According to the CDC, an estimated 2.5 million people in the U.S. sustain a traumatic brain injury every year. Pentagon figures published in an August 2015 Congressional Research Service report indicated that more than 300,000 service members suffered a TBI from 2001 through the first quarter of 2015, of which nearly 8,000 were severe or penetrating TBI. According to the New York Times, one in three NFL players are affected by head trauma.

Many of those who survive a brain injury, whether due to stroke, falls, infection or trauma, will benefit from the assistance and support of a family member or friend. Family members and friends of loved ones who have sustained a brain injury are frequently unprepared for their new role as caregivers. Many people may not define themselves as caregivers even though they are providing assistance and support. Caregiving can include activities such as housekeeping or personal care, as well as emotional support such as listening and companionship. On average, caregivers spend 20.4 hours per week providing care. Those who live with their care recipient spend 39.3 hours per week caring for that person, according to The National Alliance for Caregiving.

The impact of a brain injury on families and caregivers is immense. Caregivers’ lives are affected in many ways, including physically, psychologically and financially. The stresses that a caregiver can be burdened with can cause burnout and a decline in health and quality of life.

The vast majority of caregivers for people who have sustained a brain injury are unpaid; however, the time and energy they spend taking care of their loved ones is priceless. While we’re spending time this holiday season watching football or celebrating with loved ones, let’s remember to take time to thank the people in our lives who have helped us get to where we are today. Whether that person is someone who helps us get out of bed in the morning or takes the time to listen when we need someone to talk to, their assistance is extremely valuable and does not go unnoticed.

Many of those who survive a brain injury, whether due to stroke, falls, infection or trauma, will benefit from the assistance and support of a family member or friend. Family members and friends of loved ones who have sustained a brain injury are frequently unprepared for their new role as caregivers. Many people may not define themselves as caregivers even though they are providing assistance and support. Caregiving can include activities such as housekeeping or personal care, as well as emotional support such as listening and companionship. On average, caregivers spend 20.4 hours per week providing care. Those who live with their care recipient spend 39.3 hours per week caring for that person, according to The National Alliance for Caregiving.

Caregiver Support

The Brain Injury Center’s TeleREACH program is a family caregiver intervention program to improve self-care and assist with daily issues caregivers may face in supporting loved ones with a brain injury. The evidence-based program offers 12 structured support sessions to family caregivers, 11 of which are offered as phone sessions. The sessions target individual caregiver needs, as well as help them develop adaptive strategies to meet their personal goals and deal with challenges in the caregiver-survivor relationship. Individually focused support plans are developed through discussion and input from their survivor.

The outcome goal of TeleREACH is to provide family caregivers with additional knowledge and skill sets for caring for their loved ones, while reducing caregiver burnout and increasing overall life satisfaction for the caregiver.
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
Donna Davies, President, BIC Board of Directors

Recently I was sitting outside waiting for the stars to become visible. I took a seat to get comfortable while keeping watch. Suddenly I thought about a night 23 years ago when I looked at the same sky, looking for the same stars, just so I could make a wish, have a sign.

Twenty-three years ago my 19-year-old son had an accident when hit by a car while riding his motorcycle. He was strong, confident, and intelligent. His favorite study was people: his friends, his dates, his family. He could ski the Black Diamond slopes, sky dive, do flips off the diving board. What could ever change his life in less than a second so we would never see this complete Jon again?

As a parent I did not want anything but the facts - What are his chances of living if he does make it through the next three days? What does recovery mean if his brain is so badly damaged? What should we do to help? Where is the best rehabilitation? What will insurance pay? How do I find the most up-to-date information about stopping his seizures? Does everyone struggle with these terrible behavioral changes after brain injury? Twenty-three years and the questions, challenges, unknowns go on and on and on.

It has been a long journey. Today I am privileged to serve as president of a community organization that is a vital presence for people facing the many changes brought on by acquired brain injury. These brain injuries occur after birth and may be the result of a fall, a motor vehicle accident, an aneurism, a stroke, or temporary loss of oxygen to the brain. Brain injury can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere.

It happened to my son, then it mandated a new way of being a family, a mom, a dad, a brother. Heartbreaking changes were required. We lost so much. Yet, we have grown together and know we will always be a family that can and will support our survivor to the best of our ability.

