



Newsletter for the Earle Baum Center

Serving People With Sight Loss
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August 2012 Volume 12 Issue 3

From the Center

The EBC has entered a new fiscal year and I am pleased to say we weathered last year, though it was with some bruises and sore muscles. Now, in the heart of summer, the EBC is beautiful and we are optimistic that things are looking up. Teachers are busy and the campus is buzzing most days. TGIF barbecues have been successful, with great food and camaraderie, and the EarleFest planning is moving along nicely.



We have an exciting opportunity to convert the EBC to a solar powered facility. Our monthly costs for gas and electricity have skyrocketed, making the solar option very appealing. If we can raise \$50,000 in donations, we anticipate receiving a matching gift of \$50,000 that will allow us to proceed. It's a steep mountain to climb, but getting off the grid and attaining low-cost energy is a wise and ecological way to reduce our expenses. Please consider contributing to our solar conversion campaign.

In preparing our annual staff reviews, I looked back over the years and was moved to read about those individuals working at the EBC. Not only do we have first-rate employees but many have been at the EBC for a long time. We opened our

doors just over 12 ½ years ago in late 1999. In early 2000, we hired our first employee and each subsequent year, have hired one or two more. As a result, out of our staff of 14 (excluding me), we have 5 employees who have worked for the EBC 10–12 years. In order of hiring date, they are: Denise Vancil, Jeff Harrington, Patricia Jefferson, Cathy Lawson, and Dr. Susan Hirshfield (as a contractor and, more recently, an employee). We have three staff members who have worked at the EBC for 5–7 years: Jacques Law, Lora Monemzadeh, and Tanya Stefan. Equally remarkable, as we have grown and established new positions, with the exception of one retirement, every remaining employee is the first to fill that position. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated and special people working at the EBC.

I want to welcome the very hard-working Eduardo Mendez back to the EBC as a summer employee before he returns to the School for the Blind for his last semester. I also want to thank Dale Godfrey, our good friend who recently returned to retirement, for his support and hard work as the Low Vision Coordinator. Dale was a joy to have around.

Finally, for all of you who believe in the good work of the EBC, please consider including us in your donations and planned giving to support and sustain the good work we're doing here. We have all faced

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some tough years but with luck and a healthier economy, this year may be the turning point in building a substantial financial foundation. The needs are growing and will be met only with your support.

Thank you and have a great summer.
Allan Brenner, CEO

SPOTLIGHT: CAROLYN WING GREENLEE

Carolyn Wing Greenlee is a writer, artist and musician. She owns a publishing company and a recording studio in Northern California. She is third generation Chinese American. She is exceptionally articulate and engaging. At the very least, Carolyn is a quintessential Renaissance Woman, vibrating with talents and interests. And, her constant companion and one of her closest friends is a guide dog named Hedy.



Carolyn is very clear that it is the Earle Baum Center that has enabled her to continue the many things she wants to do. An EBC Newsletter prompted her to telephone the Center about three years ago (slowly progressing Retinitis Pigmentosa) and what followed was a year and a half at EBC that started her “on the journey back to life.” Carolyn has been inspired by and appreciates the entire EBC staff, but she particularly singled out Cathy Lawson who answered so many initial questions and Scott Kies who changed her life with Mobility and Orientation Training. She applauds Jacques Law for expertly – and with infectious enthusiasm – introducing her to a myriad of liberating techie tools! And, “Susan Hirshfield

enabled me to feel that I could have a new normal, something different, but not less and not worse.” Carolyn’s gratitude is enormous.

The mission of Carolyn’s publishing company, Earthen Vessel, is to preserve voice. “Everyone’s voice is worth hearing.” The subtext of her mission might well be finding worth in the face of adversity. She has authored a number of books including both of her parent’s stories: *Inside the Oy Quong Laundry* and *Son of South Mountain & Dust*. She has written a book of poetry, a cartooning book, two memoirs, co-authored a book about microcurrents and more. Carolyn is a graduate of Guide Dogs for the Blind and has written three very relevant and insightful books in the last few years – *A Gift of Dogs*, *Steady Hedy* and *A Gift of Puppies*. All of Carolyn’s books and those she has published can be found on her website www.earthen.com. Be sure to click on the “music” tab to explore yet another Carolyn dimension!

