

HEAD/TALES

Newsletter



of the
Brain Injury Center of Ventura County

Our Mission is to improve the quality of life for people living with a brain injury and their families throughout Ventura County

3rd Quarter 2010 - September

Coordinated by BI Survivor Lee Staniland

This edition of our Newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Rex Wells. Rex was one of our founding members along with his wife Linda (who is a brain injury survivor and an active member of our organization). Rex was currently serving as a member of our Board of Directors. His dedication, commitment and compassion to our mission were awe-inspiring and he is missed dearly.

A NOTE FROM LEE STANILAND

I would like to tell you about the man that wrote our Survivor's Story. He is a veteran who I met on Facebook through another friend of the Brain Injury Center. We are going to have many more of these brave men and women returning home to us who will be in the same shape as Victor. I just pray that they will all have the same attitude as this brave man does. He has learned so much in his short time of being a TBI person, and I am so proud that he has become my friend.

Victor Medina, is a veteran of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. He has shared some of his thoughts with us - you can read more at www.vmedina@tbiwarrior.com. His story will highlight the life-long challenges faced by all of BI survivors - but also his courage and determination. We continue our efforts here in Ventura County to reach out to our veterans and their families.

BECOMING A TBI WARRIOR

By: Victor Medina

I am a three times veteran having served two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. I am a Purple Heart recipient. Throughout my deployment, I have been in multiple enemy engagements, including bomb explosions. On June 29, 2009 at 9am I was on patrol in the city of Nazariyah, Iraq when my vehicle was struck by an Explosive Formed Projectile (EFP) penetrating part of the armor. It was at that specific moment that I sustained the Traumatic Brain Injury that changed my life. It caused loss of consciousness among many other issues that are still present. Also, with my injury I developed a speech fluency problem.

I learned throughout my recovery some factors that are the keys to a successful healing. These factors are: striving to always maintaining the independence, getting knowledgeable about the condition, having a strong support network and compassionate providers, setting goals, maintaining spirituality and motivation, setting specific goals, and getting ample amount of rest. As a Traumatic Brain Injury survivor, I did not learn this by myself, it was a combination of my family, friends, providers, and I. At the early stages everything was very difficult to do. All things were so hard that it was easier to use the injury as a crutch instead of trying. It started to affect my social life, i.e. my family and friends. I did not want to go anywhere or do anything. I felt embarrassed when going out in public. As time progressed everything became easier and motivation kicked in.

I turned my injury into a positive mission, to bring Brain Injury awareness and education. Maintaining coherence and finding words was a challenging task, but I noticed that the more I wrote the easier it got. Today I have a webpage (www.tbiwarrior.com) promoting awareness. I have been interviewed by different media networks, newspapers, and Congressmen. The mission is getting accomplished. The community is listening.

Please remember that you are in control of your rehabilitation. Motivation is a cycle: a provider gets motivated by having a motivated patient and the patient gets motivated by having a motivated provider. Do not isolate yourself, involve your family and friends. You are not alone in the healing process. There are many that care about you. Try your best: don't let yourself down. And most importantly remember: **IT WILL ALL GET BETTER.**

Making sense of this situation...

The following is an excerpt from the blog written by Roxanne Medina, Victor's wife.

You can follow her journey as a family member and caregiver at
<http://tbiarmywife.blogspot.com/2010/08/making-sense-of-this-situation.html>

Sometimes it is difficult to envision the possibilities and be confident of what it is ahead. I can tell you that even though this past year has been the most challenging year of my life I am confident that it will serve for a purpose. "What a year", that is a phrase I could say all the time and instead I always say "What a journey". Why do I call it a journey? Think about it, when you travel most of the time you will go to places you have never been, you sleep, eat and visit new places, Right? So, when an injury happens to a loved one you will travel to a new dimension and you are enriched with new experiences. You may say, "But when I travel I plan and enjoy" and Yes that is also a good point but in life I think it is all what you make out of it. I know there are particular situations that joy may not be even part of your experiential dictionary but what you make out of it is what will make you unique and one of a kind.

My dear husband is one of a kind, he transformed his sorrow into a mission, and he conquers his brain injury. As his wife and caregiver, I could inspire him as much as I want but it was up to him to take the opportunity to succeed and I am glad he did. At first like I mentioned before, my husband felt worthless, just imagine a guy that was 24/7 on call, ready for duty, waking up at 4:30 am and working until 7pm or later. He had approximately 60 soldiers and he enjoyed every second of his duty. I never heard a complaint when he had to work long hours or hard work under the Sun or during cold times. He loves to serve this great Nation, he could not imagine doing anything else in life. Even during deployment time we would prepare as much as we could and empowered each other until that day that he would leave and that continue during the whole year long deployment time. What else can I say, now just imagine that guy in a uncertain mode, just going to medical appointment and feeling that he does nothing else other than taking care of his health. This is pretty much very frustrating to those who had an active life with responsibilities.