We have not done it without a great deal of support from family, friends, and from a wonderful group of professionals throughout the years. The reason I serve as president today is because I know how important knowledgeable, caring support is when these difficult challenges are faced and new ways of living are required.

The Brain Injury Center continues to offer a place of support through our support groups and individual sessions. We are excited to be partnering with the Ventura County Medical Center Trauma Department and Neuroscience Center of Ventura County to be part of a team of caring professionals available to ensure survivors get the best the community has to offer as they begin living a new life with an acquired brain injury.

The efforts of the Evening of Magical Memories committee, the business sponsors, individual donors and our supporting foundation grants provide us the necessary dollars to work with hundreds of clients each year. The dollars also support our advocacy work throughout the county to increase awareness of acquired brain injury and the subsequent life-long support needed by the survivor and the family caregiver.

More than 95 percent of the care provided to survivors is given by family caregivers. These are the loved ones who make the difference in survivors’ lives. The various programs and resources we provide help stabilize and strengthen the ability of the family to provide this needed care.

When you receive this newsletter the board will be in the midst of finalizing the budget for 2016. We do not receive government funding. We rely solely on private dollars - your dollars. All funds are used to provide the best we can offer to each and every person who comes to us, regardless of their financial situation. As you complete your gift-giving list this year, please remember the vital services we offer to your friends and neighbors who work each day to live a meaningful life after sustaining a brain injury.

When you look up into the night sky and see the stars appearing, know someone, somewhere is looking up and craving an answer - needing support and understanding. Look up and send a prayer their way. Then go ahead and send your gift to make sure we are available with the answers, the support and the understanding.

Bless you all this season. The Brain Injury Center looks forward to a year of growth as we widen our sphere of caring throughout Ventura County.

Support BIC with a generous donation

Thank you!
FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jeanette Marie Villanueva, MPPA

I know what it is like to care for someone you love. It can be emotional, frightening, stressful and exhausting – and worth it.

Some of you may know that my husband has been ill for the past few months. We received good news recently, and life is gradually returning back to normal. I want to thank everyone for being supportive and thoughtful during my leave, especially Chrissy and Alicia, who kept the BIC office and programs moving along. I appreciate you and am so grateful to be back.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, an estimated 2.4 million people in the United States sustain a traumatic brain injury and another 795,000 sustain an acquired brain injury annually. For every one of those individuals there is a spouse, mother, father, child or other loved one who takes on the role of caregiver. When a loved one has a brain injury, being a caregiver is your “new normal.” Unlike me, you don’t have the option of being a caregiver for a “thankfully” temporary health condition. Brain injury can evolve into a lifelong health condition that may extend over an individual’s life span. We can help with support, referral and resources and provide a sense of community. Our TeleREACH Program provides one-to-one support for caregivers over the phone with a Brain Injury Specialist focused solely on your needs. We are here for your survivor, and for YOU, too.

We are excited about the significant progress made with the partnership between the Neuroscience Center of Ventura County, Ventura County Medical Center Trauma Department, and the Camarillo Health Care District’s Wellness and Caregiver Center of Ventura County. The partnership will fill a much-needed gap in Ventura County healthcare by providing a continuity of care for ABI survivors from immediate post trauma to rehabilitation to a safe transition back to their homes and communities.

As you will see from the coverage in this issue, “An Evening of Magical Memories” was a thorough success, and once again broke all fundraising records. Congratulations to Linda Wells and Bill and Elise Kearney – you inspired us. To Dotti Oliver and the Fundraising Committee, a sincere thank you for your hard work. It was a magical evening!

As we head into the holidays and a new year, I am thankful for the many people that help provide direction and support to the Brain Injury Center of Ventura County. Our Board of Directors make important decisions to keep us moving forward and well positioned for the future, the Professional Advisory Council provides insight into the needs of our survivors and caregivers, and the countless volunteers make our accomplishments possible. We appreciate your important roles with the Brain Injury Center of Ventura County and wish you a wonderful and safe holiday season!

Our Mission
Our mission is to raise awareness, provide support and resources to survivors and caregivers, and improve the quality of life for those impacted by brain injury.
Adopted by the BIC Board of Directors - December 2014

PROGRAM UPDATE
Chrissy Riley, Brain Injury Specialist

In 2016, we are excited to offer our Ventura County Brain Injury Conference as a series of workshops provided at different locations throughout the year!