Carolyn Wing Greenlee is A Resource. In addition to her Earthen Vessel website, Carolyn also authors a self-titled website: www.carolynwinggreenlee.com. She generously shares her stories in a blog-type format and offers low vision suggestions, nutrition ideas, recipes, puppy stories, tales of her book tours and lots of great photos! Highly recommended!

Talking about people who could benefit from the plethora of valuable services Earle Baum Center of the Blind has to offer, Carolyn said, “They don’t know that there’s a place like the Earle Baum Center that has all these resources and all these wonderful people who are dedicating their lives to helping us get back on our feet, finding our lives again, finding that we have purpose, we’re real people and we

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have value. I can say now that there is an army of people to help you. That's what Earle Baum Center is – an oasis of caring people who carefully and gently bring people back to the land of the living.”

Carolyn cautions about analyzing too much about the past: “What matters is where are you now and where you want to go from here.”

Coming Soon to a TV Near You! A New Era in Described Programming: See If Your Favorite Shows are on the List!

Video description is audio-narrated descriptions of a television program's key visual elements. These descriptions are inserted into natural pauses in the program's dialogue. Video description makes TV programming more accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. The description is a carefully written script prepared by a trained describer, read by a professional narrator, and mixed in a professional audio production suite by Media Access Group. Media Access Group at WGBH has been pioneering and delivering accessible media to people with disabilities for over 30 years. In addition to television, there are described live performances of theatre productions and described DVD movies.

As of July 1, the landmark provisions of the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act (CVAA) require the nation's leading networks to provide a combined total of at least 450 hours of described video programming per calendar quarter will come to life.

The top commercial broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC) and the 5 non Broadcast networks- Disney Channel, Nickelodeon, TBS, TNT and USA must provide about 4 hours a week of Prime

time and /or children's programming. To access the description for television go to the “second Audio” feature, which some TV controls identify as “SAP” or “Secondary Audio Program”. You may have to press the SAP several times to find the one you want. It may also be identified as a language feature. Check your TV manual, customer service where you bought the TV or TV manufacturer. For DVD movies, go to the menu for languages and try the English DVS. For more information visit the FCC'S web resource <http://www.fccgov/encyclopedia/video-description> or <http://www.VideoDescription.info>

Independence by Darragh Ryan

With some training in living and travel skills, we blind and low vision individuals can become as independent as we wish.

Good traveling skills consist not only of good cane technique but also a perception of our surroundings. I call it a 6th sense or, as some of my friends call it, my superhuman or daredevil sense.

Here's an example. Sighted, when we would wake up in the middle of the night to use the restroom, we'd hardly ever turn on lights. That's using muscle and brain memory combined with that little extra sense of our personal bubble, like when we're looking away and someone steps close to us, we turn to face them because we just know someone is there.

Everything we learned prior to blindness needs to be adapted to a new way of thinking and a new way of asking for what we need. The more we ask for what we need to become better able to travel safely and independently, the more likely we will succeed in being self-sufficient.

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Too many times have I heard of blind and low vision people calling in sick to crucial living skills training classes because of fear or lack of motivation.

Thanks to my training, I am able to bake a salmon, slow cook an Irish lamb stew, or stir fry a simple mein noodle dish. With the cane and travel skills learned in class, I am able to get to the store and pick up the goods needed for any meal I am preparing. The biggest thing is self-education and the willingness to ask why.

For those who don't use the word "see" because they are blind, I say this: I still watch TV and movies. I still see things the way they are, and I still see the future. This is independence to me.

DAN NEEDHAM, C.O.O.

