

BAY AREA OLDER ADULTS (BAO) VIP STORIES, QUOTES AND PHOTOS

Cornel's Story



Cornel is 67 years old, lives in San Jose and is in the forefront of this photo. Cornel, a long time Vista Center client, joined Bay Area Older Adults for a walk around Almaden Lake in March 2019. The walk was led by California naturalist Mike Hundt, who taught us about the birds around the lake as we listened to the bird songs and enjoyed the gurgling of the nearby creek running under the bridge. Cornel said he saw the world in light and shadow and could follow me only because I wore a light-colored shirt. It was a beautiful day to walk on the path around the lake, and Cornel was just happy to be out catching a few rays of sun and learning about the birds in the area. He laughed and joked with us and his fellow VIPs,

charming and joyous even though his world had long gone dark.

Two months later, we saw Cornel for the next walk. As he climbed into the van, I saw him wince as he tucked his feet into the van. When I asked about it, Cornel said he recently had broken his back from a fall, so he was recovering from back surgery and motivated to get outdoors. He enjoyed walking along the rippling creek, learning about the Sycamore trees, touching and feeling their large-sized leaves. Then we went to the Nature Center where he laughed as we put a live snake in his hands. Even though Cornel's eyesight is deteriorating rapidly and his world is getting darker, Cornel is humorous, resilient and an inspiration to everyone who meets him.

Quotes from VIP participants:

"It was a very truly enjoyable the event hosted by Bay Area Older Adults. I felt happy knowing that I would be able participate since I feel locked out of other events that are too physically challenging. I thought the environmental and watershed information provided by Dr Ferguson was fascinating."

"Bay Area Older Adults make for a great group of dedicated professionals. I do not know where else I could get the opportunity to have a healthy walk and explore the watershed and its biology which was explained to be so important to our Silicon Valley. This event for me and my peers was a joyful experience, and I look forward to the next watershed walk event."

"I really liked learning about the plants, what they felt like and the animals, the sounds they make. After all of the exercise from this outing, I am interested in doing more of these next year. My body actually felt better and I was left thinking about how important the rivers, canals and water ways are to our community and livelihood. I appreciate the social recreation. I did not think such a positive experience could be so well facilitated or even available. I hope to have another opportunity to return soon."

Photos

VIPs touching a live snake at McClelland Ranch Visitor Center and a variety of wild animal skulls at Alum Rock park's Youth Science Institute.



Touching and smelling plant life at Sunnyvale Baylands, McClelland Ranch and Almaden Lake parks



A quote from Sergio Alatorre, Vista Center for the Blind Program Manager: “The BAO walking program is big. You created a wonderful outing for blind seniors.”