

*Dining*  
IN THE *Dark*

**Friday,**  
**March 6th, 2026**  
Luigi's Warehouse

**BENEFITING**



Valley Center for the Blind

# *Timeline*

*6:00 PM*

## **Cocktail Hour**

Test your senses with blind wine tasting, silent auction, cornhole and much more! Be sure to talk to our puppy raiser friends from Guide Dogs of America!

*7:00 PM*

## **Wine Reveal and Event Opening**

*7:15 PM*

## **Dining in the Dark**

A four-course dinner consisting of:  
Two opening courses blindfolded  
Family-style main course  
Dessert

*8:00 PM*

Dinner Reveal and Organization Overview

*8:30 PM*

## **Special Guest, Gabriella Bigler**

Artist, Athlete and Advocate

*9:30 PM*

**Close of Silent Auction and Announcement of Raffle Winners**

Welcome,

We are delighted to bring our signature event, Dining in the Dark, back to Bakersfield for another year. These evenings we have shared are all about gaining perspective and exploring possibilities- and your participation makes it all possible.

There is an undeniable ongoing need for people living with blindness to have access to specialized services, support, and employment. At Valley Center for the Blind, we are so grateful to get to serve our community as the only blindness focused agency in Kern, Tulare, Kings, Fresno, and Madera Counties.

This organization is special – we are dedicated to helping people who are often overlooked, forgotten, and hopeless. It has been a great privilege serving Kern County and beyond for so many years and our programs for people who are blind and have low vision are in demand now more than ever. We dream of a world where people who are blind or have low vision have exceptional opportunities to flourish and together, with your support, we are taking meaningful steps towards that big dream.

With innovation, collaboration, and determination, VCB is keeping our attention on our mission – helping the men, women, and children of all ages who would benefit from services that are compassionate, effective, and modern. Together, we can make this a better world, enhancing the lives of one unique person at a time.

Warmly in service to our community,

*Shellena J. Heber*

Shellena Heber  
Executive Director



# Gabriella Alexis Bigler

Valley Center for the Blind is excited to have Gabriella Alexis Bigler, a 17-year-old nationally ranked adaptive rower and visual artist. She is Junior at Canyon Crest Academy (CCA) and a member of the San Diego Rowing Club since the Fall of 2022. Gabriella was born with aniridia, strabismus, and nystagmus. Despite her conditions, rowing is something that brings her immense joy and satisfaction.



Gabriella has had some memorable highlights in her rowing journey so far. In June of 2025 she competed at the US Rowing Youth National Championships in Sarasota, Florida for the SDRC Youth Women's Team. She and her partner won the National Championship in the Women's Youth Para Inclusive 2x.

Gabriella is also the defending champion at Head of the Charles in the Women's Youth Para Inclusive 2x and the two-time defending champion at the US Rowing SW Championships in the Women's Youth Para Inclusive 2x. This past summer, Gabriella attended the US Rowing Para National Team Selection Camp in Boston and trained with other Para rowers in preparation for the 2025 World Rowing Championships.

While rowing is a very big part of her life, she has always enjoyed using painting as an avenue to express myself. Gabriella was accepted into the prestigious Art Conservatory program at CCA. She is passionate about the creative process and emotional inspiration to decipher an image in her head and bring the image to life on the canvas. Her vision enables her to see the world in a unique way and her art is an avenue to express how she experiences the world around her.

We are thrilled to share Gabriella's personal story with blindness.

# *Board of Directors*

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Executive Director

# *Special Thanks*

## Guide Sponsors

*Mary Trichell*



## **Caterer**

Luigi's Warehouse

Warm gratitude to all our generous silent auction donors including, Jamie Gibson-Barrows, Marvin and Debbie Douglas, Dracaena Wines, Fuel4Ever, House of Talula, Jim Hicks and Company, Laura Goldsmith - Keller Williams Realty, Marilyn Johnson, Aaron and Noelle Kagle, Razor, Trader Joe's and others!

## **Special staff and volunteer thank you to:**

Jill Caviezel  
Abner Calzada  
Madellyn Walker  
Cali Cheek  
Dee Dee Ciorobea

**Big thanks to our dedicated volunteers who brought Dining in the Dark to life!**



Valley Center for the Blind

We support, train,  
and employ people  
who are blind or  
have low vision.

## IMPACT SNAPSHOT

2024-2025

**1931**

Clients served

**68%**

Of VCB employees  
are blind or low  
vision

**26**

VCB clients found/  
retained gainful  
employment

**70%** of people with disabilities in the U.S. who can work, are unemployed. **Your donation** helps blind and low vision VCB clients throughout the Central Valley live independently and gain/maintain employment.



Learn more about us at [myvcb.org](https://myvcb.org)

# Helping our Community



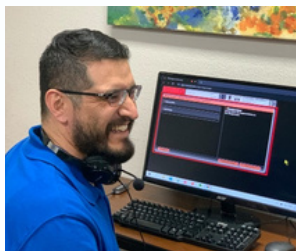
## Training

- Assistive technology
- Braille
- Independent Living Skills
- Orientation & Mobility



## Work Readiness

- Vocational Assessments
- Situational Assessments
- Employment Services
- Adult Work Experience



## Business & Industry Support

- Web Accessibility Testing
- Accessibility Consultations
- Virtual Customer Service Support
- AND MORE!

VCB's services and Workforce Development efforts are nationally-recognized in our field, thanks to the generosity of partners like you! Interested to learn more about how we can help your business? Give us a call at (661) 865-5115 or visit [myvcb.org](http://myvcb.org).



Contact us for  
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needs

Website: [mechanicsbank.com](http://mechanicsbank.com)  
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The VCB Team  
appreciates  
our friend,  
Mary Trichell,  
for her  
continued  
support for  
the Central  
Valley's blind  
and low vision  
community.



**Proud to support Dining in the Dark!**

We're all made for more. More possibility. More transformation. More partnering to build healthy families and futures. That's why Adventist Health Kern County is proud to support the Valley Center for the Blind and its inspiring mission. Because when our community is flourishing, we can all experience more.

[AdventistHealthKernCounty.org](http://AdventistHealthKernCounty.org)



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program. Thank you very much for  
your continued support.**



Valley Center for the Blind