



MIND MATTERS

Prevention • Support • Education • Advocacy

A Continuing Journey Fueled by Family, Humor and a Hopeful Attitude

By Doris Andrechak and Zsche Navarre

IT WAS SPRING 1979. TWENTY-three-year-old Patrick Hietter was living the good life. His job as an apprentice lineman for Columbus Southern Power paid well and offered a good future. Then one rainy morning, in just in a matter of minutes, his life irrevocably changed.

While driving to work, Patrick lost control of his car and hit a cement barrier head-on. He was not wearing a seatbelt and was traveling at fairly high speed. Patrick suffered multiple injuries including a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Twenty-nine years later,

Patrick still wishes he could thank the stranger, a medic who served in Vietnam, who stopped to help while he waited for an ambulance.

Patrick was in a coma for several weeks and in the hospital for several months. He had several broken bones, a ruptured spleen and a severe TBI. For several weeks he struggled for life. “I literally died five times,” he notes. His father remembers him becoming so thin and frail, that “if he turned side-wise



TBI Survivor Patrick Hietter with his father, Joe Hietter

you might not see him.”

Just seven months after his accident, Patrick tried returning to his job. Given the severity of his brain injury, it is not surprising that it did not work out. Problems with short-term memory, initiation and

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*Let's
Have
a
Ball!*

BIAWA Announces 2008 Annual Fundraising Dinner and Auction

THE SECOND ANNUAL FUNDRAISING GALA AND AUCTION TO SUPPORT the Brain Injury Association of Washington will be held Friday, September 19 at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Seattle. The theme of this year's black-tie event is “Let's Have a Ball,” reflecting the association's new partnership with the Seattle Seahawks and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) on the “Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports” awareness campaign. This project works to alert and educate coaches, children, and parents about these potentially devastating yet preventable brain injuries that occur all too frequently in youth athletics.

The Gala keynote will be presented by Dr. Stan Herring, director of the University of Washington's Spine Center and team physician for the Seattle Seahawks and Seattle Mariners.

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TBI survivor recognized by Governor Chris Gregoire



Zach Furney
displays his award

BIAWA MEMBER AND BRAIN injury survivor Zach Furney received the Governor's 2008 Award for Volunteer Service in April. The award was presented

at the Governor's Mansion in Olympia. Zach was nominated by Andrea Wyatt Detrick of the Stanwood-Camano Community Resource Center where Zach

volunteers two days a week.

"Zach is always so friendly and cheerful, and he is such an inspiration to the rest of us," said Detrick.

Zach has been a big help to the Community Resource Center over the past two years. He cleans and sorts books, enters items for inventory on the computer and runs the cash register. Zach also volunteers at the Stanwood Food Bank, and he is employed at the Stanwood Café and the 76 gas station.

In addition, Zach is a student in the Stanwood High School ASSIST program designed to help students with special needs reach academic and vocational goals. His mother, Karen Furney, is the facilitator of the Stanwood Support Group. ■

Heads Up Program

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New Agreement Supports Veterans with TBI

VETERANS WHO SURVIVE A brain injury and their families will benefit from a new partnership between the BIAWA and the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WSDVA). The two organizations will work together to reach the goal of ensuring that all veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI) or their family members who contact the BIAWA are connected with benefits specialists who can guide them through the Federal and State Veterans Benefits process.

On March 25, BIAWA Executive Director Gene van den Bosch and WSDVA Director John Lee signed an agreement to provide veterans and their families with access to and information on all entitlements and services for which they are eligible. BIAWA will modify its intake questionnaire — used when an individual calls the Information and Referral Helpline

— to include the question: “Have you ever served in the Military?”

When callers answer “yes,” they will be asked to give permission for their contact information to be shared with the WSDVA. Contact



BIAWA Executive Director Gene van den Bosch and WSDVA Director John Lee Sign Agreement to Help Veterans with TBI and their Families

information for consenting veterans will be emailed to an appropriate staff member at WSDVA. Callers also have the option of contacting the WSDVA directly through a toll-free number: 1-800-562-2308.

