Back to Work – Vista Center Sets the Path

Jimmy Uharriet, a Teamster, was hired as a United Airlines mechanic at San Francisco Airport in 2010. In 2016, the unexpected became his reality – Jimmy was involved in an accident outside of work that left him totally blind.

“I decided not to look back, but to move forward,” Jimmy said. So, only six months after the accident that took his sight, Jimmy became a Vista Center client, working with Valerie Campos, Director of Adult Services. “I had to be retaught everything, and I was often frustrated with what seemed to be my new life limitations,” said Jimmy.

With the help of Vista Center’s individualized, one-to-one Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instruction, Jimmy learned the specific skills he needs to travel safely and efficiently at home, work, and within his community. New skills such as using a white cane, using public transportation, safely crossing streets, and fully using his other senses, set the initial path for Jimmy to go back to work.

Vista Center’s programs and services helped jimmy to process the grief of losing his sight, and learn how to navigate without vision in a sighted world. Over time, and with steady support, he regained his self-confidence as a mechanic and was able to return to work at United Airlines.

Jimmy remained an integral part of his United Airlines family. Ed Tana, a fellow mechanic who helped retrain Jimmy shared, “Jimmy has always been a core part of our work group. Camaraderie is big here and we are all brothers.” The skills Jimmy learned at Vista Center helped him return to being fully functional at his workplace again.

Before losing his sight, Jimmy worked on jet bridges, ground power, and locksmith work. “Now I do bench-work,” he explained. “I am brought electric motors, clutch brakes, and gearbox reducers for the back system to rebuild and overhaul.” Vista Center’s Valerie Campos was impressed by Jimmy’s warm demeanor, sense of humor, and relentless motivation to continually challenge himself. She believes this positive attitude, combined with Vista Center’s services, helped him regain his career success and also introduced him to a new world of community engagement.

Jimmy speaks highly of the services he received from Vista Center and credits Valerie and her colleagues for paving the way for him to return to work as a mechanic: “Looking back.... I would not be where I am if it was not for Vista Center!”
Our Impact | 3400 Clients

In 2018, Vista Center served more than 3,400 clients and their families throughout four counties in Northern California.

TECHNOLOGY

94%

Clients who attend Assistive Technology training are better able to utilize their smartphones, providing greater independence and reducing their reliance on other people.

LOW VISION CLINIC

90%

Clients have a better understanding of their vision loss and how to maximize their functional vision upon completion of their low vision evaluation.

DAILY LIVING SKILLS

98%

Clients who attend Daily Living Skills instruction are better able to cook, manage medication, organize their homes, and utilize many other new systems in everyday life.

Thank you to the Fox Family Foundation for launching our new Job Transition program for visually impaired youth and adult clients. This program supports the Foundation’s mission to “ensure capable and motivated people-in-need can thrive inside their schools, careers, and communities.” The San Jose based program (following our 2018 merger with the Santa Clara Valley Blind Center) offers resume preparation, mock interview experience, job search skills, and assistance in securing employment. Vista Center appreciates this wonderful opportunity to collaborate with the Fox Family Foundation to focus on academic and work-skill solutions that prepare people who are blind or low-vision with next-step job readiness.
To Our Vista Center Family,

Upon Pam Brandin’s retirement at the end of 2018, our Board of Directors appointed Karae Lisle, a well-respected and experienced nonprofit leader, as our new Executive Director. Pam’s dedicated service, vision, and leadership, combined with her deep compassion and unwavering commitment to Vista Center’s mission, have made an incredible impact on our community over the past 24 years – we THANK Pam and wish her much happiness.

Karae brings a unique blend of private sector and not-for-profit perspectives to the Vista Center executive role. She is focused on our vital mission and recognizes the importance of our long-serving culture and values. Her proficiency with mergers and organizational growth is just the right skillset, following our recent 2018 merger with the Santa Clara Valley Blind Center. In her short tenure, Karae has demonstrated she is a true nonprofit leader, with a smart balance of tenacious advocacy, client compassion, and a dedication to development/donor growth.

