



**Earle Baum Center**  
Serving People with Sight Loss

# LIMITLESS



## My Son Sat in the Car and Cried

### Onset of Vision Loss

Cindy Zook had 20/20 vision her whole life until 2010 when glaucoma reared its ugly head. Within a year and a half, she had severely low vision. Kaiser referred her to Earle Baum and she started coming to the Center in 2011.

As many do, she started with Orientation and Mobility instruction, Adjustment to Disability, and Living with Vision Loss classes. She soon learned how to cook and shop by herself, and

get herself to the doctor and to Earle Baum.

### Affect on the Family

Because her Son Derek lives in Sacramento, he hadn't seen her progression. One day on his monthly visit, he drove Cindy to Earle Baum for her classes. When she got out of the car, he said, "Are you sure you can walk alone?" She responded, "Sure, I do it all the time," and walked off. She didn't know this at the time, but he sat in the car, watched her check in,

and then waited for her to walk from the office to class. Later on the phone, he told Cindy he'd watched her and said, "I sat in the car and cried."

Cindy said she didn't want him to feel sorry for her. She was happy. And he replied, "I'm not sorry for you; I am so happy that you are independent and doing well on your own. I am so proud of you."

### Earle Baum Is a Lifesaver

She'll tell anyone who will listen that it was because of her mobility and orientation training at Earle Baum that she had the necessary tools to navigate places. Before getting that training, Cindy and her son had wondered if she should move to Sacramento to be near her son's family. That idea made her sad because she's been here her whole life. She really didn't want to leave her friends or the community she loves. Now, those worries are in the past. "The Earle Baum Center has been such a lifesaver for me. It's given me independence and helps Derek not worry about me."



*Always happy outdoors, Cindy prepares for her tandem ride!*

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# Message from the CEO



## Helping People Achieve Their Goals.

We're very proud that we help those who are blind or visually impaired improve and enrich their lives. That's our mission. We teach people how to travel safely, prevent falls, and stay independent in their own homes as long as possible.

Sometimes, we help folks (even technophobes!) use voice commands for their phones or have the computer read aloud what's on the screen. It's all about helping people adjust to the loss of vision, which has to include how to share it with family, friends, and neighbors.

After we teach the basics, we offer plenty of opportunities to practice newfound skills in a supportive environment. Take art history, for instance. Or yoga, ukulele, tap dance, birding by ear, exercise, and book group! There are also low-vision support groups to reinforce the training. Teachers and staff (many of whom have vision loss) inspire our students daily by sharing their own stories and leading full and exciting lives.

Some of the students in our classes have large goals like switching careers or traveling internationally. Others want to

use their remaining vision to see family photos, knit, read, or watch shows. We offer a wide variety of training to help people achieve their goals.

Our community center provides a place where people learn from each other in less formal ways. Conversations over coffee, sharing a joke or a snack, or getting a much-needed hug can make all the difference. And on our beautiful Earle Baum campus, we can practice safe travel on well-kept walking trails.

The majority of our support comes from you. Your investment is helping local residents like Cindy and Jan who are highlighted in this newsletter.

Thank you. We are very proud to have supporters like you!

Sincerely,

Dan Needham,  
CEO

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Summer TGIF Picnics:

The final two are August 19 and September 16, 11am-1:00pm. RSVP 10 days in advance. \$5.00 with RSVP; \$7.50 without.

### Outdoors

- **Tandem Biking:** Pie Ride is September 24. Halloween Ride, October 29.
- **Garden Club:** Meets twice weekly through the end of September.
- **Birding by Ear:** Call 707.523.3222 to find out when next session starts.

### Moving the Body

- **Exercise & Fitness:** Tues. and Thurs. from 9-10am.
- **Tai Chi:** Weds., 5:30-6:30pm.
- **Tap Dance:** Wednesdays, 1-2pm. Eight sessions.
- **Yoga:** Call 707.523.3222 or check with front desk to find out when next session starts.

### Stretching the Mind

- **Book Club:** Meets first Monday of every month, 12:30-3:00pm.
- **Book Club Movie Day:** Meets third Monday of every month, 11am-1:30pm.

### Technology

- **Technology Users Group:** Meets first Monday of the month, 11am to 12:30pm.

### The Arts

- **Ukulele:** Begins July 26 and runs through September 27. 12:30-2:00pm Tuesdays.
- **Art History:** Call 707.523.3222 or check with front desk to find out when next session starts.

### Site Tours & Vision Group

- **EBC Vision Group,** 11:00am-1:00pm (meets 1st and 3rd Thursday of every month at EBC – Room 3)
- **Site Tours:** By appointment. Call 707.523.3222. or check with front desk.



Social Media:



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# We Receive Help and We Give Help

Even though Jan Seeley had been in the eye-care business her whole corporate life, she hadn't heard about the Earle Baum Center until she lost her sight due to glaucoma. A well-traveled woman, Jan was heading home from India in 2011 when she got an eye infection from a crowded plane.