The BIAWA will also form a

Veterans Advisory Board to meet at least twice per year to further explore how veterans, National Guard Members and Reservists are receiving TBI services and whether there are gaps in service that the BIAWA can fill.

Veterans or family members who contact the WSDVA and indicate they are experiencing symptoms of TBI or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which could be caused by TBI, will be referred to the toll-free Washington TBI Helpline. Each caller may then receive further and ongoing guidance and assistance. Veterans and their families will be asked for their permission to forward contact information

to BIAWA staff members with expertise in TBI.

The WSDVA will also recommend individuals to serve on the BIAWA Veterans Advisory Board to ensure the unique needs of veterans are addressed. ■

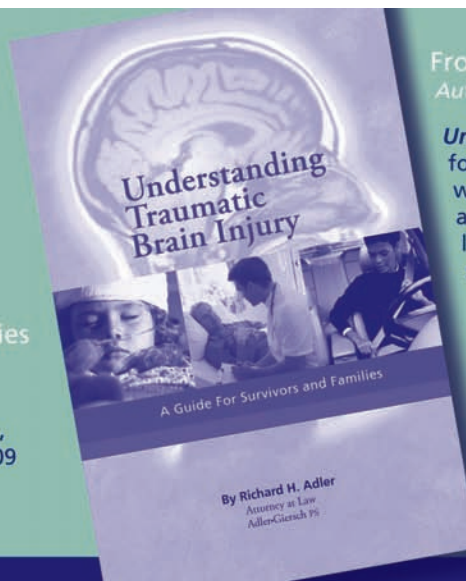
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From Richard H. Adler
Author of Spinal Trauma and the Personal Injury Case

Understanding Traumatic Brain Injury is a free guide for families and survivors, thoroughly explaining what TBI is and how to deal with the ordeal and its aftermath. This guide offers informational, medical, legal, and support services that have a keen understanding of the evaluation, representation, and treatment of TBI. There is help. If you or a loved one would like to know more, please order this Free guide today to learn more about America's silent epidemic and how to cope with it.

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Patrick Heitter

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concentration interfered with his ability to work then, as well as in the years to come. In retrospect Patrick sees that a major obstacle after his injury was his own inability to “recognize my disabilities to the degree everyone around me did.” This is an exceptionally common problem for individuals with brain injuries, and often it is the one thing that makes adjustment to a TBI the most difficult.

Patrick’s good sense of humor and ability to maintain a positive and hopeful attitude about himself and others is notable.

Patrick moved from Ohio to the Northwest about eight years ago, along with his parents who wanted to be closer to some of their children and grandchildren who live in the area. His dad, Joe Heitter, has been involved in Patrick’s recovery from day one; and continues to provide close supervision and support. Joe helps Patrick budget his monthly income; he stays in touch on a daily basis and helps with major purchases and health care appointments. In coping with the challenges, Joe borrows the tried and true adage from Alcoholics Anonymous: “Take one day at a time.”

Patrick’s family has gone the

distance in providing the support he has needed over the years, but also have allowed him to be as independent as possible. Patrick’s good sense of humor and ability to maintain a positive and hopeful attitude about himself and others is notable. Although he is still frustrated by the position he is in, for the most part he says he is able to “accept what has happened, and I try to get as much humor out of it as I can... I continually tell myself “you’re going to do better.”

In addition to coping with his TBI, Patrick has made some serious changes to his life. He has given up alcohol and drugs and has abstained from them for several years. More recently he gave up smoking — again proving that once he puts his mind to something, he stays the course.

Involvement in BIAWA’s support groups has been helpful to Patrick and his dad. Both are valued members of the bimonthly group that meets at Elderhealth in Seattle. Patrick also co-facilitates the Bellevue group and enjoys the opportunity to help others. His father was the one to contact the BIAWA a few years back, but Patrick was reluctant to participate at the time. However, he now looks forward to the groups and feels good about his role as a facilitator.