Now let me share some tips:

Honesty about what you truly feel important to heal, always having in mind that this is a new journey, one that you need to make the best out of it.

Acquire a warrior spirit, conquer your emotions through Faith, Love and Hope.

Proclaim victory over your circumstances. DO NOT stay in the "regretful" mode.

Possibilities are at the reach of your hand, look for new ways to be unique and extraordinary.

Identify the new meaning in your life. How to make sense and transform this that I am experiencing?

Nobody will know how you feel other than yourself, so be courageous and share with others, communicate.

Express gratitude in ALL because it could be worst. Develop a humble spirit because as long as you breathe you are alive.

Silence negative words and thoughts, make them disappear from your mind and spirit. A positive attitude will make you a positive you.

Smile as much as you want. I believe in the power of smiling, not only you feel better but you will inspire others. The smile comes from deep inside the joyful spirit.

You see, I follow these 9 principles and if you noticed I found HAPPINESS. I am sharing so you have an idea of how I make it through each day. One thing that I am known for is #9. I'm always smiling, I don't care if I do not know the person. A smile will take you a long way, but of course it needs to be sincere.

Remember, "Love and Care but also take care of yourself".

With Love,
Posted by TBI Army Wife

A Note from our President, Dave Wilk Telling our story...

One of the Brain Injury Center's important goals is to increase public awareness about brain injury in Ventura County. We are as active as we can possibly be in conducting programs or giving speeches in front of groups and organizations. In this past month we've told our story before gatherings in Westlake Village, Simi Valley, Ventura and Ojai.

We have an active group of brain injury survivors who participate in each and every one of these programs. Lee Staniland, Jon Davies, Tyler Sutton and Gina Bartiromo participated in the recent programs and every one of them did a terrific job. Usually Joan Moore or I introduce the program and talk about brain injury in general and what BIC does in the community -- but the real "star of the show" is the survivor, who tells his or her personal story about living with a brain injury.

Recently the Toastmaster's Club of Ventura invited us to attend their meetings to learn more about public speaking so that our survivors could improve their techniques and gain confidence. They could not be more welcoming or supportive and we have gained much from getting to know them. Toastmasters has local clubs all over the county (all over the nation, in fact) and I have no doubt that all of them would welcome brain injury survivors who want to learn more about public speaking. An extra benefit is the sense of accomplishment and boosted self-esteem survivors get from being active in our speaking program.

Rotary clubs in Ventura County have been particularly responsive to hosting our programs, but we want to speak about brain injury wherever there is a group interested in community issues. If you have connections with a church, school, service group or any other kind of group, please let them know about us...and be sure to give us their contact information, as well. This is important! And, I assure you, that no group is ever disappointed: our presentations are interesting, entertaining, poignant and very meaningful.

Volunteer Opportunities

If you have a few hours of time each month, or would like to work on a one-time project, we have some great volunteer opportunities open. Why not get a group of your friends together and make a difference. We promise that your soul will be nourished; you will make new friends and have some fun too!

Call our volunteer coordinator and Board member, Cherie Roberts, at 805/985-7595.

On going: 2 hours every other month - help with our Support Groups as a monitor.

One-time - help with our 2010 Cornucopia friendraiser/fundraiser on Sunday October 3rd

Help us coordinate our March 2011 Walk for Thought - we need help brainstorming for the event and the day of the event.

If you are interested in joining our Board or joining one of our committees, you can email us at joan@braininjurycenter.org or give us a call at 805/482-1312.

A note from our Executive Director, Joan Moore

Every place I go I wear my green Brain Injury Center bracelet. This sparks many a conversation, and I am always eager to talk about our mission. We continue to make connections and foster collaborations with community leaders and service providers.

We know that living with a brain injury is challenge enough. Families and survivors do not need the added stress of finding appropriate, available and needed services. We continue to challenge ourselves with better ways to steam-line appropriate care - be it medical, social, supportive, therapeutic or rehabilitative. We make available information, education and support. We know that different services are needed at various times along the continuum of care for survivors and their families. Please call our office at 805/482-1312 to set up an intake interview and learn more about what we do.

Our office is located on the campus of the Camarillo Health Care district, specifically in their new *Wellness & Caregiver Center of Ventura County*. Their center is dedicated to helping persons navigate through their chronic disease and helping ease the burden of care giving through compassionate support and learning. To learn more about their programs, please call them at 1-800-900-8582.

We have been in dialogue with the Ventura County Medical Agency, specifically their medical director, Dr. Robert Gonzalez, MD. We have shared with him and his amazing team the work we do and how we serve as the gateway to community services throughout Ventura County for brain injury survivors and their families.

