

Summer 2018



SHARED VISIONS

SERVING THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

It Has Been the Gift of a Lifetime

A Message from Pam Brandin, Executive Director, Vista Center

**Dear Vista Center Clients and Extended Community,
How does one decide the perfect time to make a major life change and plan to retire, after 24 years of having the most wonderful “job” in the world? The answer is – I just know.**

I have truly loved going to Vista Center every single day of these years, working side by side with a highly skilled, deeply caring and supportive team of individuals whose commitment to Vista Center, its mission and its clients is so remarkable and inspiring.

I have also had the pleasure and privilege of getting to know so many of you - our clients and other community partners, and that is the main reason I have loved walking in the door every day. Yes, we have had a few different “doors” to our various locations over these years. No matter which door to our offices has been used, the clients who have come to us are the reason why we have existed for over 80 years.

Our clients have also helped to keep Vista Center flourishing for many years through their dedicated volunteer service. Our Health Library was launched due to the dedication of two very special volunteers, Roger Peterson and Dawn Wilcox. To this day, Roger and Dawn are in our Palo Alto office every Wednesday answering questions and providing materials related to eye conditions to people all over the United States and beyond.

Our Store in Palo Alto was also launched due to the service of a very special volunteer, Steve Nakagawa. Steve's legacy lives on in both Palo Alto and Santa Cruz as we help clients, their families and friends with finding the right product for their needs. Steve was also the impetus behind building our robust Access Technology Program. This tradition of service lives on in the Vista Center volunteers we now have in Palo Alto and Santa Cruz, and soon to be San Jose. Our Store, Access Technology Program and Volunteer Program are supported by volunteers, and the service they provide to our staff and to our clients allows Vista Center to offer programs far and wide to clients and others in need.

During this time I have also worked with many, many, board members and 22 board presidents – all of them dedicated to our mission and passionate about our clients. The consumers who have served and continue to serve on our board help us to plan and implement strategies for the future.

Since 1994, we have grown from a small, relatively simple organization that served several hundred clients in two counties, to a much larger, more robust and more complicated one – one that is highly regarded in Northern

California and nationwide. And we're just getting in the groove – there is still a great deal to do to ensure that everyone who could benefit from our services is able to access and benefit from them. We are at a good point in our organizational development for us to give a new leader the chance to bring in a fresh perspective, different professional experience and expertise, and the energy it takes to lead a nonprofit.

I believe there is a wonderfully talented, caring and capable individual waiting to know that this best job ever is going to be available in early 2019, that he or she will put the finishing touches on an already impressive resume, and throw their hat in the ring to be considered for the position.

I will hope to say “goodbye” to many of you in person over the next few months – whether in Palo Alto, Santa Cruz or our soon-to-be San Jose Branch.

**With warmest regards,
Pam Brandin**

Low Vision Expo – FREE Event

Our Low Vision Expo is on Saturday, September 8th, 2018 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Loudon Nelson Community Center, 301 Center Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060.

Our keynote speaker is ophthalmologist Dr. Carolyn K. Pan with Byers Eye Institute at Stanford, whose presentation will be on *Diabetic Retinopathy*. Highlights include a technology presentation presented by the Computer Engineering Department at UC Santa Cruz; and *Adventures in Low Vision – Living Each Day to the Fullest*, where panelists will discuss

the social/emotional impacts of vision loss, factors in deciding whether or not to have a guide dog, an overview of Assistive Technology, and how to maintain an active recreational lifestyle.

The very latest in equipment and technology will be demonstrated by a variety of exhibitors. Participants will also have the opportunity to learn about critical resources in the community including services provided through Vista Center and other local organizations. Register by September 1st to receive a free lunch. This is an event not to be missed!

Low Vision Expo Event Schedule is listed below. For more details, please visit our website at www.vistacenter.org under the header News & Events.