Patrick is contemplating additional volunteer work to provide a sense of meaning and structure to his days. If he puts his mind to it, there is no doubt that he will find other opportunities in the community to share his humor, care and commitment with others. ■

Auction

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Dr. Kathleen Bell, director of the UW’s Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, and Dr. Peter Esselman, chief of Rehabilitation Medicine at Harborview Medical Center serve as this year’s honorary gala co-chairs. The evening will be emceed by Grant Goodeve, host of KING-TV’s *Northwest Backroads*, and Steve Raible, KIRO-TV news anchor and the “Voice of the Seahawks.”

The 2008 gala also marks BIAWA’s Silver Anniversary. For 25 years, the association has promoted awareness and worked to reduce the incidence of traumatic brain injury by providing information, support services, and advocacy for TBI survivors and their families.

Last year’s event was a resounding success, raising over \$112,000 for the association.

Tickets for the Gala and Auction are \$200 per person. If you are interested in attending, would like to donate an item or unique experience for the live or silent auction, or make an in-kind donation, please call Shannon Fountain at 253-238-6085, or send an email to admin@biawa.org. ■



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BIAWA briefs

DVR Waitlist Eliminated

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) recently announced that the waitlist for services has been eliminated. DVR is now able to serve each person as they come through the door. Those needing help will no longer wait for assistance with job development and other opportunities to reach employment goals.

Arlana Nelsen, vocational rehabilitation counselor, is the Seattle DVR liaison for people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). She explains, "As liaison I can meet with you at your convenience at various locations. As a team we can assist you with obtaining employment in various ways."

Some of the services offered include:

- Educating employers about specific needs, strengths, recommended accommodations.
- Trial work experiences — this will give TBI survivors the opportunity to assess skills at different work sites.

- Job development to fit unique skills and abilities.

- Long-term follow-up to assure successful employment outcome.

"DVR is committed to working with you and the employment community to improve and assist you with your employment possibilities," Arlana said. For more information or assistance, contact: Arlana Nelsen, vocational rehabilitation counselor, 206-273-7114, or Eddi Schumacher, rehabilitation technician, 206-273-7118.

Support Group Planned for Family and Caregivers

Plans are underway for a support group for family members and caregivers in the greater Seattle area. The target date is September 2008. If you are interested, please help us choose a time, place and format that meets your needs.

Contact Doris Andrechak at 206-784-6829 or dorisandrechak@yahoo.com for more information and to share your ideas and preferences. ■

Washington State Heads Up: Concussion in Youth Sports Campaign

BIAWA has joined the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Seattle Seahawks in launching a statewide initiative to distribute multimedia education toolkits to protect middle school and high school athletes from concussion — a serious but often underestimated health threat. A concussion is a brain injury caused by a bump or blow to the head and can change the way a brain normally works. More than 300,000 sports- or recreation-related traumatic brain injuries occur in the U.S. each year.

Visit www.biawa.org for more details and to find links to the Heads Up website where you can order or download toolkits.



Support Groups

For the most up-to-date support group information, including times and locations, please visit www.biawa.org/support.htm.

Bellevue/Eastside: 1st and 3rd Monday of each month, 1:30–3 p.m., St. Louise Catholic Church, Parish Center, 141 156th Avenue SE, Bellevue. Contact: Linda 425-820-0204 or Patrick 425-451-0222.

Bellingham Day: 1st Saturday of each month, 11:15 a.m.–12:45 p.m., Health Support Center, 1210 Indian Street, Bellingham. For further information and first time visitors, contact: Victoria, 360-398-9110.

Bellingham Evening: 4th Monday of each month, 7–8:30 p.m., St. Joseph Hospital, South Campus Rehab Center Conference Room. Contact: Gary Nelson 360-656-6195.