On the following pages is information about our upcoming monthly workshops and classes. Our Professional Advisory Council guides us in our all of our programming and services.

Also in this Newsletter is an invitation to our upcoming Friendraiser/Fundraiser. This is a crucial funding vehicle for us - along with the grants we receive from private foundations - and is essential to our continuing ability to provide help to brain injury survivors and their families living in Ventura County. We hope you can join us. If you are unable to attend, we do accept individual donations on our web page - www.BrainInjuryCenter.org.

Brain Injury Survivor Support Groups and Social Program

We offer support groups for brain injury survivors and family members. Our survivor support groups are unique, in that, besides the traditional supportive environment, an educational component is highlighted at each meeting. The survivor support groups are facilitated by a cognitive rehab specialist, and the family groups are peer-to-peer led. We also offer a social opportunity once a month for brain injury survivors that offers fun, social interaction.

We offer support groups in Ventura, Camarillo and Santa Paula.

Our support groups and social program are free of charge; however, you must pre-register by calling 805/482-1312.

Workshops

Experts in their field present all of our workshops. The topic will change each month, but the main theme is "living with a brain injury". Unless specifically stated, all workshops are open to brain injury survivors, families, caretakers and professionals. Preregistration is mandatory for all workshops, and for some workshops, the size is limited and there are specific participation requirements. The dates and the summary of each workshop are below. All of the workshops are free of charge. Specific registration and participation instructions are listed under each title. The location for all workshops is the campus of Camarillo Health Care District - 3687 E. Las Posas, Bldg H, Camarillo.

Learning and Memory with a Brain Injury

Date and Time: September 21 (T) 6pm-7:30pm

Presenter: Erik Lande, PhD

Registration: call 805/482-1312 to register

Brain injury, whether caused by trauma, stroke, illness or tumor, can affect memory and learning skills in many different ways. During this presentation, we will explore the steps of the memory process and the various ways that brain injury can affect memory. We will also learn some basic techniques and strategies to address memory difficulties, specifically focusing on matching the memory strategy to the specific type of memory difficulty.

Your Dependent with Special Needs: Making Their Future More Secure

Date and Time: October 19 (T) 6pm - 7:30pm

Presenter: Helen Kim-Bass, ChFC

Registration: call 805/482-1312 to register

Families with dependents with special needs, no matter what the age or disability, face many serious questions about how to best prepare for their future well-being. This workshop addresses such critical issues as protecting government benefit eligibility for Supplemental Security Income (SSI), creating Special Needs Trusts and the importance of a Will. Taking steps now can help arrange for a loved one's well-being today and tomorrow.

Self Care and Stress Management for Family Caregivers

Date and Time: November 16 (T) 6pm-7:30pm

Presenter: Lisa J. Hayden, PsyD

Registration: call 805/482-1312 to register

Caring for someone with a traumatic brain injury is a challenging endeavor. Taking care of yourself in order to have the stamina to be a good caregiver can be even harder. We will explore what we know about the stresses of caregiving and how that may negatively affect your own physical and mental health. This interactive class will help you to assess your personal stressors and come up with a plan of action to help you take care of you, so that you can be the most effective at what you need to do.

Interpersonal Relationships and Dating Skills for Brain Injury Survivors

Date and Time: 12 week session beginning October 1 (F) 3:30pm-5pm

Presenter: Lisa J. Hayden, PsyD and Joanna R. McLean, BA

Registration: This workshop is limited in size to eight brain injury survivors who are over the age of 18 and single. Pre-screening and registration - call 805/701-7206

If you have a brain injury, it can be a challenge to re-build different aspects of your life. Would you like to date, but are uncomfortable asking someone out? How can you tell if someone is interested in joining you on a date? Or even whom to ask? Learn how you get to know someone and how to engage in conversations. This twelve-week workshop will use role-playing and skills training with both professional and peer feedback to help you strengthen your social skills. The class is limited to eight committed participants with consistent access to transportation.



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CONTACT: CHERIE ROBERTS 805.985.7595

The Brain Injury Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization - tax ID# 77-0491413

----- Please return this section in the enclosed envelope with your payment -----

\$70 per person - Please list your guests on the back.

Yes, I will be attending and my check for _____ ticket(s) at \$70 ea. is enclosed.

Yes, I will be attending and my check for _____ table(s) of ten at \$700 ea. is enclosed.

I am unable to attend, but have enclosed a contribution of \$_____

Make checks payable to- **Brain Injury Center**

Mail to- **P.O. Box 1477, Camarillo CA. 93011**

To ensure your reservation, please mail this form by **September 24**

Please bill my: ___ **Master Card** ___ **Visa Card** (For the above ticket(s)/table(s)/contributions)

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Expiration Date _____ **CVV2 Code** (3 digit code on back of card) _____

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