She was hospitalized and a retina specialist saved the eye, but it was clear life would change from here on out. Her friend recommended a low-vision optometrist who referred her to rehab, which then referred her to Earle Baum.

On her first day, she was in Denise's Independent Living class and says, "I'll never forget. I thought, 'I shouldn't be here!' And then I realized Denise was blind and there was another blind lady there—knitting! My attitude changed immediately and I took all the classes Earle Baum had to offer. It taught me straight away that I didn't want to be a victim. I never wanted to think 'poor me.' That's one of the things I love best about Earle Baum—they teach the opposite of that. They teach us how to be productive and responsible for our own independence. Earle Baum teaches a mental state as well as action items."

Over the years, Jan has donated every month and she's



*Jan Seeley enjoys receiving and giving at The Earle Baum Center.*

passionate about her reasoning for that. "We receive help and we give help," she says. "That is very important. It's what we do—our actions—that defines us as people and part of the human race. I started making a monthly donation and that felt not only good, it felt appropriate. It felt like it was the right thing to do because I had received so much."

During the time she was caring for her husband (who passed away in February), Jan modified the amount of her automatic donation. She says, "I give what's right for my budget. But it's important to me that I give every month. It's the regular giving that makes such a

difference. Giving what you can to help each other is what I believe life is all about."

"The Earle Baum Center is like an army of independence. It's a community that's driven by intention and dedication. I want to support and give all that I can to that type of community because it's an example to the rest of the world. And believe me, our planet is in a big mess at the moment. We need to do as much as we possibly can to respond to the great needs of our world and promote a higher perspective. I believe the Earle Baum Center is a very good example of that. They're a wonderful bunch of people who are doing a great job."

## Earle Fest:

**Saturday, September 17.**

Lucinda Williams, The Mavericks, The Paladins, Girls+Boys, and more! Doors open at 1pm. Show starts at 2pm. Buy tickets here or at



People's Music in Sebastopol, 122 North Main St., 707.823.7664, or Sally Tomatoes in Rohnert Park, 1100 Valley House Dr., 707.665.9472 or online at [www.ticketfly.com/event/1204873](http://www.ticketfly.com/event/1204873).



## My Son Sat in the Car and Cried *(continued from page 1)*

Cindy's vision loss had hit Derek hard because she'd worked all her life and the vision loss came at the time she retired—right when she was supposed to start having fun. He had always hoped she'd be able to travel and do things upon retirement and for a while thought vision loss would



*Cindy's grateful to be living an independent and happy life.*

end those dreams.

### Tandem Bike Riding, Tap Dancing and More!

But no! Thanks to our committed staff and generous donors, Cindy has already taken two trips on Amtrak and is participating in art classes (a mask she made was shown at Art Slam at the de Young Museum), birding by ear, tap dancing, exercise classes, book and movie clubs, and her most favorite—tandem bike riding! She and Derek are avid members of the tandem bike club (aka the Baum Squad). Cindy says, "It's really neat that we can do this together. I've always been an outdoor person but I couldn't enjoy the outdoors if Earle Baum

didn't have this program."

### Living Alone Doesn't Have to Be Lonely

As someone who lives alone, when glaucoma came on, Cindy's life could have really taken a turn for the worse. Instead, what she's experienced at Earle Baum has made her life, in some ways, better than ever before. "I feel really blessed that I was referred to Earle Baum," says Cindy. "Sometimes I'm asked, 'what's the one thing you like best about Earle Baum?' but I can't say one thing. It's the combination of all the parts. I tell anybody who's losing their vision or knows someone who is, 'Get to Earle Baum. They'll help you.'"

## Programs Boosted by Volunteers

We're thrilled to report that on June 1, we hired a volunteer coordinator! Her name is Leigh Thorsen and already she's helping to make our programs even better. In her role, Leigh supports our current volunteers, many of whom are also clients, organizing their activities to maximize their valuable time. She also reaches out to people in the community via her broad network of connections to recruit new volunteers when needed.

We are so grateful to be able to fund this part-time position because it affects a multitude of programs, giving us a big "bang for our buck." As Leigh will tell you, "Our volunteers are here every day and they do lots of work—all

unpaid." Some assist with class set-up and registration and some teach classes and run clubs, while others offer their skills, such as photography, for free. Our popular summer picnics are entirely organized and run by volunteers.

The tandem biking program, aka the Baum Squad (see our lead article) is part of our Learning Independence for Enjoyment (LIFE) program and is volunteer-run too. Sighted volunteer "pilots" take the front of each bike. Two local businesses—NorCal Bicycle Sport and the Bike Peddler—keep the equipment in good shape.

"We would need to hire more staff if we didn't have a dedicated volunteer core," says Leigh. "They



*Leigh Thorsen, The Earle Baum Center's new Volunteer Coordinator!*

donate hundreds of hours of their own time to welcome, encourage and support new clients, and to plan and host events. Last year, they donated 2,017 work hours! Without volunteers, we couldn't stretch the dollars that come in from our dedicated donors nearly as far as we do."