Bremerton/Kitsap: (Two meetings) Second Thursday of each month 3–4:30 p.m., Harrison Silverdale Medical Center, 1780 Myhre Road (flagpole entrance), Silverdale. Fourth Wednesday of each month 4:30–6 p.m., Harrison Green Mountain Rehab Center, 2625 Wheaton Way, Suite A, Bremerton. Contact for both groups: Janice Worman OTR/L 360-475-6480

Lewis County: 1st Tuesday, game night, 5 p.m.; 2nd Tuesday, social group, 5 p.m.; 3rd Tuesday, study group, 5 p.m.; 4th Tuesday, social group, 5 p.m. All meetings at Providence Chehalis Hospital, 500 SE Washington, Chehalis. Contact: Larry Carroll 360-864-4341 or Ann Grabhorn 360-983-3166

Moses Lake: Telephone support only, 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Contact: Rick 509-765-5435

Olympia: 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6–7:30 p.m., Providence St. Peter Hospital Campus, Emilie Gamelin Pavilion, Third Floor Classroom, 410 Providence Lane, Olympia. Contact: Pat Gabrielse at 360-493-4432

Quad Cities: Second Saturday of each month, 9 a.m. Tri State Memorial Hospital, 1221 Highland Avenue, Clarkston. Contact: Deby Smith at 509-758-9661 or biaqcdeby@earthlink.net

San Juan County: Telephone support only, 8 a.m.–6 p.m. Contact: Andrea Simmons: 360-378-9541

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Support Groups

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Seattle: 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month, 3:30–5 p.m., Elderhealth Northwest, 800 Jefferson St., Seattle. Information and first time visitors, please contact: 1-800-523-5438 for information on bus routes, parking and entering the building.

Seattle/Wallingford: 3rd Tuesday of each month, 4–5:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Center, Room 202, 4649 Sunnyside N, Seattle. Contact: Janet Novinger 206-547-2526

Sequim/Port Angeles: 4th Thursday of each month, 4–5:30 p.m., Sequim Library, 630 N Sequim Avenue, Sequim. Contact: Kurt 360-683-8901

Skagit Valley: 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6–8 p.m., Skagit Valley Hospital, 1415 E. Kincaid Street, San Juan Room B (across from cafeteria), Mt. Vernon. Contact: Pam and Ward 360-848-0275.

South Snohomish County: 3rd Thursday of each month, 7 p.m.– 9 p.m., Stevens Hospital, 21601 76th Avenue W, Edmonds. West side of the cafeteria on the 2nd floor of the main hospital building. Contact: Jeff Slater 425-466-0900

Spokane: (3 meetings)
TBI Survivor Support Group: 2nd Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m., St. Luke's Rehabilitation Institute, 711 S Cowley Street, Room 200.

Family & Care Giver Brain Injury Support Group: 4th Wednesday of each month, 7 p.m., St. Luke's Rehabilitation Institute, 711 S Cowley Street, Room 200.

Education-Transition Brain Injury Support Group: For current schedule, please call Gloria or Craig, 509-340-0786 or visit the Spokane Group website at www.biawaspokane.org.

Stanwood/Camano Island/North Snohomish County: 3rd Monday of each month, 6:30–8 p.m., Stanwood Community and Senior Center, 7430 276th Street NW, Stanwood. Contact: Karen Furney 425-268-2934

Tacoma: 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month, 7–9 p.m. at TACID Center, 6315 South 19th Street, Tacoma. Contact: Penny 253-426-5735. Website: <https://home.comcast.net/~tbisg/>

Tri Cities: 1st Wednesday of each month, 7:00 p.m., The Neurological Resource Center, 712 Swift Blvd, #1, Richland. Contact: 509-943-8455 or tncr@kadlecmed.org

Vancouver, WA: 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month, 2 p.m., Disability Resources of Southwest Washington, 2700 NE Andresen, Suite D5, Vancouver. Contact: Cacy Lee

360-694-6790. E-mail: disabilityresources@darsw.com. Website: www.darsw.com

Vancouver: Phone support only. Contact: Kaycie 360-750-6773

Whidbey Island/Coupeville: 1st Monday of each month, 6:30–8:30 p.m., Whidbey General Hospital Board Room. Survivors, caregivers, family members and friends welcome. If you plan to attend, please call Arlene/Allen House at 360-678-5392 or e-mail rwriter2000@comcast.net.

Yakima: 3rd Wednesday of each month, 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Yakima Regional Medical & Cardiac Center, 110 S 9th Avenue, Yakima, 5th Floor Conference Room. Contact: Nancy 509-573-3535. NOTE: This group does not meet in July or August.

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