



Quarterly Newsletter

HELPING PEOPLE DO THE THINGS THEY LOVE



It's the season of giving and gathering! This fall, Valley Center for the Blind hosted a White Cane Safety Weekend for the first time, with one event in Fresno and another in Bakersfield the next day. Our team was excited to celebrate together

with our clients, supporters, and staff members from across the Central Valley. We're happy to share that our community came through for us at both events and we thank each and every one of you who supported us!

Attendees at our Fresno event got to enjoy the White Cane Safety Walk, food, and resource booths. We even got some new players at this year's beep baseball game — the Fresno Fire Department! This year, we partnered with FFD to create an accessible hands-on experience learning about firefighting, including two fire trucks brought to the event! We are grateful to the team for joining us this year! We also thank Dani from All Elite Homes for taking photos at this year's event in Fresno.

At our first Bakersfield White Cane Safety Walk, we walked from Yokuts park to Truxtun Avenue

and stopped at the intersection to spread the word to drivers about White Cane Safety with our banner that said "White Cane Safety Day. Safety starts with you." Our attendees had fun hearing all those cars honk and show their support for this event. For both events, we gave away raffled door prizes as a thank you to our guests for joining us on this important day symbolizing independence for our blind and low vision community.

We want to thank our guests, our donors, and especially our two Vendor Sponsors, Sterling Adaptives and Northstate Assistive Technology for making both events possible this year. VCB looks forward to celebrating this important event with you all next year!



Thank You to our Vendor Sponsors:





Dear Friend of VCB,

At this time of year, we look back on the many accomplishments of the past 12 months and the generosity of those who helped us get here. On behalf of the children, parents, adults, grandparents, wives, husbands, daughters, sons, and cherished loved ones who came to VCB this year, I sincerely thank you. Each time you give, you are creating the brilliant light of hope in an otherwise dark world.

Because of you, Valley Center for the Blind exists to support, train, and employ people who are blind or have low vision. We know that, sadly, without our help, the over 1,200 people VCB helped last year would have nowhere to learn essential skills in safety, connect with resources to stay out of poverty, and find others who have similar experiences to help get through their darkest days. Without the warm friendship of VCB, people who are blind face this complicated world alone, experiencing not only the day-to-day challenges we all encounter, but also facing severe discrimination, health disparities, and a horribly depressing 70% unemployment rate.

Friends, we need your help. With our new services, we are seeing children who are blind do better in school, adults who are blind finally getting jobs and making a living wage, and seniors with vision loss living unassisted for so much longer safely in their homes. By word of mouth, community trust, and an effective and consistent outreach strategy, we are finding so many more people who have suffered in the isolation of dependency due to their blindness and they are finding hope, purpose, and renewal.

We are leveling up, and your gift will mean the difference between a six month wait list and helping people right away. You see, we are working

with the same number of teaching staff and the same facilities as we were four years ago, yet the number of clients trained each year has grown 134% over that time. We need larger facilities, more instructors, and more teaching equipment. We need to put devices into people's hands that let them still read their mail, walk confidently down the street, and use a computer without being able to see the screen.

Your donation today will go directly towards helping Valley Center for the Blind expand our direct support, training, and employment work to serve the incredible need in our community. There is nothing greater than the gift of the hope of independence. This holiday season, let's give people who are blind what they deserve: the bold proclamation that your disability does not make you alone. Be a friend, even when it is dark. Thank you for giving generously.

Sincerely,



Shellena Heber

SHeber@myVCB.org

559-222-4447 or 661-865-5115



Please scan this QR Code or visit myvcb.org to give:



\$50 - A new cane
\$100 - Two hours of independence training
\$250 - A magnification device
\$500 - Work readiness training services and support
\$1,000 - Accessibility software to use a computer without vision



Our Second Annual Dining in the Dark in Kern County was a huge success on November 17th at the Luigi's Warehouse. Bringing in 40% more guests than our first year, the event was a warm and engaging evening celebrating the accomplishments of people who are blind and taking a deep look at the staggering work still to be done. VCB would like to thank our friends at Guide Dogs of America who shared two of their guide dogs in training with us and Luigi's for their fabulous blind wine tasting and excellent meal, including two courses completely blindfolded! Our diners had a wonderful time guessing the dishes they were being served and we even spotted a few couples stealing from each other's plates!



Our event culminated in the incredible talent of Rachel Flowers, a young woman who delighted the audience with her jazzy original compositions as well as played and sang some of our classic favorites. Thank you to the many individuals who helped make this event possible and especially to our sponsors, Mechanics Bank, Mary Trichell, and Adventist Health. "See" you next year!

Rachel Flowers

Valley Center for the Blind was excited to have talented world-renowned multi-instrumentalist and composer, Rachel Flowers perform at this year's Dining in the Dark fundraiser. Growing up as a musical prodigy, her talents have been recognized and mentored by greats from various genres such as Conductor Terje Mikkelsen, Herbie Hancock, and the late Greg Field and Keith Emerson. You can even find a video of her playing piano for an amazed Ray Charles when she was just 10 years old.

Although trained as a classical musician since the age of 4, Rachel has excelled at playing music of many genres, and was especially taken with jazz at a young age. She loves to improvise, and in her upcoming album, *In the Moment*, all tracks were improvised and recorded live. If you can't get enough of Rachel's music, you can continue listening through her SoundCloud page, and make sure to follow her on social media for her latest updates. In addition, you can watch award-winning documentary, *Hearing Is Believing* to learn more about her life as a musician and as someone who was born blind.



Central California Braille Challenge

The Parent Permission form for the Central California Braille Challenge is ready to download. The Braille Challenge is a great opportunity for students in grades 1-12 across the Central Valley to show off their Braille skills and possibly qualify for nationals. Stay tuned for more details on this event and how you can help.

- February 10th
- 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM
- Fresno

To download the registration form, click this link: rebrand.ly/3hrxtos



Beeper Egg Hunt

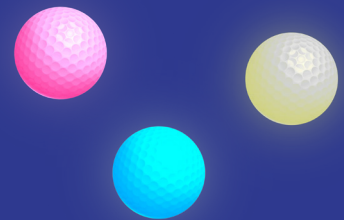
Beeper Egg Hunt planning for next Spring is underway! In an effort to create social opportunities for kids who are blind or have low vision, we are hosting our Beeper Egg Hunt again next Spring. If you would like to donate to help make this event possible, contact our Outreach & Development Manager, Citlali Medina, at cmolina@myvcb.org or call (559)222-4447 extension 121. To learn about how your donations made the event possible earlier this year, check out the photos from the event on our Facebook

To learn about sponsoring our event, click this link: rebrand.ly/ek7ghwz



Glow Golf Tournament

We are hosting our second annual Glow Golf Tournament and Dinner in Fresno next April. Want to know what to expect? Check out the photos from last year on our Facebook page.



To learn about this past year's event: rebrand.ly/r8dj9td



Thank you, donors! **July through September 2023**

Thank you to the following donors for your contributions of \$100 and above between July and September 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.

Blackbaud Giving Fund/PGE
Clovis Country Lions Club
Fresno Host Lions Club
Madera Evening Lions Club

Mary Luck
Linda Sidlinger
Henry Vehrs

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