



## Spring Newsletter

### HELPING PEOPLE DO THE THINGS THEY LOVE



This past Spring has been eventful, providing new and exciting ways for our community to engage with VCB! Our team did a great job organizing our inaugural Glow Ball Golf Tournament Fundraiser at the beautiful Fort Washington Country Club in Fresno, earning our community new supporters who had a thrilling time golfing at night after learning more about VCB programs at a relaxed dinner. We are grateful to the teams who participated and the sponsors who made this event possible, including Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino and Noble Credit Union for donating exciting raffle prizes that helped us raise over \$16,000 to support critical programming for people who are blind and low vision. Our team was delighted with the success of this event and would like to especially thank our top sponsor, EYE-Q, for their continued support of VCB's growth and mission.

Our team has been hard at work seeking to do more to engage kids with visual impairments, their families, and teachers for students with visual impairments (TVI), which included two exciting Easter-themed events this year. We joined Wayfinder Family Services at their Beeper Egg Hunt in Bakersfield for participants of their early intervention programs and had our first independent Beeper Egg Hunt in Fresno at Oso de Oro Park for

children of all ages. These specially-designed accessible Easter eggs have beeping devices in them so that children who are blind rely on sound to find them. Thanks to the generosity of Fresno State's Delta Gamma Alumni Chapter, we were able to purchase enough beeper eggs for everyone to find. Not only did kids with visual impairments participate, but their siblings were blindfolded to experience the egg hunt in the same way. Kids created their own bunny bags, ate a delicious lunch, and engaged in other fun crafts and activities. In Fresno, All Elite Homes partnered with VCB to ensure the kids had a great time by bringing the Easter Bunny and taking everyone's pictures. This was a great opportunity to connect with parents and TVIs to get input on the future of our student and youth services and provide outlets for these kids and families to connect with one another.

Spring hasn't stopped us from enjoying our time in the snow. We organized two winter sports outings in China Peak for clients alongside Central California Adaptive Sports. The Adaptive Sports Team helped clients set up their ski equipment and skied alongside them as their guides. We thank the team at Central California Adaptive Sports for ensuring clients had a safe and unforgettable experience. Some quotes from participants of this

program: "Blind skiing rules!" "I was able to believe now that I can still glide even though I can't see. I was able to do it with Adaptive Sports. It's awesome." "Regardless of disability, you can do it. Any sport." Photos from these events are on our social media pages but stay tuned for a video from our second winter sports outing!

As you may know, this is our 50th year serving the Central Valley. We plan on continuing these important efforts to engage with our community and we hope you can support us in these new efforts, whether it's through volunteering, donating, or spreading the word about these opportunities. There are still many people in your community who need our services, but do not know VCB is available to help. It takes community members like YOU to ensure that VCB remains available and that others know about our services.



Client begins to ski with a guide to his right.



Dear friends of VCB,

Another busy and beautiful season, has come and gone! As you may be able to tell from this packed newsletter, our team has been hard at work implementing new programs, hosting great events, and serving more people who are blind than ever before!

As we head into the summer months, we are especially grateful to have had several “big wins” that are more than just exciting- they are changing the landscape for what it means to be blind in our unique valley: VCB was granted our first opportunity to become a federal contractor with the Office of Personnel Management, managing one of their important hotlines. This could not have been achieved without the help of our partners, National Industries for the Blind, who continue to support our development in work programs. Right now, VCB has three agents implementing this project, two of whom were new hires to our company. Congratulations to Jason Smith on his supervision of this historic project!

Additionally, VCB participated in two Beeper Egg Hunt events- one in Bakersfield in partnership with Wayfinder Family Services and one on our own in Fresno at Oso De Oro Park in Fresno. Beeper Egg Hunts give children who are blind or have low vision the opportunity to join in the Easter fun. This is an exciting step in the right direction as VCB works towards having more youth and student services and supports available through our blossoming organization.

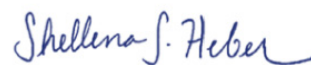
Thirdly, VCB was also recently selected to implement a second federal government project, this time working with the Air Force. This represents our first contract through the federal AbilityOne Program, meaning VCB is officially joining the network of organizations nationwide that employ more than 36,000 people who are blind or have

significant disabilities. The AbilityOne Program is one of the largest sources of employment in the United States for people who are blind or have significant disabilities through the provision of quality products and services to the Federal Government at a fair market price.

