



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving People With Sight Loss
(707) 523-3222 ebc@earlebaum.org

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From the Center

Entering Our Thirteenth Year

The New Year signals the beginning of the Earle Baum Center's 13th year. As I write this, it is raining hard as we are in the midst of winter. Most trees are leafless. The green lawns and manicured borders stand out against the brown fields which are slowly forming a green velvet blanket from the rejuvenating moisture. Every season presents great beauty at the EBC along with the serene feeling of our open space and quiet grounds. One cannot help but love spending time in this beautiful place.



Welcome Dan Needham, COO

With the New Year, we also welcome our first Chief Operating Officer, Dan Needham. Dan brings a wealth of experience and skills to the organization. He will oversee our daily operations. We are very excited that Dan accepted the opportunity to join us. Look for more information about our new COO in the next newsletter.

Hitting the Road for the EBC

Another reason we are happy to have Dan on board, is that I plan on spending a sig-

nificant amount of time away from the Center, raising more awareness and financial support for our programs, facilities and operations. As I mention ceaselessly, the Center must become more self sufficient and diverse in its funding sources to ensure sustainability. Ultimately, our goal is to continue our work knowing that our organizational focus remains providing life-changing services rather than expending a disproportionate amount of energy hunting for funding. An important part of this aim is to expand communication channels and leverage the talents of our many stakeholders.

New Ambassador Program

As part of this effort, we are in the early stages of developing an ambassador program designed to reach more people in support of the EBC. It is exciting to see the hard work going into the unfolding of this program. In time, we plan to have a broad range of volunteers speaking on behalf of the EBC so that we may better reach those with sight loss while expanding our donor base. We will keep you up to date with its progress in future newsletters and on www.earlebaum.org. In addition, we are creating a Facebook page and the Ambassador Program will be updated regularly as it evolves. If you have an interest in being an Ambassador for the EBC, please let us know.

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Greenfest

EarleFest 2011 was a hallmark event in many ways. In addition to going off without a hitch, the event was powered entirely by solar energy, which was quite exciting. It inspired me to look into finding a way to entirely convert the Center's power source to solar. As it turns out, we are in an envious position to draw sunlight and convert it to electricity with all of our open space and unimpeded structures. Converting to solar power is very expensive but so is our monthly energy bill. We hope to find a large grant and other funding sources to make this conversion possible. Please suggest ideas if you have them.

Capital Campaign

We are once again re-visiting the potential construction a large multipurpose building at the Center. Finding resources to construct a building with a large hall, commercial kitchen and meeting rooms will no doubt be challenging, but would open up many new possibilities. We considered a capital campaign several years back but found that the community knew very little about the EBC. I believe we have done a good job in getting our name and mission out since then. Now we are engaged in discussion on how to secure funding for this exciting project. Please let me know if you have any good ideas for a capital campaign to further the project.

As you can see, the EBC is a dynamic organization, always on the move, evolving and maturing. But the real joy is in seeing the impact of our good work and knowing that the lives of thousands have improved because of the concerted efforts of our staff, volunteers, mentors, clients and of course, the support of this great community.

Thank you for your interest in the EBC.

Allan Brenner, CEO

Mary Friman: Una Californiana

San Francisco native Mary Friman (pronounced Freeman) has roots that go back seven generations in California. Her father's descendants were from the north of Spain and her family traces its history to the founding of San Francisco just around the time of our country's Declaration of Independence. And if you are at all familiar with historic Los Angeles, you may be impressed to learn that Mary's father was born and grew up on Olvera Street in Los Angeles in the mid to late 1800s. The old family home is now an information center in that historic district. And just to weave a little more yarn, the late vaudevillian actor Leo Carrillo, also a member of an old and respected California family, was his buddy and good friend.