We listened to your feedback and are pleased to be able to have presentations addressing a variety of topics. These presentations will take place throughout Ventura County at different times during the week so more people will be able to attend the sessions that interest them.

Some of our upcoming presentations will include: ABC’s of Special Needs Planning Made Easy by the Special Needs Project and Executive Function and Enhancing Community Re-Entry Following Traumatic Brain Injury by Marsha Zak, PhD-CCC, Speech-Language Pathologist and member of the Brain Injury Center’s Professional Advisory Council.

Stay tuned to the newsletter and website for more information on our upcoming conference series: Surviving-Striving-Thriving with Acquired Brain Injury.
Caregiving during the holidays

By Dr. Erik Lande, Ph.D., Neuropsychologist

So, it’s coming upon that time of year, when everyone is supposed to be happy, relaxed and of good cheer. There are a lot of wonderful things about the holidays, but there are also a lot of challenges.

While many feel overwhelmed enough with their lives without the holidays thrown in, research has shown that people in the United States tend to find their stress increases during the holidays. The hustle and bustle of the season, and the strong desire to make holidays the best we can for our families results in not caring for ourselves. Instead, to cope we retreat to comfort eating, too much television watching and other unhealthy behaviors.

Now, think about being a caregiver to a brain injury survivor in addition to the normal holiday stress. Caregivers may fear they will not be able to participate in the festivities as much as they might like because of caregiving duties. They may feel somewhat isolated and that other family members are not supportive and do not understand the caregiving situation. They often fear that perhaps the excitement and change will be too stressful for their loved one, and as a result may avoid activities and become further isolated.

A main fear is that all of the excitement and change in routine will be overwhelming for the brain injury survivor. They may appear to be enjoying things initially, but caregivers are always on edge anticipating the development of fatigue and agitation. To handle this issue, the most important step is to be aware of the survivor’s energy levels and watch how they are responding. Some will be resilient and happy. Others may become irritable and withdrawn. For some survivors, it may be more enjoyable for the caregiver and the survivor to sit and reminisce about holidays while focusing on quiet activities. Recall that long-term memory is often stronger for the brain injury survivor, so doing things such as looking at photo albums of past holidays, taking a stroll to look at Christmas lights, or unpacking holiday decorations can be enjoyable.

When attending events, it will be helpful to plan for possible holiday fatigue. This may be as simple as taking short breaks in a quiet area of the house, away from the excitement. Along those same lines, for some survivors it may be more appropriate to have a visit room, a quiet room where the survivor can sit and let others in limited numbers visit them for short periods. It can be a nice and intimate situation for the survivor. It also will be important to remember that it is OK to skip some activities and focus on the ones that are more meaningful. Remember the holidays are about enjoying the person you love, not just being their caregiver.

The last, likely most important part of being a good caregiver during the holidays is caring for yourself. If we do not care for ourselves, how can we appropriately be there for our loved one? Keys here include maintaining awareness of your own fatigue level and taking breaks as needed. It is also important to be willing to adapt. This may include being willing to give up past traditional roles, such as being host of the holiday party, or by cutting attendance at events short if the survivor, or you, have had enough. Finally, caregivers need to practice self-compassion. Caregivers by nature are compassionate, warm and caring towards others. Caregivers understand that survivors and others can fail or make mistakes, but do not judge them harshly. Self-compassion means being willing to direct that compassion towards ourselves. This can be difficult as caregivers tend to focus on perfection. Caregivers need to admit that they can fail and make mistakes, and that this is simply part of life. When caregivers accept that they are human and fallible, it will be easier to continue to have compassion towards themselves and others and be successful as caregivers.

Happy Holidays!
Tips for family caregivers

By Camilla Seippel, Clinical Program Consultant

Family caregivers play an important role in helping their loved ones recover from a traumatic brain injury. However, caring for a TBI survivor can be a long-term commitment. Since many caregivers typically put themselves last on their list, we have compiled a few tips to keep in mind.

After experiencing a brain injury, changes in behaviors or emotions, outbursts and uncharacteristic remarks are likely. Social isolation, apathy and difficulties in controlling impulsiveness also may occur. Try not to take it personally.

Reward yourself periodically with short breaks. Designate time away from the survivor to help reduce stress. Schedule time for relaxing activities like reading, walking and listening to music. The Brain Injury Center’s TeleREACH program emphasizes teaching effective stress management techniques, and how to incorporate them into daily routines.

