



Fall Newsletter



HELPING PEOPLE DO THE THINGS THEY LOVE

From VCB client to VCB board member, Kenneth Clausell is determined to inspire, educate, and motivate everyone around him. Kenneth has an eye disease called Keratoconus, which causes the cornea to bulge outward in a cone-like shape. After the loss of his right eye in an accident many years ago, his left eye has undergone a few corneal transplants in hopes of stabilizing what's left of his vision. His vision has its ups and downs but that does not stop him from continuing to accomplish everything he sets his mind to.

In 2009, his daughter challenged him to a race. Spoiler alert... he did not win! What started as a fun competition with his daughter had quickly led to him joining his first marathon in Fresno. After 12 years, 9 marathons, several half marathons and 5k runs, you can now find him traveling to Chicago, ready to inspire others to never give up while running in the Bank of America Marathon.

Kenneth started as a student at VCB in 2007. He learned everything from Assistive Technology, to Independent Living Skills, to Orientation and Mobility. "After completing the program, I still wanted to be involved with the center. I joined the board to give our board members with vision a different perspective since I was once a VCB client."

Kenneth believes the most important thing VCB does is "provide hope and support." He remembers being a student and realizing that VCB wasn't just a center, it felt like home.

As for the future for VCB? Not only does he think that VCB will continue to grow in the Central Valley, but throughout all of California. He says VCB has already expanded so much since he was a client, and he knows there is still so much more that we can do for our community. "There are no limits."



"Just because you're blind or visually impaired, people think their life is over, it's not. You just have to find your motivation and reach out for help. Whatever your goal is in life, don't let anything stop you."

Dear Friend of VCB,

We have recently shared with you some special stories of people who are near and dear to our hearts. Kim, Nina, Jason, Kenneth, and numerous clients have done some amazing things this year. While we look forward to sharing with you what a truly tremendous year this has been through our annual report, today I need to take a different approach.

VCB has long been a service organization that is dedicated to the wellbeing of people who are blind and low vision. The cornerstones of our programs are to train and support those who are visually impaired. However, for years we have been discussing the need to do more. Employment opportunities for people who are blind are hard to come by and can be even harder to retain, especially this time of year. The Central Valley is a special place for community, compassion, and opportunity; it is a beautiful place to call home.

We have the social obligation to make sure that people who are talented, driven, and want to make a working wage to support their families have the chance to do so and are not forced into living off social welfare programs. Blindness does not discriminate- we see people who are the first in their families living with a genetic disease that onset in late childhood. As a result, they slowly lose their vision over the years. We also encounter people who were working great jobs and making amazing lives for themselves suddenly be in an accident and have the lights turned off in an instant, never to return.

We have an unusual opportunity before us. Every hour of work we have created in our program this past year has been the foundation for something bigger and is truly phenomenal. We've been working hard to transform the entire Central Valley into a place of inclusivity and inspiration, something more than just changing individual lives.



We really do not have a strong culture of asking for help. We have never been good fundraisers. If you look at our financials, you will see that this is just the truth. The opportunities before us are just too big though. This year, when you think of your holiday giving plans, please think of us. We have come a long way in the last six years, and I have been blessed enough to be with this company...but we cannot get to the next level without you. In earnest sincerity, your gift during this season could be the reason a person who is blind finds employment. I believe firmly that the people we serve, from birth through golden years, living with vision loss and the discouragement and challenges that come with it, deserve every bit of attention you and I can give. Jason, Kim, Nina, and Kenneth have so much to offer and continue to inspire us every day.

If you are unsure about your plans for giving, how your gift to VCB may directly impact a person who is blind, or you just want to get to know one another, I welcome your call or email. You just might be our path to the future.

In earnest and appreciative sincerity,

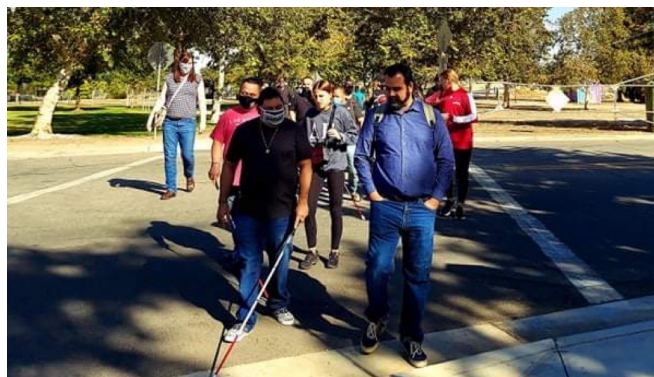
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shellena J. Heber".

Shellena Heber
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On October 15th, VCB celebrated the achievements of those with vision loss by celebrating White Cane Day. VCB clients, staff members, volunteers, friends, and family all got together to bring awareness to such an incredible day. The white cane is a symbol of opportunity and community recognition for blindness and VCB is proud to support the independence and mobility of all those with vision loss.

What started off as a walk for awareness quickly led to new friendships. It became a place where people from all walks of life gathered to share stories, listened to great music, laughed together, and enjoyed some amazing tacos.

VCB would like to thank the Disability Equity Project for sponsoring this event and Starbucks and Krispy Kreme for their donations! We also want to thank Fresno State's Delta Gamma volunteers, Chef Merito for our delicious food, Joaquin Cornejo for his leadership, and the rest of the VCB staff for making this celebration a success. We look forward to watching our annual White Cane Day continue to grow throughout all the Central Valley.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**
63%

Of American adults are unaware that you don't always experience symptoms before you lose vision to eye disease.

Source: American Academy of Ophthalmology

Our Special Thanks

To the Dyer Family Foundation for their support



VCB would like to say a special thank you to Dyer Family Foundation, one of our longest running supporters. In memory of Calvin and Frances Dyer, the Foundation's Board of Directors has supported VCB's rehabilitation programs for people with vision loss since 2016. Thanks to their support, VCB has been able to bridge the funding gap for countless individuals in need of transformative services such as independent living skills and technology to improve their independence and get back to doing the things that they love. Thank you, Dyer Family Foundation!



Employment Services - A Path to Success!

VCB's Employment Services is continuing to grow! Jamie Gibson-Barrows had no idea the amount of success this program would bring but she is so happy that is has.

"We hit a barrier for a while. We were giving our clients all of this training with the hope that they would eventually be employed, but it wasn't happening. We realized there was a need within our community to help people who are blind or low vision find employment. So, we did it. We put a team together and created a program that would help."

Here we are, almost one year later and VCB's Employment Services Program is a success! We have helped place our clients in great jobs such as paralegal intern, prep chef, IRS customer service representative, medical clinic receptionist, and legal assistant at a reputable law firm. "We want our clients to know that we are here to help them every step of the way. We want to continue to break barriers and give hope to those who feel hopeless. Employment Services is just getting started." We look forward to sharing these stories with readers in our future newsletters.



Did you know that you can shop on Amazon AND support the Valley Center for the Blind at the same time?

You can if you shop through smile.amazon.com. 0.5% of your Amazon Smile purchase goes to VCB. Visit smile.amazon.com to choose VCB as your nonprofit today!

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