



**THE BLIND  
& VISUALLY  
IMPAIRED  
CENTER**  
OF MONTEREY COUNTY INC.

# BLINDFOLD

225 Laurel Avenue, Pacific Grove, California 93950 831-649-3505 [www.blindandlowvision.org](http://www.blindandlowvision.org)

**Fall 2020**

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## NEWS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### **Response to COVID-19**

The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County resumed in-office operations on Monday, July 6, 2020. Following strict State and local health guidelines, along with implementing new office protocols, we have made the following changes to our office:

- 1) Implemented social distancing procedures;
- 2) Implemented hourly and daily disinfectant procedures;
- 3) Implemented a staff wellness plan, including daily temperature checks;
- 4) Implemented bi-monthly support groups via Zoom;
- 5) Limited office hours and client/staff interactions.

### **Braille and Ceramic Classes**

In compliance with State and local Shelter-in-Place Orders, braille and ceramic classes are cancelled until further notice.

### **Contact Us**

The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County, Inc.  
Address: 225 Laurel Avenue, Pacific Grove, California 93950  
Telephone: 831-649-3505  
Toll-Free: 1-800-404-3505 (in Monterey County)  
Fax: 831-649-4057  
Email: [vision@blindandlowvision.org](mailto:vision@blindandlowvision.org)  
Website: [www.blindandlowvision.org](http://www.blindandlowvision.org)

### **Peer Support Group**

In response to COVID-19, The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County resumed bi-monthly support groups via Zoom in April 2020. The support group is peer led and meets every other Tuesday morning at 10:00 a.m. For more information, including Zoom access, contact Steven Macias, Executive Director, at 831-649-3505.

### **Community Outreach**

Community Outreach is a growing service offered by The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County. We provide low vision training to service providers, attend health fairs, and present information sessions at senior living centers and in the wider community.

To submit an event invite or demonstration request for 2021, contact Steven Macias, Executive Director, at 831-649-3505.

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## A MESSAGE FROM TOM GARDNER, BOARD PRESIDENT

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It has been an exciting several months since the release of the last newsletter for The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County. We have successfully resumed the low vision clinic, made progress on securing our mobile low vision unit, and welcomed two new board members.

The Board and I recognize it's been a rough year for all of us. One key area I want to focus on is starting 2021 in the right way. As you will see in this newsletter, The Blind and Visually Impaired Center is once again part of the Monterey County Gives! campaign. By donating to this worthy cause, you can help offset some of the disruption caused by the coronavirus.

Last year, the Monterey County Gives! campaign provided an additional 13 cents for every dollar donated. This campaign is crucial in supporting the Center.

So please, talk to your tax advisor or financial advisor to plan for a generous donation to The Blind and Visually Impaired Center. We've been fortunate enough to keep our doors open to serve our clients, which is only made possible through your generous donations. With your support, we can continue our mission to help the visually impaired to lead a healthy and independent life.

Sincerely,



Tom Gardner  
Board President

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## Product Showcase: Victor Reader Trek from HumanWare

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The Victor Reader Trek from HumanWare keeps getting better. This improved and upgraded device provides the confidence to get you where you're going easily and the freedom to enjoy entertainment on the go. The Victor Reader Trek introduces new map browsing modes, allowing you to do virtual journey preparation to explore the neighborhoods before you even get there. You can discover the nearest cafes, restaurants, shops and landmarks. This exciting feature comes with brand new maps with global coverage, points of interest and faster map updates. Map installs are quick and simple with just a computer and an SD card. With TomTom and HERE maps, you will get smoother navigation with more precision, more accuracy in the pronunciation of street names, and more points of interest.



Schedule your visit with our assistive technology department to check out the Victor Reader Trek by calling The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County at 831-649-3505.

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## A MESSAGE FROM STEVEN MACIAS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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As we approach the final months of 2020 a lot has changed since the start of the year. Masks and hand sanitizers have become commonplace, while traveling and socializing have almost become non-existent.

When I first started as the Executive Director in March 2020, the coronavirus was all over major news networks. I knew that given Monterey County's demographics, especially here on the Peninsula, that the Board of Supervisors would take the necessary precautions to protect the most vulnerable population. On March 18, the County issued a Shelter-in-Place order for what was originally for two weeks to close non-essential businesses. The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County remained open, as the Center was categorized as essential. Then, on March 27, we closed our doors for a little over four months. During those four months, staff, including myself, scattered our time in the office so that no more than one person would be at the Center at a given time. Daily cleaning procedures were implemented so that the person coming in the afternoon or the next day could worry less. The low vision clinic and all in-person programs were suspended. Thankfully, Zoom proved to be beneficial in hosting the Tuesday support group, with a higher attendance through Zoom than in-person.

We re-opened the office on July 6, after four months of closure. With our COVID-19 protocols in place, we began seeing clients daily. On August 17, we resumed low vision clinic operations. However, braille, ceramics, and weekly luncheons are still cancelled. The support group meets regularly through Zoom every other Tuesday morning.

It may be months to years before life returns to a normal setting. What we can all do in the meantime is keep each other safe, and reach out to one another in this pandemic. Call a friend, learn a new craft, or go outside for a walk. It helps to ease the mind to stay focused when the world seems in such disarray.