10:00 AM - 12:30 PM	Registration/Visit Exhibitor Hall [Exhibitor Hall is open 10 AM - 4 PM]
10:30 AM - 10:45 AM	Welcome & Introductions
10:45 AM - 12:00 PM	<i>Diabetic Retinopathy</i>
11:30 AM - 1:00 PM	Lunch – (Included if you register by September 1st, 2018)
1:00 PM - 1:45 PM	<i>Technology Presentation</i>
2:00 PM - 2:45 PM	<i>Adventures in Low Vision – Living Each Day to the Fullest</i>
4:00 PM	Low Vision Expo Concludes

Diving for Pearls and Coming Up Big

By Tina Murray, Parent

On April 14th at our Palo Alto office, the Parent Support Group committee held its first panel discussion, Pearls of Wisdom: My Journey as a Vision Parent, and by all reports it was a grand success. The Parent Support Group committee would like to thank all participants. We encourage other interested parents to contact us for more information about this event and future events (contact information below).

Committee organizers, Tina Murray, Jo Jaros and David Hoffman, would like to thank parents Esther and Walter Johnson, Lynda Jaquez, Michael Steinberg and Christie Moore for sharing their stories and motivating all in attendance with their inspirational and uplifting tales of their blind or visually impaired kids as they trotted through the adventures of infancy, toddler, childhood and adolescence. The two hours flew by and turned into three with the promise of more to come.

We learned so much about advocacy, the education system and Individual Education Plans (IEPs), independence, letting go, dating and learning life lessons. We learned that to our shock and surprise (sarcasm intended) those blind or visually impaired children are quite normal and grow up juicy if they are basted with love. We learned that their path to their own success may be different than a sighted child and at the same time that every child is unique and each one comes with their own special and wonderful attributes and none of them come with user manuals. We learned that our new parent support group has a place in the lives of our

clients and their families and we look forward to many more events such as this one.

Pearls of Wisdom shared for parents:

- * Seek to accept and understand what is going on with your child**
- * Slowly and continuously let go of your grief. Give yourself permission to grieve**
- * Being a parent of a blind or visually impaired child is not a DIY Project -- reach out to others for resources and support**
- * Every human has remarkable inner strength. Tap into those strengths**
- * Pursue early intervention to its greatest extent**
- * If vision is deteriorating, spend the time and energy to make visual memories while you can**
- * All children should do chores to support their ongoing journey to independence**
- * Don't coddle your kids -- have high expectations**
- * Don't accept a "No" answer in an IEP. Be a proactive champion for your child**
- * Trying to be friends with educators takes energy and may interfere with your ability to advocate for your child**
- * Be Present -- the years fly by**
- * Have patience**
- * Endure -- it's a marathon, not a sprint**
- * Remember to rest**

The Parent Support Group meets the second Saturday of the month so stay tuned or contact us for the next event. We truly hope that if you or someone you know has a blind or visually impaired child in their lives that you will come by to our next event and see what pearls you can find.

With many thanks,
Vista Center Parent Support Group Committee

For more information, please contact Tina Murray by email at tinaonmybehalf@gmail.com or by cell phone 408-644-1303, Jo Jaros by email at jjaros@vistacenter.org, or David Hoffman by email at dhoffman@vistacenter.org or by phone at 650-858-0202 extension 131.

Vista Voyagers – Youth Program

***Experience Your World
Embrace Who You Are
Embark on Life with Confidence!***

Vista Center Youth Group and Family Activities are getting a makeover as the Vista Voyagers Program! Kicking off the program are these FREE upcoming youth events:

- August 8th, Seymour Marine Discovery Center
- September 15 - 16th, ETC Overnight Kayaking Adventure
- November 10th, Cane Quest

Save the date! Check our website for more information and to RSVP for one of these events, please contact Bethany Small at bsmall@vistacenter.org or by phone at 650-858-0202 extension 183.



**FREE MATTER
FOR THE BLIND
OR HANDICAPPED**

for the blind and visually impaired

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Vista Center empowers individuals who are blind or visually impaired to embrace life to the fullest through evaluation, counseling, education and training.

Learn more or donate at www.vistacenter.org