Mary is a long time member of Los Californianos, an organization that seeks to preserve the Hispanic heritage of old Alta California. In fact, Mary has been an invited representative at celebrations for the founding of the Presidio. With her deep roots in early California, it's no wonder that genealogy has been a lifelong interest of Mary's and in her own words, "kept me alive." She has treated her work in genealogy like a job and it has led her around the world. In addition to researching her father's lineage in Spain, she researched her mother's Irish forebears from Kilkenny County, Ireland and traced her late husband's ancestors to Gothenburg, Sweden where almost everyone's family name is Friman. She traveled the world in these pursuits and met distant kin. It all began many, many years ago with some genealogy classes at Santa Rosa Junior College.

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It is evident that over the years, her efforts have been precise and accurate. States Mary, "You can't horse around with genealogy!"

Mary's sight loss is from age-related macular degeneration. She became aware of the EBC several years ago through Petaluma's Senior Center where EBC facilitator Beryl Brown conducts informational and support group meetings. According to Mary, "Each meeting always bears fruit, wonderful fruit. To me it's been a life saver." Mary offers an example of one of the fruits: Her white cane with a rotating bulb at its tip, called a roller tip. A quick demonstration shows her proficiency with the cane, a key to her mobility and safety on her daily walks for pleasure and exercise. As is common with sight loss, Mary cites not being able to drive as the biggest challenge.

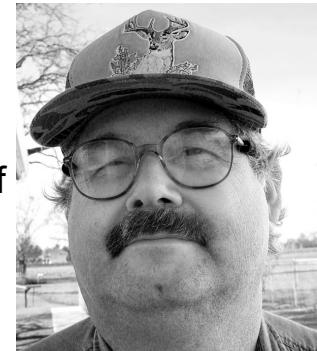
Mary's ties with Earle Baum Center go beyond attending support group meetings in Petaluma. Her late cousin, George Fogarty, was a good friend to and strong supporter of EBC. Blind from birth, George was an early leader on the front lines of what was perhaps the most significant movement for blind and disabled rights in our country. He believed that people with vision loss would be best served by training and opportunities to maintain independence. In support of this philosophy, George bequeathed a significant portion of his estate to the EBC.

In reflecting on her occasional visits to the Center, Mary says, "He (Allan Brenner) has done very well. I think the Center and its buildings are great. The ramps are wide and it is easy to get around." And she says she would "be amazed if anyone did not know about the Earle Baum Center."

Bert Hoage: He Learned a Thing or Two from Earle Baum

Bert Hoage considers himself one of the many success stories at the Earle Baum Center. Bert says, "The Center is a God-send. It's impressive. I went with an open mind and soon realized I am not the only one in the boat. I started training at the EBC through the Department of Rehabilitation a little over a year ago and I can't say enough about them."

Bert's progressive vision loss is from myopic degeneration. Not to be confused with the sort of myopia (nearsightedness) that is corrected by wearing prescription glasses, degenerative myopia is the seventh leading cause of legal blindness, occurring in about 2% of the U.S. population. This condition can start at birth, but most often starts during the pre-teen years. It is believed to be hereditary. Bert was diagnosed when he was around 7 years old and recalls, "After the exam, the doctor sat me down and told me my vision would get worse and worse over the years." Bert also suffers from acute iritis commonly known as anterior uveitis. These bouts come with a lot of pain "not to forget" that can last from 4 hours to 2 days. So it is understandable when, lightheartedly, Bert divulges that he has "good eye days and bad eye days."



Bert is a dyed in the wool Sonoma County native who worked in warehouses and on farms with livestock and heavy equipment. At 13 Bert went to work for Louie Ricci who owned Santa Rosa Live Stock. This

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is how Bert became acquainted with Earle Baum who was a customer of Ricci's. Bert explains, "We'd go out to the farm 3 or 4 times a year to pick up cattle." Before his first visit to the farm, Bert was advised by Ricci to "...take your head with you. This old guy can help you. This old boy's got it together. Look and listen."

