripe bananas
2 ½ cups flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt

Beat oil and sugar to blend
Add eggs, beat until light
Add bananas (I do not mash first, just break into chunks into the mixer)
Slowly mix in flour, baking soda and salt
Mix until blended, do not overbeat

Bake at 350 degrees for:

2 — 9x6 loaf pans = 60-75 minutes, or
3 — 8x5 loaf pans – 55-60 minutes

Additions: cranberries, macadamia nuts, walnuts, or chopped sugared dates, Maraschino cherries halved, or any combination of any of the above.

From the kitchen of Cathy Lawson

Keeping the Spirit

Reading our cover stories, it's easy to see why there is a special feeling that comes from observing the day to day successes that are a way-of life here at the Earle Baum Center. A day seldom passes that doesn't witness a turning from "I don't think I can" to "O.K., what's next?" Perhaps the only shadow that can mitigate this joy is the concern that someday we may have to ration these services. With an aging population, no significant increases in government support on the horizon and increasing competition for private grant funding, we are faced with the possibility of turning away potential clients.

The Earle Baum Center has always believed that if you have the motivation to improve your life, we will find the resources to support your efforts. Where public funding is not available, support is offered in the form of EBC scholarships. However, the staggering growth of vision related diseases threatens to overcome our ability to serve everyone in need.

Your support at any level will make a significant difference. Your annual contribution during this fundraising season will help ensure the continuity of services throughout the coming year. If you would prefer to help by making a smaller monthly contribution through your credit card or checking account, please contact our Development Department at 523-3222.

Tax Benefit Expiring Soon

Many of us appreciate the work done by local service non-profits and would like to help sustain them but don't have the liquid resources to make a substantial contribution. Recognizing this, lawmakers enacted a provision to encourage increased charitable giving by rewarding Americans 70½ or older who make contributions from Traditional or Roth IRAs. The Charitable IRA Rollover permits taxpayers to make direct donations from their IRA without counting them as part of their Adjusted Gross Income and without paying taxes on them. This benefit is especially valuable to taxpayers who don't itemize their deductions, itemizing taxpayers who have reached their charitable donation limit and taxpayers whose tax deductions decrease as their income increases. Donations must be made by December 31, 2007 to be eligible. For more information contact your tax advisor or call the EBC Development Department at 523-3222.

Developing the Future

If you are interested in helping sustain the work of the Earle Baum Center with a cash gift or by volunteering your time, please contact our Development Department. The Development Department is the fundraising arm of the Earle Baum Center. Funds are raised through individual donations, bequests, foundation grants, corporate gifts and government contracts.

Another Great Barbecue Season



The end of September saw our last TGIF Barbecue of the season and it was spectacular. Not only did we have nearly 60 attendees but the food was perfectly prepared, highlighted by a very tender tri tip. Throughout the season, the menu differed from week to week under the careful stewardship of our volunteers. This was certainly our best season ever. Thank yous also go to the Soroptimists who oversaw the final event. Probably the best part of our barbecues was the range of attendees. We hosted clients and participants, friends and families, volunteers and staff. The mix of people sharing a meal together reminds us that the barriers of inclusion are easily broken when people share time together.

Crafts Class Scheduled

For four consecutive Mondays, the EBC will be hosting a tactile skills crafts class. Designed to enhance tactile skills while creating fun art and holiday items, the class will meet on November 19th & 26th and December 3rd & 10th from 11:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Projects will include beadwork, mosaics, foil art and holiday cards and gifts. There is a \$20 materials fee with scholarships available. For more information or registration call the EBC at 523-3222.

Talking ATMs

October marks the eighth anniversary of the first U.S. Talking ATM. As the result of advocacy efforts across the country by many individuals and blind organizations, there are well over 50,000 Talking ATMs in this country, along with installations all over the world. Key to the on-going advocacy effort is people using the Talking ATMs, as well as other accessible banking services. Bank of America has over 11,000 currently installed. Other participating banks are Washington Mutual, Wells Fargo, Citibank, LaSalle, Citizens, Sovereign, Union Bank of California, Wachovia and Chase. Talking ATMs can be found in public and private locations other than banks in all fifty states. Bank of America Talking ATMs, for example, are in many airports around the country, and many banks have Talking ATMs on college campuses. Banking websites should allow you to search for your nearest Talking ATM. Questions or comments or feedback on accessible banking services can be sent to Lfeingold@earthlink.net

New Paratransit Process

The City of Santa Rosa has a new process for paratransit users. You are asked to call the transit office at 541-7180 for an application to be mailed to you. Once the form is completed, you can schedule an appointment for a Functional Testing evaluation. The intake person at the evaluation site help you fill out the application, or you can contact the EBC for assistance with the form.