The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County celebrates its 50th anniversary next year. As the Center has withstood the test of time, so too shall we in this difficult time.

For any questions or comments, you can call me at 831-649-3505.

Stay safe everyone.

Sincerely,



Steven Macias  
Executive Director

**MONTEREY COUNTY** **GIVES!**  
Joining Together for Big Ideas

On Thursday, November 12, the Monterey County Gives! campaign officially begins. The campaign runs from November 12 to December 31, 2020. All donations must be sent directly to the Community Foundation for Monterey County to be included. This campaign serves as one of the major funding sources for The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County.

Monterey County Weekly has had a close relationship with the local nonprofit community for more than 25 years, supporting and promoting those who work to improve the quality of life for all. The Monterey County Weekly witnesses, reports, and collaborates with nonprofits to promote their events and programs, so they may communicate and carry out their mission.

In 2000, the Weekly supported the nonprofit community in another way when it established the Monterey County Weekly Community Fund, a donor advised fund of the Community Foundation for Monterey County. In 2009, Monterey County Gives! was launched, focused on an annual appeal to the Weekly's generous readers for year-end donations. In that first year, \$417,000 was raised and granted. The Weekly has built on that success each year, and with the Monterey Peninsula Foundation joining as a partner in 2015, the campaign has shown the power of philanthropy in Monterey County.

Starting November 12, please visit [www.montereycountygives.com](http://www.montereycountygives.com) to make your donation online. You can also mail a check directly to:

Community Foundation for Monterey County,  
Attn: MCGives!  
2354 Garden Road  
Monterey, California 93940

Checks MUST be made payable to "Community Foundation for Monterey County" (or CFMC, or CFMC/MCGives). Please remember to include your full name, address and "Blind and Visually Impaired Center" in the memo section of the check.

Alternatively, you can send your check directly to The Blind and Visually Impaired Center and we will deliver it to the Community Foundation for Monterey County.

The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County encourages everyone to give generously to allow us to continue to serve and empower our clients toward an independent life through education, support services and skills training.

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## GIFT BASKETS

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Beginning Tuesday, November 10 at 9:00 a.m., The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County has gift baskets available for a suggested donation amount. To view the gift baskets, visit [blindandlowvision.org](http://blindandlowvision.org) and click the link on the homepage. Baskets will be provided on a first-come, first-serve basis. Once a basket is paid for it will be removed from the website. Payment must be made through VISA or credit card by calling The Blind and Visually Impaired Center at 831-649-3505.

Contact Steven Macias, Executive Director, at 831-649-3505 for any questions.

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## TIPS FOR LABELLING AND ORGANIZING CLOTHES – KAREN LEVIN

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Below are tips for organizing and labeling clothes for individuals who are visually impaired.

- 1) Use overhead lighting, natural light or a flashlight to help illuminate the room.
- 2) Use tactile cues such as texture, cut, style, and button design. Some clothing may have no labels on them.
- 3) Place matching outfits together.
- 4) Separate different colored socks in washable laundry bags or use black or white socks for convenience.
- 5) Always keep items in the same place each time.
- 6) Use different shaped and sized containers or drawers for personal items.

Next, we'll suggest some products that may help with identifying clothes. This can include a Pen-friend clothing label, Colorino, puff paint, ColorMates clothing identifiers, aluminum braille clothing identifier, Sock Locks, large print labels, safety pins, buttons, iron-on patches, loc dots, Maxi-Marks and bump dots. Any of these can be used as your own system to help in identifying your clothes.

For more information or help labelling your clothes, contact The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County at 831-649-3505.

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## Product Showcase: Explore5 from HumanWare

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The Explore5 from HumanWare is a powerful handheld magnifier with a 5-inch LCD screen that provides crystal clear display and 2x-22x zoom magnification. The Explore5 is a smart choice for individuals with mild to medium low vision loss who need variable magnification and contrast enhancement. The Explore5 is designed to go just about anywhere with its lightweight design and handle. The battery is rated to last three continuous hours on a single charge and has a television output, allowing you to see the enlarged pictures and text on your home television. The durable case resists small drops and impacts. The Explore5 can hold thousands of images for viewing anytime.

Schedule your visit with our assistive technology department to check out the Explore5 by calling The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County at 831-649-3505.

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## **NEW BOARD MEMBERS**

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The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County is pleased to welcome two new board members. These new members bring a wealth of experience in their respective field and were confirmed as board members on August 6, 2020. Below is a brief introduction of the new members:

### **Dr. Gary Gray**

Dr. Gary Gray serves as the Chief Executive Officer at Natividad. His previous roles at Natividad were Chief Medical Officer, Chief of Medical Staff and Director of the Family Medicine Residency Program. He is certified by the American Board of Family Medicine and was formerly Assistant Professor and Director of Pre-Doctoral Education for the Department of Family Medicine at Georgetown University School of Medicine in Washington, D.C. He received a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine from the University of Osteopathic Medicine and Health Sciences in Des Moines, Iowa and completed a residency and internship in Family Medicine at Womack Army Medical Center at Fort Bragg. Dr. Gray was previously a staff physician at the former Fort Ord and in private practice in Denver, Colorado.

