



Earle Baum Center

Serving People with Sight Loss

LIMITLESS



What Keeps Me Going

"I've bowled so many years, that all I have to do is picture the pins in my head," said Elsie Shaffer. She's 79 and has been bowling since she was 34. "But that's when I really noticed how bad my eyes were. A bowling lane is 60' long, and I could see probably to about 40' before things would begin to blur and go dark."

Reading, however, is more difficult for her. "I have a hard time putting words together. I isolate my words," she said. Elsie began

losing her vision to macular degeneration around three years ago. She developed cataracts, and after having them removed, her vision worsened.

She was referred to the Earle Baum Center's Low Vision Clinic. "Dr. Caddell was wonderful," Elsie said. "I can't say enough good things about her." She was prescribed glasses and was loaned a large video magnifier.

But Elsie was one of the many people who lost their homes in the recent fires. She didn't have time to grab her glasses, and the assistive equipment burned along with the rest of her belongings.

Elsie and her roommate are staying with family in Rohnert Park for the time being until they can figure out what their next steps will be. She wants to help out and pitches in wherever she can. "I've taught myself how to do a lot of things by feel," she said. "Last night, I was peeling a potato and a friend was sure I was going to cut myself. But I know what I'm doing."

"When I go to stores, I use my debit card and I just punch in the pin number

because the buttons are just like on the phone. I can tell colors, so I know which card I'm using. I don't see faces, though. I look at bodies. I know the people I bowl with by their voices. Sometimes, I know who someone is by their shape and their walk."

Her bowling friends tell newcomers: "If she doesn't say anything to you, she's not being snotty; it's because she can't see you." The newcomers often ask why she still bowls. "I tell them it's because it's what I love to do. It keeps me going. I'm secretary of the league and I take care of everybody's money and prize money. I've been doing that for close to 40 years. I've got a good memory and I'm good at it."

Elsie is realistic about recovering from the fires. "It's going to take time," she said. But things are looking up. "They put a rush order on my glasses, and I just got them yesterday. And the Earle Baum Center is loaning me another CCTV. The insurance stepped up. And every place we go, people want to help. They want to do for you. There are a lot of people who need it worse than I do. At least we have a place to stay temporarily. If we all help each other, we'll get through this."



Photo of Elsie Shaffer who lost her home and belongings in the fire with her bowling team members.

Message from the CEO



Dear Friend,

The disastrous fires consuming whole neighborhoods around us have left devastation in their wake, and it will be a long time before our community fully recovers. Our hearts go out to all who have been directly or indirectly affected. We are extremely grateful for the courageous first responders. We've been heartened by the fortitude and resilience shown by individuals, and by the outpouring of compassion, concern, and support from our community.

Thank you to everyone who contacted us to check on our safety. The fires came very close, but the Earle Baum Center was thankfully spared. Some of our staff and directors were evacuated. Some lost property, but all are safe.

We were saddened to hear that one of our longtime supporters of the Earle Baum Center, Dr. Carmen McReynolds, died tragically in the fire. She was a compassionate physician who loved poetry and music. We

send our condolences to Dr. McReynolds' family and friends.

We have been in touch with most of our clients, and are continuing to provide assistance as needed. We are holding scheduled classes, and have resumed training and activities.

If you know someone who is blind or visually impaired who may need our help, please let them know about the Earle Baum Center. Contact us at 707 523-3222 or EBC@earlebaum.org.



Fountain Grove Inn destroyed by the fire

We can help:

- **replace white canes, glare shields, and magnifiers**
- **provide assistance with orientation and mobility**
- **offer help with accessible technology**
- **connect with other agencies providing needed services**

You can also help us by renewing your support for EBC. Especially in times like these, people who are blind or visually impaired need access to information, and the ability to find comfort, care, and the tools they need to restore their sense of independence and control over their lives.

Stay safe and know that we are here if you need us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan".

Dan Needham

Please join our Legacy Society!

Become a member! Help the Earle Baum Center continue serving people with sight loss by including us in your will and estate plan. Gifts may include cash, stocks, IRAs, real estate, life insurance, charitable trusts and automobiles—all may become the means to help others in the way you or your loved ones have received assistance. Please call Bob Sonnenberg at **707-284-1088**, or email sonnenberg@earlebaum.org for more information or questions. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.



Knowing What's Important

Jeff Harrington manages the Assistive Technology Department at the Earle Baum Center. Like many of the staff at EBC, he was both personally and professionally affected by the recent fires.

"I woke up around 1:30 in the morning and I immediately smelled smoke, because we usually have the window open a little bit," he said. "I thought, man, is somebody having a bonfire in the neighborhood? My wife woke up and she smelled it, too. We woke our daughter. Around an hour later, we got the call to evacuate. At that point, you're thinking, 'What do I need to get out of the house? What's the most important thing?' I grabbed our fire box with our important papers. I grabbed my guide dog Lucas' dog food and harness. When I went out

to the garage to open up the car and the smoke in the air was so thick. I started hearing mini-explosions. I didn't know if it was PG&E towers, or people's propane tanks."

He and his family were among the lucky ones. They and their house survived intact, but his sister lost everything. "At least, she escaped with her life, and that's what's most important," he said.

Once his family was safe, Jeff re-connected with EBC staff so that others in need could be helped. "We asked ourselves, 'What are their immediate, critical needs? How can we get the message out?' I thought about the disorienting noise and chaos of being in a mass evacuation center. So, I contacted KRSO Radio and let them know that we were available to assist with orientation and mobility. We worked with a local independent living center so they could tell people with vision loss how to reach us. We started filling people's immediate needs — replacing white canes, glare shields, and magnifiers — things they needed that they might have left behind in their hurry to evacuate."

