



# Earle Baum Center

Serving People with Sight Loss

# LIMITLESS



## Sometimes, All You Need is a Nudge

Tom Patton was frustrated, but his wife was having none of it. "I'm tired of this," he said. "No, you're not," Amy responded. "You're not giving up!"

There had been many times in his life when Tom just needed a nudge to meet a challenge he was facing as glaucoma gradually took away his vision. Now, he's learned to live by the motto: "Pick yourself up. Dust yourself off. Start all over again!"

When Tom still had some usable vision, he was grateful



*Tom and Amy Patton*

to be able to borrow a video magnifier from the Earle Baum Center. But after a second corneal transplant failed to slow his fading vision, he returned the magnifier to EBC, sadly telling former CEO Allan Brenner, "I can't see to use it anymore." Allen took him aside and gave him something to think about. "He made me realize what my life would be like if I decided to just give up and rely on other people," Tom said. "I went home upset, and thought about it for a week. Then I realized he knew what he was talking about, because he was living it. It was exactly what I needed to hear at the time."

"Admitting that I was blind and I needed help was one of the hardest things I've ever done," Tom said. EBC could offer him the right kind of help. He signed up for training in the use of the white cane. "I was scared to death. I was worried about it, and looking for a way to get out of it; I was so nervous." But his Orientation and Mobility Instructor, Leslie Bailiff, nudged him with humor. "Come on," she said. "I brought the nitro - you'll do fine!"

"Before, when my wife and I were out somewhere and she'd leave my side to go check

something out, I'd immediately feel anxious and claustrophobic. But now, I have the tools I need. The cane gives me a sense of security," he said.

He gained confidence. He jokingly named his cane Mr. Sticky, and soon, he and his wife were hiking regularly. When he reached 1,000 miles with Mr. Sticky, he asked Leslie to autograph it, and she did.

All-in-all, Tom feels lucky to have lived a good life. He's had a variety of jobs: heading a shipping and receiving department for a sheet metal manufacturing plant, running a sandwich shop, and flying as a fire spotter when his vision was still good. "I'm in charge of laundry now," he jokes. "I turned over the lawn mowing to Amy."

He and Amy are ham radio operators and enjoy talking to people all over the world. Tom is a CAL FIRE volunteer, a communication liaison for mobile fire patrols. He also teaches Smokey Bear Programs in schools, and specially designed programs for youths that set fires. He's making a valuable contribution to the safety of the community.

# Message from the CEO



## The Power of Community

We are in a new year! Last year had many challenges. Those challenges proved we are part of a strong and caring community. We are interconnected, and we each have a role. Most people with sight loss need to have their confidence, joy, and independence restored. Our staff and volunteers have the honor of providing that healing through training, activities, or encouragement. Some get to increase their legacy of kindness through donating time, equipment, or funds to enable services. All of these roles help change lives for the better. Let's move boldly into 2018 by playing our roles well.

Our lead story is about Tom Patton. Tom has been continually adjusting to his changing vision throughout his life. EBC helped him find the tools to be independent. Tom gives back to the community as a ham radio operator and CAL Fire volunteer.

Lesley Ann Gibbons of Sterling Adaptives takes her company's mission of helping people with vision loss one step further

by partnering with EBC as a corporate sponsor. Lesley Ann and her team model how businesses can go above and beyond to make a difference in our community.

And finally, you'll read about Cindy Bishop and her late mother Betty Levin. Through EBC, Cindy received the support she needed in helping her mother adjust to losing her vision. Betty paid it forward, helping her neighbors adjust to vision loss by including EBC in her estate plans.

What are your roles? We need great corporate sponsors, donors, teachers, managers, and volunteers to help fulfill our mission of providing opportunities for people with sight loss to improve their social, economic, and personal lives.

Thank you for caring. Thank you for helping. Helping others makes you feel good. **Help us today** and feel good about your role bettering the lives of your neighbors, friends, or family with sight loss.

Sincerely,

Dan Needham

## Tree of Life

The EBC Tree of Life is an outstanding way to honor and commemorate those special to you.



Located in our office lobby for all to see, the Tree has individual 'leaves' that can be engraved with a loved-one's name. We ask for a minimum donation of \$250 to have a leaf engraved and placed on this perpetual plaque. Made from cast bronze, the tree is tactile and beautiful. If you want to celebrate or remember someone special, consider including their name on the EBC Tree of Life.