Following a long-serving nonprofit leader is an honor and a challenge. The Vista Center Board believes that under Karae’s leadership, Vista Center is poised for the next phase of success:

In FY19/20, we will dramatically increase fund-raising objectives to support and strengthen our expanded client base and geographic service area: San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties.

As we progress, Vista Center’s strengths will continue to be the foundation of our capabilities and performance: our highly skilled and deeply caring staff, our dedicated board members, our passionate volunteers, and our loyal, generous financial supporters.

Our stronger, larger organization (with offices in Palo Alto, San Jose and Santa Cruz) will continue to deliver outstanding client service, conservative financial performance, and mindful consideration of the needs and contributions of all members in the Vista Center family.

This Annual Report provides a peek at Karae’s initial leadership, as we share the success and challenges experienced in FY 18/19. As always, we are tremendously grateful to our supportive community - our event attendees, in-kind donors, and financial contributors.

Thank you for joining us in our mission, and thank you for providing support to our new Executive Director and our community members who are blind or visually impaired.

Mark O’Boyle  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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I have never seen smiles brighter than those that weekend! The *Vista Voyagers*, our youth program, spent an entire weekend in March in Bear Valley, cross country skiing and playing in the snow! Whether first-timers or return skiers, students quickly picked up the sport of skiing and were soon tackling hills in a quest for more speed. Other students switched to snowshoes and had a blast trampling through deep snow or chucking snowballs at unsuspecting friends. Big Trees State Park wowed everyone with the largest trees in the world, and students had hands-on experience at the Visitor Center where they explored animal pelts, bird calls, and even bear poop!

One student who recently lost his sight summed up the trip, “My favorite part about the trip was being able to ski. Before the trip it was really hard for me to imagine being able to ski like I did before I lost my sight. Being out there and actually skiing like I used to, it was actually quite amazing.”

Experiences like this help youth learn skills in the academic *Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)*, nine areas where children with visual impairments require specialized opportunities in order to compensate for "a lack of learning by observing others." The Vista Voyager ski trip encompassed all nine learning areas, some of which are:

**Safe travel techniques**: Students traveled on all sorts of unusual terrain, particularly snow! They discovered how to balance in the snow, traveling up and down hills while wearing new footwear such as ski boots, skis, or snowshoes.

**Social interactions**: There was an abundance of social bonding over the weekend, allowing the students to express their personalities and interests as they got to know each other. Some students met other students with visual impairments for the first time, realizing they are not alone in their disability, which helped them to accept their own visual impairment.

**Sensory efficiency skills**: “Wow, my echolocation skills are completely different when wearing all this winter gear!” a student exclaimed after stepping outside all decked out for snow. Students utilized all their senses traveling through the silence of snow.

**Self-determination development**: For nearly all the students, this was their first time on skis or their first time in snow! They demonstrated impressive resilience by snapping on those skis and giving a new sport a try, even when they were nervous!
Vista Center is grateful to be the beneficiary of such extraordinary fundraising events, and is thankful for the unwavering support of the event committees and volunteers who put so much time and effort into financially supporting our organization every year.

Vista Center's 2018 events were full of fun, unique opportunities, and a reminder of how important Vista Center services are for our community. In August, the Menlo Charity Horse Show brought us riveting equestrian jumping events at the Menlo Circus Club. The six-day event hosted riders and families from all over California. A special thanks to Miles Lima, a Northern California Braille student winner, for entertaining event sponsors under the big tent with his live music.

In September, Vintage Affaire, Silicon Valley's Premier Wine Auction, was showcased on the amazing grounds of Filoli gardens. Guests enjoyed strolling through the gardens, savoring culinary treats, and bidding on unique wines. Son Kim, Vista Center's Assistive Technology Specialist and Matt King, Facebook Accessibility Developer, shared how assistive technology transforms their lives and the lives of others with visual impairment.