Body, Mind and Spirit



The EBC's new Body, Mind and Spirit Program began on Thursday, October 11 by making decorations for their November 2nd Harvest

Masquerade Party. The group stuffed two scarecrows and made spiders with funny eyes out of black yarn and black pipe cleaners. On Thursday, October 25, they carved pumpkins, made ghosts, decorated, and wrapped up the party plans. BMS will end the year's events on December 6, making ornaments to distribute to a local convalescent facility.

The Body, Mind and Spirit Program, under the direction of Recreation Coordinator Tammy Meyer, meets on the first and third Thursdays of each month, year round. Tammy promises that the new year will bring loads of interesting and fun activities, events and outings, with lots of opportunities to learn, develop skills, be creative, share, and most importantly, laugh and have fun together.

"We will play games that make you think, there will be guest speakers. We will meet in places like bowling alleys, swimming pools, parks, theaters and coffee shops. We will be making things like crafts, and gifts, doing food and party prep and much more! We will share poetry, recipes and lots and lots of smiles!"

The BMS program has an annual enrollment fee of \$50.00 for the entire year or \$5.00 each day for drop-ins. Everyone is welcome. The more the merrier! For more information, contact Tammy @ 523-3222.

Free Large-Print Checks

Banks are legally obligated under the ADA to provide large-print checks to individuals unable to use standard checks, at no additional charge than would be charged the public for standard checks. If you or your bank has questions, contact the U.S. Department of Justice ADA hotline (Americans with Disabilities Act) hotline at 1-800-466-4232.

City Survey

The City of Santa Rosa's Capital Improvement Program is a long-range planning tool that combines community, City Council, and staff requests into one document to help evaluate the City's capital needs and prioritize them over a five-year period. Many of the projects include adding amenities to help improve accessibility and usability for seniors and persons who are disabled. A survey is being conducted to give you an opportunity to share your priorities and concerns for the future. The City is also interested in identifying a priority list for impediments that are highly dangerous or totally inaccessible. For a copy of the survey, contact Mardell Morrison, ADA Coordinator, City of Santa Rosa, (707) 543-3037.



Dogathon '07

walk 4 independence
earle baum center



Described Videos Described

The Tech Club's October meeting featured Shoshana Brand, operator of Blue Rose Videos, a mail order video rental service specializing in described videos for persons who are visually impaired/blind. Shoshanna started Blue Rose Videos because of her vision impairment. "I love to watch videos but I could not always tell what was going on! To solve that problem I got some descriptive videos, but I had to buy them or get a small selection from the library. That is why I thought of beginning a described video rental service. I know how much more I enjoy movies that have been described, and I wanted to make them available to others with visual impairments." They currently have over 300 movies available for rent. To become a member you need to complete an application and pay a one time \$20 fee. Your first rental is free and subsequent rentals are \$3.22. The web site address is: www.blurosevideos.com

Free AT&T Services

AT&T offers free local directory assistance (411), speed calling, and operator assistance free of charge to individuals who are legally blind. Contact AT&T to request the medical verification form which must be completed by a licensed physician and returned to AT&T in order to take advantage of these services. 1-800-772-3140.



Time Change Tip: Dress to be Seen

On the first Sunday of November (4th), we'll all change our clocks to standard time. This means it will become darker earlier in the evening, decreasing drivers' ability to see pedestrians who are walking at night. During this time of year, it is important to dress to be seen. Brightly colored or contrasting colored clothing may make pedestrians more visible to drivers during daylight hours, but during nighttime hours, bright and even white clothing does little to enhance your visibility to motorists. Reflective clothing and materials are more visible at night. Instead of absorbing light, they reflect light back. When walking when it is dark, wear reflective clothing or accessories and carry a flashlight for maximum visibility. If you prefer not to carry a flashlight, a blinking red (bicycle) light that runs on batteries is an alternative to using a flashlight. Most of these safety accessories can be purchased at your local bicycle shop or local hardware store. Remember: as the days grow shorter, dress to be seen!

Discount Parks Pass



The California state park system offers a discount pass for individuals who are permanently disabled and for disabled war veterans. Individuals holding a state park pass are entitled to discounts for both day and overnight use in state parks.

