



For Immediate Release

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- Local people who are blind; use tech to make lives easier
- Images with AmazonShow engineer, Palo Alto Junior Museum accessibility advisory team, tech training for blind individuals
- 36th Annual Vintage Affaire at Filoli benefited Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired [assistive tech programs](#)

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Vista Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired Impacts Silicon Valley's Blind Community

Silicon Valley Tech Helps Local People Who are Blind

Palo Alto, CA – September 4th, 2018 -- When Son Kim, who is blind, walks on El Camino Real in Palo Alto, he shakes his phone to hear his current location, the nearest intersection, bus stop, post office or bank within a 200 meter radius. What a sighted person takes for granted, Kim can now do by using the accessible [BlindSquare](#) GPS app developed for the blind and visually impaired.

Kim, a [Vista Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired](#) Access Technology Specialist, integrates many locally created tech products into his life for a more seamless routine that he would not have been able to do years ago.

Understanding how to access technology creates independence and agency in the lives of those who are vision-impaired. Kim takes great pride and joy in introducing technology and training to other blind and visually impaired individuals. Training that changes lives!

“It’s important to me to always be pushing my boundaries,” says Kim.

Vista Center is often utilized by Apple, Google, Facebook, [PARC](#), and Microsoft, for help creating and/or testing new products and technology to create accessible workplace environments.

On a given day, Kim wakes up to an alarm on his iPhone, checks the news and researches the latest technology. He might use his phone to check his bank account, book a VTA Paratransit ride and order Uber Eats. He’s active in Facebook groups for individuals who are blind and uses his AmazonEcho to easily ask recipes, get definitions and play music.

He loves the challenge of figuring out new technology and works every day with Vista Center clients like Jackie McClure, who says, “For three years communicating with others, accessing outside venues and doing things was difficult. That part of my life just didn’t exist. Tech training at Vista Center allowed me to open that door again to connect with friends and relatives and to feel very confident in being able to have that opportunity to connect with the world.”

“In today’s world access to info is a crucial step to achieving anything,” says Kim. “For those with a visual impairment these daily tasks become a struggle and can lead to stress and depression. Accessible technology and Vista Center’s one-to-one training bridges this gap. Trainings keep them independent, connected to friends and family and engaged in their communities.”

His program is made possible by community grants, donations and fundraisers like the recent 36th Annual [Vintage Affaire](#) on Sunday September 23, 2018 at [Filoli](#) in Woodside. At the Vintage Affaire event, there was wine tasting and elegant appetizers served by well-known guest chefs and wineries, followed by dinner and a rousing live auction.

Vista Center Executive Director Pam Brandin says, “As long as there are individuals with visual impairments and blindness, Vista Center will continue to be essential in providing the tools necessary to access a society created for those with sight – making the larger community stronger, more diverse, and more inclusive.”

About Vintage Affaire

Vintage Affaire is one of the first charity wine auctions in California when founded in 1983. It benefits non-profit Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Staffed entirely by community volunteers, Vintage Affaire 2018 will be held at Filoli in Woodside. The evening will have pouring vintners, hors d'oeuvres by guest chefs, dinner and will include unique auction items and experiences plus amazing fine wines.

Over the past 36 years, Vintage Affaire has raised almost \$9 million for Vista Center, which equates to life-changing programs and services that have promoted independence and improved the quality of life for 9,000 local blind or visually impaired individuals. For more info or tickets: www.vintageaffaire.org

About Vista Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired

It is headquartered in Palo Alto, with a branch in Santa Cruz and one to come in San Jose and serves over 3,000 people a year. For over 70 years, Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired has served individuals in Santa Clara, San Mateo, Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties. Vista Center empowers individuals who are blind or visually impaired to embrace life to the fullest through evaluation, counseling, education and training