### **Ms. Alissa Whittle**

A native of Salinas, Alissa Whittle serves as a Controller for Taylor Farms. She began her accounting career when she worked for her father at an agricultural surveying company in Salinas. In 1997, Ms. Whittle left for Tahoe to be closer to the mountains. There she served as Cost Controller at The Resort at Squaw Creek. Later she moved to Alaska and served as a Tax Preparer/Radio Controller for a tax accountant/pilot. The two would fly into villages to prepare taxes. She also offered her cost accounting services at a local Heli-Ski Camp for free Heli-Skiing. In 2007, she moved to New Hampshire and began working as the Lodging Controller at Attitash Ski Resort in North Conway, New Hampshire and was later promoted to General Manager of Attitash Grand Summit Hotel.

Tired of shoveling snow, she moved back to her hometown of Salinas in 2015. She enjoys being closer to family and getting back to her roots.

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## **LOW VISION CLINIC – MARTHA BURGOON**

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The time for New Year's Resolutions is coming. Should one of your resolutions be a visit to The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County's low vision clinic?

Many eyecare professionals recommend yearly visits to eye care centers to test if your current glasses and aids are working well or if a different power is needed. There may also be some new aids that were not available at your last visit to the Center. For instance, there are a variety of video magnifiers available. They are more versatile than regular magnifiers as they have high definition cameras and the print and background colors can be changed for easier viewing. The magnification levels can be increased as needed from 2x to 22x the normal size. Screen sizes range from 4.3 inches to 12 inches. The low vision clinic also provides other assistive technology recommendations. These include magnifiers and telescopes, special eyeglasses, electronic vision aids, and improved lighting.

Schedule your visit with our low vision clinic by calling The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County at 831-649-3505.

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## **MONTEREY-SALINAS TRANSIT TRAVEL TRAINING PROGRAM**

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Monterey-Salinas Transit (MST) offers free fixed-route travel training to teach interested individuals, groups, and organizations how to ride the bus safely and independently.

Buses and transit centers are thoroughly cleaned each night using hospital grade disinfectants, and hand-held foggers are used to spray germicide inside buses to decontaminate the coach. Hand sanitizer dispensers have been installed on all buses to help keep passenger hands clean, windows are kept open to allow air inside buses to be refreshed quickly, and visual reminders have been placed throughout the bus asking everyone to maintain a safe distance from other passengers.

After training, you will discover how easy it is to plan a trip; understand route maps, stops, schedules and landmarks; get to and from bus stops safely; get on and off the bus safely; pay fares and purchase passes; ride a specific route; transfer to other buses; and if needed, use a mobility device when riding.

Not only are passengers gaining independence, they are saving money, enjoying the opportunity to meet other passengers, making a positive impact on the environment, and gaining valuable time to relax while leaving the driving to MST.

Contact the MST Mobility Services Center to schedule your training at 831-264-5886.

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## **BOARD MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS**

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The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County is proud to recognize their current board members and volunteers:

### **Board of Directors**

- Tom Gardner, President
- Dr. Celia Barberena, Vice-President
- Russell Hatch, Treasurer
- Sonja Jackson, Secretary
- Joe Desmond
- Dr. Gary Gray
- Randy Henson
- Toula Hubbard
- Dr. Ken Hunter
- Bob Johnson
- Alissa Whittle

### **Staff**

- Steven Macias, Executive Director
- Martha Burgoon, Blind Rehabilitation Specialist/Low Vision Clinic Coordinator
- Megan Carter, OD, Low Vision Optometrist
- Karen Levin, Vision Rehabilitation Specialist
- Esmeralda Ortiz, Orientation and Mobility Specialist
- Fred Sterenberg, Finance and Compliance Coordinator
- Marisa Vallejo, Intake Assistant/Receptionist
- Lucy Yen, OD, Low Vision Optometrist

### **Volunteers**

- Reem Fayyad
- Daniel Wilson

**The Blind and Visually Impaired Center  
of Monterey County, Inc.**

225 Laurel Avenue  
Pacific Grove, California 93950

831-649-3505

vision@blindandlowvision.org

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**Ways to Donate**

You can make a tax-deductible gift online through PayPal at [www.blindandlowvision.org/give/](http://www.blindandlowvision.org/give/)

or by mail to:       The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County, Inc.

225 Laurel Avenue

Pacific Grove, California 93950

Federal Tax ID #23-7221588

**Endowment Fund**

Did you know that over the years many of our clients and donors have left a bequest to the Center? Their gifts have been used to establish a modest endowment fund. The Board uses earnings from the fund to expand programming, purchase equipment, or supplement the annual operating budget.

**Chariots for Charity**

Operated by the Monterey Old Capitol Lions Club, Chariots for Charity vehicle donations support The Blind and Visually Impaired Center of Monterey County with cash donations from the sales of donated vehicles. Operated since 1985, the Chariots program has raised more than \$350,000 to support the Center.

For more information or to donate a vehicle, contact Russ Hatch at 831-659-5360.