Ricci was right. Earle Baum left a huge impression on young Bert. He was taken with the way the old man had adapted to his sight loss in such simple and creative ways. For example, on his first visit to the Baum farm, Bert spied a bath tub in the barn. Bert was no stranger to barns or to bath tubs for that matter but this was the first time he had seen them together in such a manner. "What's that?" inquired Bert. "A bath tub" replied Baum, "go take a look at it." Bert did as he was told and went in for a closer look. The tub was situated next to the hay manger. Within the tub was a bale of hay, which when full, Bert noted, fit into it nicely. Earle used the tub as guide to portion the daily hay ration for the cattle. There were other adaptations that the old farmer used successfully such as his well-known guide wires with knots strategically placed to indicate where various plants were located so he knew where to water. To this day Bert refers to adapting his own 5 acre ranch as "Earlefitting."

During the four years that Bert worked for Santa Rosa Livestock Earle Baum conveyed a great deal of wisdom to him on blindness. Bert shares some advice from Earle, "You've got to make it work for you. All of us are different. Make it work your way." Bert believes Earle Baum would be proud of his legacy and the individualized, client-centered train-

ing that is the foundation of the Center's curricula, "The folks at the EBC are adamant about helping people and doing it differently for each... we are all individuals."

For new clients of the EBC, Bert recommends, "Go with an open mind. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Know what you want. As for me, I am doing things today that I didn't do 5 or 10 years ago. My confidence is higher. I am not afraid to travel by myself, I've sharpened my skills."

One could say Bert himself is part of the Earle Baum legacy. "Earle made an impression on me. The Center's enhanced that. It's always been good out there. At the EBC you get a flash feeling that you're going to be OK."

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Do you get confusing messages when starting your computer? Is your computer operating slowly? Do you think your computer might have a virus or other problem?



Maybe you need training to perform such tasks as sending attachments?

Don't forget that the Earle Baum Center's team of technology experts can help with your training needs and keep your computer running properly.

We offer competitive rates. Everyone's welcome. Call Jacques for details and to setup appointments. 707-703-9046

Facilities & Maintenance Updates

Ray Thompson, EBC's official Facilities Manager, is a happy camper! Our expanded maintenance shed was recently completed, providing more than twice the space to house our tractors, equipment and supplies. That means that Ray's beloved tractor no longer has to sit outside under a plastic tarp.

Special thanks goes to the following for their generous support and contributions of money, labor and materials. Redwood Lions Memorial Foundation and Lions Clubs that contributed funds; Ken Coker



for contributing architectural design and building plans (including most construction projects), Ron Marchand, general contractor, for constructing the addition and Canyon Rock of Forestville for donating gravel and concrete.

Also, additional thanks go to Ron Marchand for adding subfloor ventilation to our classrooms.

Ray also reports that our annual spring pruning will start the end of February. Bill Verran, master gardener, will volunteer his time pruning and planting of fruit trees in the orchard.

The restroom floors repairs project was completed in January and cost the EBC nearly \$50,000 from general funds. The solution should be permanent and will likely outlast the rest of the building which is sturdy.

Puffy Chili Rellanos Casserole

Anne Haden, Board Member

8 oz Jack Cheese, cut in strips
1 can (27 oz) whole peeled chilies
8 eggs
2/3 c. milk
1 c. flour
1 t. baking powder
1 c. cheddar cheese, grated
Salsa

Stuff chilies with jack cheese and arrange on greased 8x13 pan. Spoon salsa over chiles. Beat eggs, milk, flour, and baking powder until smooth. Pour evenly over chiles. Sprinkle with cheddar.

Bake 350 till golden.

Mexican Corn Bread

1 cup cornmeal
1 cup flour
2 tablespoons sugar
4 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon chili powder
2 eggs -- beaten
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup butter -- melted
1 tablespoon jalapeno pepper, chopped
1/2 cup sweet red peppers, chopped
1/2 cup onion, chopped
1 can creamed corn
1 cup Monterey jack cheese, shredded

Sift dry ingredients together into a bowl. In another bowl, beat together milk and eggs. Then beat in melted butter.