I'm the second generation of my family to work to help those with vision loss. My father, Dr. Walter Evans Needham, was a psychologist. His specialty was the psychology of the blind. His research on beliefs about blindness, the effectiveness of biofeedback for blind patients, the natural occurrence of "hallucinations" for those with vision loss, and many other topics helped thousands of visually impaired people.



My dad died this June 6th. I miss him very much, and I was happy to be able to share his last days with him. He was a great man, and my hope is that I'm able to help others even a small amount in comparison.

My family received a kind note from Gale Watson who is the Director of Blind Reha-

ilitation Services, Veterans Administration Central Office. She said:

"I knew your father at the West Haven VA – such a kind, inquisitive and sensitive soul; shy. The world is a lesser place without him. You have my deepest condolences. His body of work stands as a tremendous contribution to how we practice blind rehabilitation.

Walt was one of a kind. There are few people who truly "turn the ship" in a field of practice; he was one who did. But - he is most remembered for himself."

The Earle Baum Center was at the top of the list of charities for memorial donations in my father's obituary. We have received some already. Thank you very much.

The EBC, like many other organizations, has been under great pressure to serve a growing number of people during challenging economic times. Many of our expenses like fuel, energy, and insurance have gone up significantly.

We have held our budget flat this past year, yet we are looking at a \$110,000 deficit on a \$1 million dollar budget for our fiscal year ending 30 June. [These numbers aren't final or audited at the time I am writing this.]

Thanks to the generosity of prior donors and excellent planning by our Board of Directors and management, we have reserves that will cover our financial loss this fiscal year. But we know that spending down our reserves is not a solution for the long-term.

The need to help those with vision loss is growing. Government assistance is diminishing. Private donations from donors like you and private foundations are keeping us open to provide services now. Legacy and estate gifts are the key to our ability to expand services to those with vision loss

in the future.

Can you help us close the gap? Can you make a donation now? Can you plan for a gift from your estate in the future?

I am continually impressed with the courage of our clients, the selflessness of our volunteers, the dedication of our staff and the generosity of people like you to help those with vision loss.

Thank you for what you have done and what you will do in the future.

SPOTLIGHT: CHARD LOWDEN

Chard Lowden is a Business Systems Analyst, managing the complex digital backbone for Marmot Mountain, LLC, a large outdoor clothing manufacturer in Sonoma County. A passionate hiker, rock climber, kayaker and bicyclist, Marmot was a natural fit for Chard when he started working there about seven years ago.

Several years ago, Chard's perfect vision was reduced suddenly to very limited vision in one eye during a span of about fourteen days (nonarteritic ischemic optic neuropathy). During the very short period of time he wasn't going to work, he was unwilling to sit at home "waiting for answers" and used a hiking stick for navigation until he made arrangements with the Earle Baum Center for Mobility Training and general instruction with Regina Kutches.

Chard's courage and tenacity, Marmot's willingness to upgrade and customize his equipment and the excellent support of the Earle Baum Center were a winning combination for Chard Lowden. With Regina's help, Chard has become a master of the streets of Santa Rosa and he is very grateful to Jacques Law who worked onsite at Marmot to fine tune, present options and develop adaptations to Chard's work/

computer environment. A quick and almost seamless transition was made and Chard continued his career without skipping a beat.

One of the biggest challenges facing those with limited vision, Chard feels, is isolation. He makes a colossal effort in that regard and says that in many ways he feels more a part of the community now than he did when his vision was perfect. Exactly one year following his diagnosis, Chard participated in the Levi Leipheimer Gran Fondo completing the 103 mile ride. His team is called Blind Power and their motto is "No Limits." He rode again in 2011 and planning has begun for his 2012 ride. (He's always looking for tandem partners!)