In the first half of our fiscal year, VCB has provided direct training to nearly 300 clients and engaged 650 people living with vision loss in our area. I am so proud of the amazing work this team is accomplishing and ask you to consider continuing to invest in an organization that is doing real work to change lives in the most amazing ways... to have the opportunity to be independent, supported, and even employed is something most of our clients didn't think was possible before coming to VCB.

It's a bright future and we thank you for caring about the community we love.

All the best with gratitude,  
Shellena



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Shellena speaks to a room full of golfers at their dinner tables.





"That which is behind you does not matter," is a motto our VCB Client, John Arnold, lives by, and it rings true to us at VCB in our business of helping people move forward and overcome obstacles. John began to significantly lose his sight eight years ago and it affected his mental health.

His case manager with the County of Fresno talked to him about VCB. When he received services from our partners at Resources for Independence Central Valley, they also talked about VCB as a great resource for John.

His first few appointments with VCB were remote during the pandemic, but as isolating as the pandemic was for him, he also felt these appointments were very "supportive and gratifying." When he stepped into our office for the first time, his first impression of VCB was that it was a place of laughter. He felt welcome and had a sense of belonging because most of the people around him had similar experiences and understood him.

John's highlight at VCB was preparing a full meal in Independent Living Skills training. Preparing

the menu, getting the ingredients, and cooking the meal reaffirmed his sense of independence. "VCB taught me how to overcome these blocks. It has been extraordinarily satisfying," he says. John always leaves our office with a smile on his face. When he gets home, he applies what he learned.

It was VCB's supportive atmosphere that impacted his way of life. John is more open to sharing his struggles and what he needs help with. He is more self-reliant and more mobile. "Now all of a sudden, I had a purpose," says John. "They reenergized my core values." He believes VCB is a unique nonprofit that educates, provides resources, and supports the community. He feels empowered to contribute and reenter the workforce after he completes all his training. John says, "VCB has turned back the clock for many people," meaning VCB has helped many clients realize it's not too late to return to doing what they love.

We want to congratulate John on graduating from ILS training and wish him the best on his next training course at VCB. We thank him for sharing his story with us and we also believe it will encourage others to check out what VCB has to offer our community.

## The 2023 Wearable Technology Fair

Join Valley Center for the Blind and NorthState Assistive Technology to try out the latest in wearable technology and learn about the VCB's resources.

This event will include representatives from the top wearable device manufacturers presenting their devices and allowing individuals to try the device to see how they work.

**June 15**

**VCB Office - 3417 W Shaw Avenue in Fresno  
1 to 3 PM**

The list of devices to be covered are: OrCam MyEye, Envision Glasses, Patriot ViewPoint, Vision Buddy, ESight 4 & Eyedaptic Glasses.

**To reserve your spot, call Matt at 5592387915  
or click this link: <https://rb.gy/vaws0>.**



Scan this  
to register!

VCB is thrilled to announce that our Community Living Fund Program is now live! Through a competitive grant process with the California Department of Rehabilitation, VCB became one of the only blindness centers in the state to be offered a Community Living Fund grant, expanding the capacity of VCB to provide person-centered diversion services for people of all ages who are blind or have low vision who may not qualify through existing programs, such as DOR's traditional employment pathway program. VCB is proud to participate in this program and shares the philosophy, which states:

*"All people, regardless of age or disability, should be able to live independently and participate fully in their communities. Every person should have the right to make choices and to control the decisions in and about their lives. This right to self-determination includes decisions about their homes and work, as well as all the other daily choices most adults make without a second thought."*  
**-<https://dor.ca.gov/Home/CommunityLivingFund>**

VCB was notified this quarter that we were the recipient of the Older Individuals who are Blind grant for all five counties in VCB's service area, including, for the first time, Kern County. VCB's 50-year history of serving people 55+ with vision loss in Fresno has made us passionate about providing the best services possible for aging adults who experience vision loss.

Additionally, after over a year of effort, VCB is officially in contract with several providers of CalAIM, California's long-term commitment to transform and strengthen Medi-Cal, offering Californians a more equitable, coordinated, and person-centered approach to maximizing their health and life trajectory. VCB will be developing programs to help improve quality outcomes and reduce health disparities through essential training that meets the whole person needs of individuals with vision loss. Stay tuned for more on these programs and more in coming newsletters and, as always, if you or someone you know might benefit from VCB's services, please contact us!

## Thank you, donors!

January through March 2023

Thank you to the following donors for your contributions of \$100 and above between January and March to our important mission to support, train, and employ people with vision loss. Your support has given us the resources needed to ensure the Central Valley's blind and low vision community has access to assistive technology and training needed to continue doing the things they love. As Helen Keller once said: "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

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