Add wet mixture into dry ingredients. Stir in remaining ingredients. Mix thoroughly. Pour into a greased 8" or 9" square pan. Bake in a preheated oven for 30 minutes at 400 degrees F.

February is Low Vision Awareness Month

Spokesperson Jane Seymour, along with [Prevent Blindness America](#), the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, support "Don't Lose Sight" - a movement to educate adults ages 40-69 about their risk for macular degeneration. February is AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month, a campaign that was started to raise awareness for macular degeneration and other vision problems. This year marks the 100th anniversary of Prevent Blindness America.

Low vision affects a person's entire life, interfering with the ability to perform daily activities. The term low vision means partial sight, or visual impairment that is not correctable with contact lenses or eyeglasses. However, many low vision aids are available today to make the most of remaining vision and continue to live a satisfying and independent life.

Low vision can be caused by various eye diseases or eye injuries. A few common causes of low vision include the following: Macular degeneration, often referred to as age-related macular degeneration (ARMD or AMD), is the leading cause of blindness in the United States. ARMD primarily affects people aged 65 and older. Some macular complications that affect younger people are sometimes referred to as macular degeneration, but the term generally refers to age-related macular degeneration. The part of the eye affected by ARMD is the [macula](#), the sensitive part of the retina responsible for sharp, central vision.

Glaucoma refers to a group of diseases that cause damage to the optic nerve. Containing more than a million nerve fibers, the optic nerve connects the eye to the brain. This important nerve is responsible for car-

rying images to the brain. The optic nerve fibers make up a part of the retina that gives us sight. This nerve fiber layer can be damaged when the pressure of the eye (intraocular pressure) becomes too high. Over time, high pressure causes the nerve fibers to die, resulting in decreased vision. Vision loss and blindness will likely result if glaucoma is left untreated.

A [cataract](#) is a clouding of the eye's lens. Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness among people older than 55. Most older people have some degree of lens clouding, which is a normal part of aging

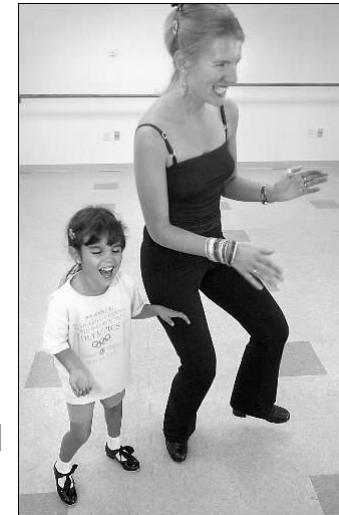
If you wonder what it is like to have a cataract, think about looking through a fogged-up, cloudy window. Cataracts make your visual field appear fuzzy or blurry.

Calling All Talent

You have heard of the shows: American Idol, or So You Think You Can Dance?

We know we have a lot of talent among the Earle Baum family. EBC would like to gather our talent around here for a fun filled, lively, enthusiastic talent show.

If you sing, act, dance, play an instrument, tell jokes, recite poetry, hula hoop, make animal sounds, or something else that you are willing to share, please contact Denise Vancil at 523-7832 for further details.





**THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR DONORS!
YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS MUCH APPRECIATED**

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FOR THE BLIND**

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

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

Seeking a Bookcase

Our audio library has suddenly grown by leaps and bounds, thanks to a recent generous donation of audio books and musical CD's. We are now in need of a book case to store these new selections. The ideal size bookcase is 30" wide x 70" high x 8" deep.

Please call 707-523-3222 if you can help!

**Interested in
Adaptive Technology?**

**Join the Tech Club!
Meetings are held on the
First Monday of each month
from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm in Room # 3**

**Spring Classes
Starting Soon**

**Matter of Balance Class
Introduction to Vision Loss
Living with Vision Loss
Call 707-523-3222**