"This fire was moving so fast; some landlines were down before people could get alerts," Jeff said. "As a visually impaired person, I could smell the smoke; I could hear the explosions."

But without being able to see that glow or have access to information... Assistive technology can be someone's connection to the outside world. If you don't have your computer, phone, or a radio — you may not have a way to know what's going on. And in midst of a crisis, so much of the information comes to you in the form of handouts and checklists — things you need to be able to read," he said.

Jeff and his team put emergency messages on the website and changed the greetings messages on their phones. "We kept checking voicemail — even over the weekend — to make sure that someone in need wouldn't have to wait until Monday to get help." Jeff now encourages everyone to register their mobile phone number to get emergency alerts.

He was pleased to find the City's website accessible. "Working with a screen-reader, I found it navigable. That was encouraging to see that we've made progress in ensuring accessibility to crucial information."

During the next phase of the recovery, people will be searching for what they will need to begin to resume their daily lives. "After an emergency like this, people want to know: What should I do next? How do I get a new ID card? Can I go back to my house? What about the ashes?"

One thing is certain, the Earle Baum Center will be there to replace equipment, and offer training and guidance to people who are blind or visually impaired. Sometimes it takes a life-changing event to make us all realize what's really important.



Jeff Harrington, EBC Assistive Technology Manager

Help Your Neighbors Respond to Life-Changing Events

When you give to the Earle Baum Center, you are helping someone respond to a life-changing event. Think about it — there are similarities between losing one's property in a fire and losing one's vision — they are both life-changing events. Something of value has been taken away. We may discover strengths we didn't know we had. We find comfort in community and appreciate guidance and support.

Independence, interdependence, and attitude:

During the evacuation, it was sometimes frustrating for Jeff Harrington to have to depend on others for even the simplest things, like getting a glass of water for himself. "I'm used to being independent," he said. His guide dog Lucas, however, took everything in stride. "He's a Labrador. He knew when it was dinner time and when it was time to go outside. It didn't seem to faze him a bit." Sticking to routines helped both of them adjust. "It's good to keep positive when something like this happens," Jeff said.

A priceless gift: Jeff's sister lost her home and all her valuables. When he realized it was her birthday the Monday after the fire, Jeff wondered what he could get for her that would be meaningful. He decided to provide her with

photos from albums and make digital copies of other family photos to replace some of the ones she'd lost in the fire.

Family photos are invaluable. Many seniors who have lost their vision to macular degeneration can no longer see faces or make out photos. But with the help of assistive technology, such as a video magnifier, they can once again share memories of family gatherings, and even see pictures of their newest grandchild.

A place for everything and everything in its place:

When someone has lost vision, learning to stay organized is an essential skill so they will know where things are. Likewise, when escaping a fire, knowing exactly where important documents are kept, for example, can make a big difference.

There's no place like home: During this tragedy, so many people have lost their homes and countless others were temporarily evacuated. Being uprooted and displaced suddenly can make anyone feel disoriented.

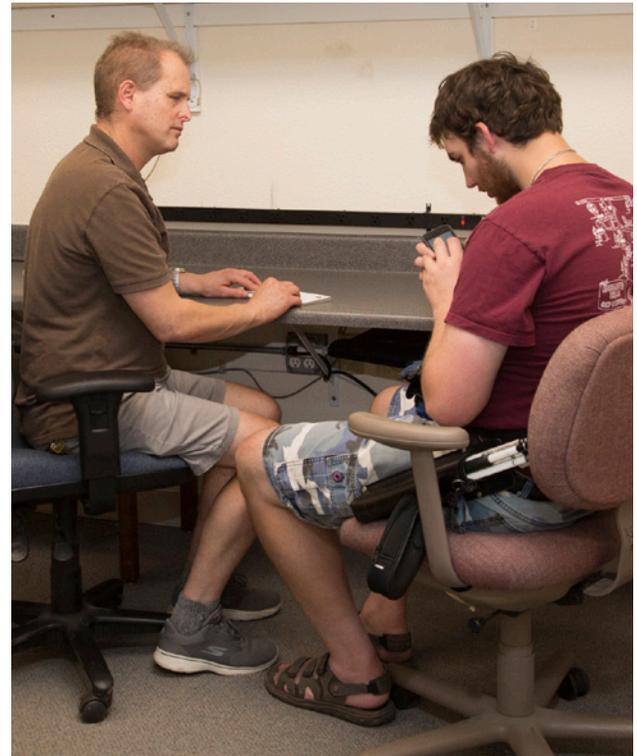
Likewise, seniors who have lost their

vision want to stay in their own homes and age in place for as long as possible. They can do so safely with training from the Earle Baum Center.

A supportive community:

In times like these, knowing that there is someone or somewhere a person can turn to for understanding, expertise, and support can make all the difference in how they react to and recover from a major life change.

Thank you for being part of a community that cares by giving to the Earle Baum Center.



Jeff Harrington, EBC Assistive Technology Manager working with Travis

There are many giving options to explore. You might enjoy the convenience of setting up automatic monthly donations. You may realize tax savings by giving to EBC through IRA disbursements, or from the sale of appreciated stocks or securities. Consider leaving a legacy of kindness and light for someone in need of our training and care by including EBC in your estate plans.