Be sure to get plenty of rest. Get at least eight hours of sleep and take naps. Rest every time you have an opportunity. Exercise and keep active. It helps relieve stress, improves sleep, reduces depression and increases your energy level. It also will improve your mood and benefit your overall health.

Remember, you are not alone. Spend time with others to ensure you don’t feel isolated. Visit with friends and take part in social activities. Attend the Brain Injury Center’s socials for survivors and caregivers. Educate yourself about acquired brain injury so you understand what your survivor may be experiencing.

Learn to recognize the symptoms of caregiver stress: anxiety, depression and frustration. Seek support and resources. Ask the Brain Injury Center to identify resources and services for you and your loved one.

Take advantage of the resources available to you, such as family and friends who are willing to help and the Brain Injury Center of Ventura County’s support groups and TeleREACH program for caregivers. For more information, contact Camilla Seippel at camilla@braininjurycenter.org.

Camilla Seippel received her undergraduate degree from the University of Tampa and her Master’s degree in Psychology from Antioch University, and is completing requirements toward her Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology. She also holds a Brain Injury Certification from the BIAA.

Keep us in mind while shopping this holiday season

AmazonSmile is a simple automatic way for you to support BIC every time you shop, at no cost to you. On your first visit to smile.amazon.com you will need to select Brain Injury Center to receive donation from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Smile.amazon.com will remember your selection, then every eligible purchase you make at smile.amazon.com will result in a portion of the purchase price being donated to BIC.

The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County is now enrolled in Ralph’s Community Contribution Program. All you need to do is follow the easy steps on our website, braininjurycenter.org, under the Get Involved tab to link your Ralph’s Reward Card with the Brain Injury Center when you shop, and Ralph’s will donate a percentage of your bill to the Brain Injury Center. It’s a free and easy way to make a difference in the lives of survivors of acquired brain injury.

Purchase gift certificates, enjoy a great meal or gather for happy hour this season and Mission Oaks Café will graciously donate five percent of each receipt to the Brain Injury Center. Just write, “Brain Injury Center” on the receipt and drop it in the jar by the door. Mission Oaks Cafe is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and is located at 5227 Mission Oaks Blvd. in Camarillo in the Von’s shopping center on the corner of Mission Oaks Boulevard and Woodcreek Road.
Magic was definitely in the air Saturday, Sept. 26, when the Brain Injury Center of Ventura County hosted its 4th annual "An Evening of Magical Memories."

The evening began with a champagne reception and silent auction with items including locally produced art, excursions and much more followed by a dinner, awards and a raucous live auction led by Richard and Bonnie Atmore that raised more than $11,000.

Community Service Award Honorees Bill and Elise Kearney shared moments in their lives that led to their lasting and generous support of the Brain Injury Center. Guests also were treated to a moving speech by the Brain Injury Center’s Survivor honoree Linda Wells, who told of her past life, her accident and her “new” life. She shared memories that spoke to all in attendance. Dr. Forest Hsu, a neurosurgeon from the Neuroscience Center of Ventura County provided an informative presentation on acquired brain injury.

The event team, led by Dotti Oliver, created an elegant, memorable evening while keeping costs at a minimum, evidenced by net proceeds of more than $72,000, which set a record for this event.

"These funds will allow the Brain Injury Center to increase the programs offered to survivors, caregivers and families living with brain injury," Oliver said. “It would not have been possible to raise this much money without the generous support of our sponsors, our donors and all those in attendance.”

The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County is a nonprofit organization and does not receive state or federal funding, and An Evening of Magical Memories is the largest fundraiser of the year.
Support Groups

BIC offers these programs at no charge. Please contact the office before attending for the first time.

CAMARILLO
1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month
4:00-5:30 pm
AlmaVia of Camarillo
2500 N. Ponderosa Drive, Camarillo
Survivor and loved one’s group held concurrently

OXNARD
2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month
2:00-3:30 pm
St. John’s Regional Medical Center
1600 N. Rose Ave., Oxnard
Survivor and loved one’s group held concurrently
Enter through main/front entrance

OXNARD
GRUPO DE APOYO EN ESPAÑOL
Primero y Tercer miércoles de cada mes
2:00-3:30 pm
En la Sain John’s Hospital de Oxnard
1600 N. Rose Ave., Oxnard
Los sobrevivientes, la familia y los cuidadores están invitados a participar en este grupo de apoyo gratuito.
Entrar por entrada principal

VENTURA
2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month
4:00-5:30 pm
Bible Fellowship Church
6950 Ralston, Bldg. #300, Ventura

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
One hour sessions are available for either brain injury survivors and/or family members. Referrals and support to promote physical and emotional health and well-being are offered. Appointments are required. Please contact the office for more information.

