Is there an adult in your life who wants to live on their own, but you’re concerned about their safety? Or, an aging family member who needs reminders about scheduled appointments and activities? We’re excited to be launching a pilot Assistive Technology program that will address these and other concerns for a group of EBI consumers.

What is Assistive Technology? It’s technology that enhances the lives of individuals with disabilities by helping them overcome barriers to independence. It can be low-tech or high-tech, as simple as a magnifying glass and as complex as a tongue-controlled wheelchair or eye gaze-driven communication system.

EBI is implementing our Assistive Technology program with a generous grant awarded by the Fremont Bank Foundation and a significant donation from a long-time EBI supporter. Our program will provide sensors, monitors, and devices to a group of participants wanting to move into or be able to remain in their own homes. Equipment and systems will be selected based on an assessment of each participant’s needs and preferences, with safety, independence, and quality of life key to the decision-making process.

In one scenario, for example, remote monitoring and a two way communication system will make it easier for young adults to live independently for the first time, with the confidence of their parents. In another, medication dispensers with visual and audio reminders will enable older consumers living independently to avoid having to move into a staffed facility when their medication regimens become increasingly complicated. For others, “intelligent” sensors in their homes will track and learn their activities and recognize when inactivity or unusual activity occurs. Some consumers will have a personalized tablet that reminds them of scheduled events and tasks to complete. Still others will use a “cook stop” with motion sensors that can tell when they’ve left the kitchen, and will shut down if they don’t return within a set time. Some participants will simply need a virtual assistant to turn lights, appliances, and electronics on and off. Based on each person’s unique situation, a monitoring system will be programmed to provide immediate alerts and information to EBI staff, as needed.

We’re confident that the lessons we will learn during the pilot year of our Assistive Technology program will make it possible for many more consumers to benefit from this technology moving forward.
Tax examiner with the IRS, community benefits advocate at Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, and conservator, are positions Herb Thomas held before becoming a Bay Area fiduciary. With his skills and desire to help people access resources and achieve financial stability, Herb established Kairos, a fiduciary service focusing on Special Needs and Settlement Trusts. When Herb’s son was three years old and received a diagnosis of autism, the special needs world he knew so well professionally became personal.

Understanding the complexity and importance of making quality services available to individuals with disabilities, Herb notes, “It takes a village, and that village cannot continue without support.”

True to his words, Herb recently joined EBI’s Board of Directors and graciously contributes time, expertise, and financial support to EBI. We appreciate his desire to “give back” to the community, and are thrilled to be one of multiple non-profit organizations benefitting from his generosity.

In addition to Herb’s ongoing commitments, he enjoys tinkering with and rebuilding mechanical objects, like old clocks and radios from the 1930s. And, during Covid, he developed a love of astronomy. While he doesn’t quite consider himself an amateur astronomer just yet, he is definitely a serious stargazer!

EBI appreciates the enthusiasm, thoughtfulness, and wisdom Herb brings to all he does.

Thank you, Herb, for your many gifts to EBI!
Meet Masoud Azimi

If you’ve spent time at the EBI office, you’ve no doubt heard the common refrain: “THANK YOU, MASOUD!” Masoud’s technological wizardry, his knowledge about each of EBI’s departments and programs, and his ability to find answers, make him an invaluable IT Manager. Add to that his patience when explaining how to use a device or software and you can understand why he’s so appreciated.

After working at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, Masoud moved to California in 2014, through the Special Immigrant Visa Program. Finding a job posting for EBI, he was immediately drawn to EBI’s mission. Today, with his knowledge of computers, servers, the cloud, video conferencing, etc., Masoud plays a vital role at EBI.

When asked what he likes best about his job, Masoud responded that it feels good to know that his work with technology benefits staff and consumers. Developing new systems, stream-lining processes, and trouble-shooting problems, etc. is rewarding to him.

When Masoud is not at work, what does he enjoy doing? Before the Covid pandemic, you could often find him playing pick-up soccer. He’s since switched sports, and has become an avid volley ball player, now playing weekly. At home, he likes watching YouTube tech videos to learn about new products and he’s interested in understanding “blockchain” technology and cryptocurrency. Since living in the United States, Masoud has met a lot of people and enjoys hanging out with a group of good friends.

A fun fact about Masoud....
When Masoud moved here, he couldn’t find Afghan food locally, so he began trying different foods and then...he discovered Chipotle. He describes himself as “obsessed” with their chicken bowls and fajitas and eats at Chipotle at least four times a week!

Thank you, Masoud, for the work you do!
WHO WE ARE

Established in 1994, East Bay Innovations (EBI) today supports more than 500 individuals with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their own homes, to be successfully employed, and to feel a sense of membership in their community.

Visit our website at www.eastbayinnovations.org

EAST BAY INNOVATIONS

The INsight

WHAT’S NEW? ~ Tom Heinz, EBI Executive Director

I want to introduce our readers to EBI’s pilot partnership with Cardea Health, taking place at the Project Homekey Oak Days site -- formerly the Days Hotel in Oakland. EBI and Cardea are working, onsite, to address the care needs of previously homeless individuals.

Because of EBI’s success supporting medically frail homeless adults in Alameda County through our Transitional Care Case Management department, we were approached to provide services at Oak Days. EBI, together with Cardea Health, is now serving 40 individuals at this site.

Our consumers at Oak Days range in age from 30-65 years old and are in need of medical respite, caregiving and/or clinical services. All are very low income; many have serious chronic health conditions and limited mobility. On average, they’ve lived on the streets for about five years before coming to Oak Days.

I’m happy to report that since EBI and Cardea Health been working in partnership at Oak Days, residents are experiencing greater stability and a significant reduction in emergency room visits and inpatient hospital admissions. In addition to our public funders, we just received a grant from the Bay Area News Group and East Bay Times “Share the Spirit” fund to partially support this much-needed program.

This newsletter is supported, in part, by Stephen Beard -- an EBI board member, host of the weekly podcast, “Accessible Housing Matters,” and realtor specializing in accessible housing for individuals with disabilities. Check out his podcast episodes at www.AccessibleHousingMatters.com and be sure to listen to the May 31st interview with Tom Heinz! For more information, contact Stephen at www.AccessibleHomesForYou.com.