Chard is the Disabled Representative on the City of Santa Rosa Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board to raise awareness and advocate for all of those who are "less able." He feels that gentle education is the key to building understanding. He is a guitarist and is involved with two Celtic jam sessions that meet monthly in Santa Rosa and Cotati. He is a Storyteller and will be one of five presenters at the Santa Rosa Book Fair in September. He has been a volunteer at Food For Thought's Calabash event and for the last five years has participated as a contributing artist. His first three gourds were created when Chard had perfect vision, but he continues to contribute is gourd artistry, calling his last two donations his "Blind Gourds."

Chard Lowden is inspiring. He is an ambassador and an advocate. He strongly encourages those with vision impairment to find interesting things to do for and in the community and says: "We have the ability to feel so well, we don't necessarily have to see to create beautiful things. It's important for us to remember that."

The Fifth Annual EarleFest!!

On Saturday, September 22, the bucolic serenity of the Earle Baum Center of the Blind will be magically transformed as Americana music lovers stream in to find a choice spot on the velvety grass of the ball field. Delicious aromas will fill the air as sausages are lined up on the grill, kegs are tapped and wine bottles uncorked. EBC will be EarleFest – A Celebration of Americana Music!

We are very excited about this year's lineup! **Rodney Crowell** is an Americana superstar and we are thrilled to have him at EarleFest following the recent release of his new album, *Kin – #3* on The Americana Music Association Chart! The 2012 Austin Music Awards voted Texan **Carolyn Wonderland** "Best Female Vocalist" – she is an extraordinary vocalist *and* guitarist! **Poor Man's Whiskey**, a four piece playing banjo, keyboards, guitar, bass and mandolin will dish up their signature high octane and antics for EarleFest this year! Rising Star **David Luning** and his band will offer superbly crafted originals and perfection in delivery – Americana at its best!

Lagunitas will return again this year with a trailer brimming with kegs and Rodney Strong Vineyards will generously provide the wine this year. We are delighted to have Sebastopol's El Coronel Mexican restaurant offering their delicious south of the border dishes and award winning Bar B Que Smokehouse Bistro will return with their succulent Ribs, Chicken and Pulled Pork. Yes, the Fabulous Frickle Broth-



ers will arrive with their Fried Pickles and Fried Green Tomatos! The Lions Club will be grilling their famous Polish Sausages and Sunshine Coffee will be using the sun to bake fresh cookies to compliment your coffee! Snapdragon Cupcakes, Snow Cones and some unexpected surprises await you at EarleFest!

EarleFest is "growing its legs" as a serious event on the music festival circuit. Gabe Meline (*The Bohemian*) said about last year's Fest: "EarleFest is a tremendously well-run festival in a perfect setting. There's not a bad seat on the field... It's just that perfect blend of 'official' and 'casual' that feels just right." Many folks contribute a tremendous amount of time and energy to the success of EarleFest and the event's reputation is building. And each year, simultaneously, the bar is raised on the awareness of Earle Baum Center of the Blind and the extremely valuable services it provides.

Please visit www.earlefest.com for more information about EarleFest! The music will be from Noon to 6pm (Gates open at 11am). Tickets may be purchased on the website, at the EBC Office, Last Record Store (Santa Rosa), Tall Toad Music (Petaluma), People's Music (Sebastopol) and Amazing Records (Cotati).

We'll look forward to seeing you at EarleFest 2012!



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

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EARLE BAUM CENTER
4539 Occidental Road
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MISSION STATEMENT

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

A MESSAGE TO CLIENTS

PLEASE DON'T HURT THE PEOPLE WHO ARE TRYING TO HELP YOU

Please make your appointment at the Earle Baum Center a highest priority. Cancellations are one of our largest sources of financial loss. A cancelled appointment that we can't fill with a replacement can cost us three ways: the lost revenue of delivering the service, the need to pay salaried or hourly staff for that scheduled time, and the lost opportunity to serve another person with vision loss in that time slot. In some instances we may charge you for a missed appointment or discontinue service for those with repeated cancellations or no shows.

Let us know if you need help with tools to remember appointments.