SOCIAL GATHERING FOR BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS AND LOVED ONES
Activities are offered periodically – an opportunity to have some fun. Call (805) 482-1312 or email info@BrainInjuryCenter.org to express your interest.

Upcoming Holiday Activities

Join BIC on Thursday, Dec. 17 as we stroll through one of Ventura County’s largest holiday light displays in Oxnard’s Historic District. Stop for cookies and hot cocoa at the home of our Executive Director’s parents and meet with friends and family between 6 and 8 pm. Holiday light displays can be seen from 6 to 10 pm on Christmas Tree Lane (F and G streets, between 5th and Palm streets in Oxnard).

Other holiday events will include gatherings at Ventura Harbor Village and a social activity in Camarillo. Please call (805) 482-1312 or check out our Facebook page for more information.

The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County wishes each of you a very happy and healthy holiday season!

Trabajadora de Salud Caregiver Intervention

Dr. Kristen Linton, an Assistant Professor, in Health Science at California State University, Channel Islands is piloting an in-home, family focused, lay health work intervention designed for Latinos with traumatic brain injuries, Trabajadora de Salud, funded by the Solution Focused Brief Therapy Association.

According to previous research, Latinos with TBIs are less likely to receive rehabilitation and return to work in addition to experiencing worse functional and psychological outcomes. Caregivers of Latinos with TBIs also are more likely to experience caregiver burden. The trabajadoras, trained bilingual lay health workers, aimed to improve these outcomes among the patients and their caregivers. Participants were visited between four and 12 times as needed over the span of three months. Visits primarily focused on providing empathy and validation for TBI symptoms and addressing patients’ unique needs with particular attention to meeting basic needs, such as housing and transportation. The trabajadoras also supported goal-setting and aimed to improve communication between the participant and healthcare providers.

Preliminary data has found that participants who received intervention improved their self-reported functional abilities, depression and somatic symptoms as well as caregiver burden compared to those in a control group, who only received a phone call. A surprising finding was that caregivers reported higher depression and somatic symptoms at the pre-survey than the patients. Thus far, receipt of the intervention has been associated with a greater decrease in depression and somatic symptoms among caregivers than patients.

Additionally, there have been some barriers to health care among participants. Five out of the six participants had not received rehabilitation at the start of the intervention and had Medical insurance or no insurance. The Trabajadora de Salud intervention was unable to make a difference in the receipt of rehabilitation among these participants since most rehabilitation centers require private insurance.

The pilot and future research will continue to explore this issue further and confirm other findings. If you know any Latinos with TBIs who may be interested in participating in the study, please contact Kristen Linton at (805) 437-3757 or Kristen.linton@csuci.edu. Se habla Español.

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The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County offers several ways to stay engaged and informed.

Join us at our monthly social.
Check our website calendar for details!

www.facebook.com/eveningofmagicalmemories
www.facebook.com/BrainInjuryCenter


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Surviving-Striving-Thriving with Acquired Brain Injury
VENTURA COUNTY BRAIN INJURY CONFERENCE SERIES

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The ABC’s of Special Needs Planning Made Easy
By Special Needs Project
Tuesday, Feb. 9, 2016, 6:30-8 p.m. (Location: TBD)
Learn about special-needs trusts, wills, guardianship and conservatorship, Medi-Cal/Medicare, as well as budget planning to protect and provide for those with special needs. It will be informative and educational for parents, caregivers and professionals.

Executive Function: Enhancing Community Re-Entry Following TBI
By Marsha Zak, PhD-CCC
Tuesday, March 8, 2016, 6:30-8 p.m. (Location: TBD)
Marsha G. Zak, Ph.D., CCC-SLP has specialized in the management of neurogenic disorders for the past 22 years in acute care, rehabilitation, sub-acute care, post-acute care, and ventilator dependent facilities. She has extensive expertise with traumatic brain injury and its effects on cognitive communicative functions.

Please check our website for more information!