With cowboy hats, holiday hats, fancy hats, animal hats, and many other creative hats, Vista Center finished off the year with another successful Hats Off in Santa Cruz. The event brought community support from all over Santa Cruz County and offered delicious hors d'oeuvres, good drinks, and a wide range of Santa Cruz specialty silent auction items to bid on. As always, the hall was full of laughter, good company, and a passion to support Vista Center's ongoing operations.

"Every Tuesday, Teresa saves my life."

Teresa Anderson has been a Vista Center Client Partner Volunteer since 2013. Every Tuesday, she visits Peggy, a retired teacher and Vista Center client. Peggy has diminished vision due to glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration; Teresa helps Peggy with household tasks, organization, and even hand-writes Peggy's heartfelt cards to friends and family. Over the years, Teresa has become more than just a helping hand; she fills their weekly visits with laughter and has become a beloved friend.

As she reflected, Peggy shared, "All of the staff at Vista Center have helped me to live independently, but I believe the weekly visits with Teresa also saved my life."
Statement of Financial Activities for the Fiscal Year
Ended June 30, 2018

**PUBLIC SUPPORT & REVENUE**

| Description                        | Amount  
|------------------------------------|---------
| Contributions                      | $1,215,237*  
| In-Kind                            | 55,302  
| **TOTAL SUPPORT**                  | **$1,207,539**  

**REVENUE**

| Description                        | Amount  
|------------------------------------|---------
| Sales to Public - Net Expenses     | $25,442  
| Government Grants & Contracts      | 315,017  
| Program Service Fees               | 570,227  
| Special Event                      | 56,598  
| Investments Income                 | 483,930**  
| Miscellaneous                       | 466  
| **TOTAL REVENUE**                  | **$1,451,680**  

**TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE**

| Description                        | Amount  
|------------------------------------|---------
| **TOTAL SUPPORT & REVENUE**        | **$2,722,219**  

**EXPENSES**

| Description                        | Amount  
|------------------------------------|---------
| Program Services                   | $2,605,266  
| Management & General               | 393,944  
| Fundraising                         | 274,778  
| **TOTAL EXPENSES**                 | **$3,273,988**  

**Change in Net Assets**

| Description                        | Amount  
|------------------------------------|---------
| **Change in Net Assets**           | **$(551,769)**  
| Net Assets, Beginning of Year      | **$8,183,478**  
| Net Assets, End of Year            | **$7,631,709**  

* Includes funds received for Capital Campaign and from organizations sponsoring annual Horse Show and Vintage Affaire events  
** Includes unrealized gains (losses) on investments
In order to be more environmentally friendly and to reduce printing costs, we have opted to post our donors and contributor names online this year. You can find them on our website’s donor page at vistacenter.org. We hope you appreciate this efficiency and have fun exploring our website.

“I’m glad to support Vista Center’s critical work in the community, and am especially grateful for Valerie and Alice’s (Vista Center staff) help with the Designing for Accessibility class I’m teaching at Stanford University.”
– John Tang, Ph.D., Microsoft Research, Social Technologies Group

“My mother was a client, so I know first-hand the incredible impact Vista Center has in the lives of people who are dealing with vision loss. I’m thankful to have the opportunity to give back and to serve with so many other committed and engaged board members. Vista Center is well prepared as an organization to meet the growing demand for our programs and services.”
– Claire Biancalana, Vista Center Board Member

“I love working directly with clients and their families, teaching new skills that can make their lives easier, safer, and more enjoyable. I’m happy to be a part of a team that shares insights and information and provides integrated services. I love being able to offer clients social/ recreational opportunities; to bring people together for “normal” events that are vital parts of healthy living. I appreciate the support of other staff, our leadership team, and our board!”
– David Emanuel, Vista Center Orientation & Mobility Instructor
THANK YOU!

Your financial support of Vista Center's programs and services helps restore hope, promote independence and create opportunities, transforming the lives of those with vision loss.