Contact us at:  
707-523-3222 or  
[ebc@earlebaum.org](mailto:ebc@earlebaum.org)  
for more information.

## 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](mailto:sonnenberg@earlebaum.org) for more information or questions. Thank you in advance for your thoughtful consideration.



# Why We Give: Lesley Ann Gibbons

“When the fires hit, I ended up having 8 people, 4 dogs, and a cat living with us,” said Lesley Ann Gibbons, who runs Sterling Adaptives with her husband Mark and a small staff. But she wanted to do more. “I kept thinking: I’ve got to find something positive to do to help people.”

The family-owned business sells adaptive and ergonomic technology products for people who are blind, have a visual impairment, or other disability. Lesley Ann decided to see if she could get help in the way of donated gift cards and replacing adaptive equipment that people lost in the fires by leveraging some of her professional relationships with product manufacturers. “I called them up and said, ‘Now’s your chance to truly support something that

**“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”**

**– Helen Keller**

you believe in. What can you donate?’ The thing is, even small stuff — like a mobility cane — is a really important piece of technology for someone who uses it. We had products and gift cards coming in from all over — even Europe! It was great to have the opportunity to do something very unique, and so very much needed. In fact, we just delivered another box over to the Earle Baum Center.”

“We are quite a tight-knit group in this community, and we love it,” Lesley Ann said. “And the Earle Baum Center is an important part of our community. They’re great people, and they serve a distinct need. Technology is so advanced these days. With the right product and the right training, people can maintain their independence. We love opportunities that the Earle Baum Center provides for us to be part of their work - for example, attending the tech fair and providing raffle prizes that encourage people to attend. We’re always looking for something that will set us apart — that’s just part of the heart of who we are, and we do it because we want to. We believe that if we look after each other, and we’re happy doing what we’re doing, it shows, and we all benefit.”



*The Sterling Adaptives Staff: (left to right) Monique Larre, Sari Zimmerman, Lesley Ann Gibbons, Mark Gibbons*



*EBC client Mario Chitwood receives a HIMS reader donated by Damien Pickering of Humana.*

# Remembering Mom

Betty Levin had been living by herself in Albuquerque, New Mexico, when she began to lose her vision to macular degeneration. Her loss of sight was particularly difficult for her, because, in addition to being a skilled handwriting analyst and collage artist, she was a life-long lover of fine literature, travel, music, cooking, and entertaining. Her loss of vision affected not only her safety and independence, but also her sense of identity.

And she wasn't the only one affected. "When my mother started losing her vision," Betty's daughter Cindy Bishop said, "it became clear to me and my sisters that living on her own in a city far from us wasn't going to cut it."

Cindy was working with the Sonoma County Office of Education at the time, and her boss suggested she contact the Earle Baum Center. She spoke with EBC Vision Rehabilitation Instructor Patricia Jefferson. "She was a sympathetic resource, right from the start," Cindy said. "She had gone through a similar situation with her own mother."

Step by step, with EBC's help, Cindy watched as her mom adjusted to her loss of vision. Betty attended therapy and support group sessions offered free-of-charge by EBC. She received personal orientation and mobility training, and as her

confidence grew, she overcame her fears and feelings about using a white cane. She learned new ways to do tasks she thought she wouldn't be able to do because of her loss of vision. She began to take classes in computer, dance, and weight loss. And she made many friends.

"Not only was my mom helped by the people at EBC, they became her really good friends," Cindy said. Senior Assistive Technology Specialist Jacques Law was among them. "Jacques and his wife Leilani continued to visit my mom even after she had to give up her white cane for a walker. Their child used to refer to Mom as 'Grandma Betty,' and it meant so much to her," Cindy said.

After enjoying a rich, full life, Betty Levin passed away last year at the age of 95. But her legacy lives on. She included EBC in her estate plans, so that her neighbors who are losing their vision will have access to the tools and training they need.

"I unearthed a few old emails from my mom in the past month," Cindy said. "She was asking me to do something - some practical task - and she said - this still chokes me up - 'I hate to bother you. This shouldn't take that long.' She didn't want to bother me. She didn't want to be a burden. When she learned how to do things for herself at EBC, it helped her feel better, and it helped me, too!"



*Cindy captured her mother's vitality and gratitude in her video: "Life in Twilight." Watch it at: [www.earlebaum.org](http://www.earlebaum.org).*

**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.**