From the Center



Eight years ago in October, the Earle Baum Center opened its doors to an unknown future. At that time, we had no teachers or support staff and were very fortunate to have talented and skilled volunteers who were able to build and facilitate a support group that later became known as the Thursday Thinkers. It was a very exciting and daunting time and yet the energy and enthusiasm was infectious. People who were blind and visually impaired in the North Bay finally had a place of their own. At that time, the EBC consisted of unfurnished buildings, no landscaping and enormous challenges and obstacles ahead. Somehow, our board, volunteers and participants were able to inspire a vision for the future and people and organizations stepped up and gave the EBC an incredible jump start. Eight years later, the EBC is a successful and viable training and community center and serves and inspires many.

Although our first eight years have been amazing, we still are in our formative years. We face a changing population with growing needs, governments that have very limited financial resources, foundations inundated with requests for financial support and a general population being pulled to help so many worthy non-profit agencies. It is a tough time for small and young service providing organizations.

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, the Walk for Independence/Dog-a-thon was the kickoff of our annual giving campaign. Our 2007-08 budget is close to \$1,000,000, most of which is for direct services to people losing sight. The budget projects a deficit of about \$300,000 which needs to be offset by donations. In past years, we have never come close to raising that much money in a single giving campaign. For the EBC, reduction of services is not an option. To allow us to continue on our current path, we are asking for your support and suggestions on how to best reach others who can help. The EBC is a small organization but serves many hundreds of people per year. We do this with a proportionately large teaching staff and a very small administrative staff. We have enjoyed helping change the lives of many, giving them a foundation to remain independent and productive. We must be successful since we are the only place to turn to in our very large service area.

One of our organizational successes has been the impact the EBC has in the education of future professionals in our field. In just a few short years, we have become a training site for Vision Rehabilitation professionals, a continuing sponsor of internships for Orientation & Mobility Specialists and Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, as well as sharing our facilities with students entering master degree programs in vision rehabilitation, holding regional in-service training programs for current

professionals and helping orient rehabilitation counselors and staff to the services we offer. We also train doctors and support staff in vision rehabilitation, conduct community based trainings for hospitals, businesses, and government agencies, and are the recognized authority in the region for vision services. The EBC not only provides training to clients but trains the trainers and makes a difference to many other organizations that we call partners.

It is difficult to take the time to look back and think about all of the excitement and past accomplishments here at the EBC. Resting on our past will not improve the future. Today's increasing demands require that we look ahead and focus on the coming challenges. With continued and increased support of our community, the future of the EBC is grand as we continue our commitment to offer the best possible opportunities to people who are blind and visually impaired. We will provide outstanding training, social, recreational and health related programs, quality staff and volunteers, excellent facilities and maintain a dynamic organization so that those living in Northern California will always have their own place to turn when losing sight.

Allan Brenner, President/CEO

Our Collaborative Partners

Long before we opened our doors in October 1999, a strong relationship between the EBC and the State Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) was established. This was the first of many important community partnerships that formed the foundation of our growth. Soon after we became a tax exempt corporation, we conducted meetings with DOR Counselors and Supervisors to prepare for upcoming service needs, become certified vendors of the State and make sure we were on the same page. That, along with excellent support, gave the EBC a great start.

Since that time, the EBC collaborations grew to include the Veterans Administration, local school systems, Regional Centers, private businesses, other service agencies and the public with the hope of better understanding the community needs and providing our services when appropriate. As a community center and training center, the EBC has benefited from all these relationships with our partners and we believe they have also benefited from this affiliation.

In our last newsletter, we discussed the State and Federal systems and how they are not able to provide the extent of services necessary to help people with unmet needs who are blind and visually impaired. The State and Federal Governments, both of which are struggling with tight budgets for social services, seem to be among the first areas to see funding cuts. Even under the added constraints, we are fortunate to work with so many inspiring, creative and dedicated partners who find ways to serve clients. Working together, we can do so much more.



EARLE BAUM CENTER
4539 Occidental Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

MISSION STATEMENT

To provide opportunities for people who are blind or visually impaired to improve and enrich their personal, social and economic lives.

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

Holiday Party!

Thursday, December 20

11:00 AM

- 3:00 PM

Food

Music

Festivities



RSVP by 12/12/07
523-3222

EBC Holiday Closure

12/24/07-1/2/08

New Classes at EBC

Intro to Vision Loss Class

January 16, 2008

Living w/Vision Loss Class

January, 2008

Call for details

Snack Attack?

The next time you visit the EBC and hunger strikes, visit our new vending machine in the Visitor Center lobby.