
◆ Brain Waves ◆

Volume 22 Issue 1

The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

Spring 2006

Once More with Feeling...Uptight

It so happened that some members of the Vocational Adjustment Group (that meets on Tuesdays in Philadelphia, PA) were experiencing situations that caused them to be uptight at the same time, or at odd times during a short span of only a few weeks. It was one of those times, it seemed, that “what goes around comes around.” In a session devoted to a discussion of what it means to be “uptight,” the group members talked about how they felt and explored what to do in search of relief. They began the discussion by first describing the meaning of the word “uptight.” In seeking some kind of relief, at the outset, Howard raised laughter by everyone when he said, “It’s not loose!” He then described being jittery, and how it’s hard not to be when you’re uptight. Jennifer agreed, and said, “You’re aware of everything around you, and you don’t want to be annoyed.” Sam said, “You’re tense,” and Stewart added, “You first feel tension, then you’re agitated, and then you’re all uptight.”

In discussing what causes being uptight, Sam related to his own situation and commented, “It is something you do to yourself.” He then added, “Of course, a situation comes first—sometimes the same one—but only sometimes you’re uptight about it.” Stewart said, “Becoming uptight occurs when you do not know what’s going on around you. It happens when everyone else seems to know, and you have to talk to somebody to find out.”

Stewart’s idea of talking to someone expanded to a discussion of choosing a person to talk to: how to choose a person to talk to and what to look for in the person you choose to talk to. Sam

said, “You should choose someone who will keep things in confidence—someone you trust. The first time a choice is made, maybe you can’t be sure, but when your confidence is kept, you grow in trust of that person.” Howard emphasized, “In addition to trust, you have to feel comfortable with the person when you are with them. You have to be relaxed; that’s how you know you’re comfortable. Then comes trust and confidence in the person.” Sam said the person must be “non-judgmental,” and Rick added, “open-minded.”

Stewart said he asks questions and answers himself about certain things at times, like whether he has been at fault for something. Sam remarked that, while self-questioning is good at certain times, bias can be a problem, and pointed out that another person may be more objective and, therefore, better to provide the answer. Stewart countered by suggesting that a group, such as ours, might be better because there could be more than one point of view, and someone might criticize. All agreed that talking, and *not* holding

(continued on page 2)

Inside this Issue

Upcoming Events..... page 2

Spotlight...

José Sanchez..... page 3

Creativity Corner page 5

Annual Staff Retreat page 6

For Information..... page 7

Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Brandon, Cara, Craig S., Craig T., David, Elizabeth, Kara, Karen, Lori, Robert F., Robert W., Sean, Tracy and William—and also to our new neurorehabilitation specialist—Carol F. “Frankie” Spear, B.A.

Our clients and staff continue to be involved in many interesting, varied activities. We only have space to report on a few in this issue; more will be mentioned in the next issue of *Brain Waves*.

- We received correspondence that Jon, a former client of Community Skills Program, was tonsured a Reader on April 9th by Bishop Tikhon at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Pottstown, PA. Jon has been reading the Epistle and helping direct the choir at Holy Trinity for several years. He has been a choir director in various Orthodox churches since 1973. Jon is currently a full-time electronics sales associate at Staples in Phoenixville, PA.
- Howard was recently honored by his employer by being selected “Employee of the Day.” He was also nominated to be “Employee of the Month.”
- Rami, Howard and Rick participated in panels discussing return-to-work issues, at the regional seminars sponsored by the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc.
- Several of our clients and some of their family members attended the annual seminar of the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, held in Eatontown, May 17-18, 2006.

(continued on page 4)

Upcoming Events

- The 6th Annual Conference of the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc. (BIAPA) will be held on June 25 and 26, 2006 at the Wyndham Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel in Harrisburg, PA. The title of this year's conference is ***Taking an Active Role: Maximizing Opportunities for Quality of Life***. The opening general session, on Sunday, June 25, 2006 at 12:00 p.m., will be presented by Dr. Thomas (Tom) Felicetti, director of Beechwood Rehabilitation Services. Dr. Felicetti will be showing a film entitled "Too Much to Stop," which is a documentary about a woman with Huntington's disease who turned her involuntary movements into artistic expression through dance. The film will be followed by a discussion of how creativity can maximize opportunities for a better quality of life.

Other featured presenters include: Dr. Dave Meaney and Dr. Andrea Laborde from the University of Pennsylvania and University of Pennsylvania Health System, respectively, who will talk about head protection and how to keep one's brain safe; Dr. Tessa Hart, Moss Traumatic Brain Injury Model System, who will share research perspectives on long-term needs after brain injury and how to meet them; and Dr. Ross Zafonte, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, who will speak at the closing session on Biotechnology Advances in the Treatment of Brain Injury.

In addition to the keynote and primary speakers, the one and one half day conference will have concurrent workshops in three tracks: 1) new alternatives in treatment; 2) activism and advocacy; and 3) improving the quality of life. Continuing education units are available.

The Annual Meeting and Awards Dinner will be held on Sunday evening.

For more information about the conference or to register, please call Tina Miletik of the Pennsylvania Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (PARF) at (717) 657-7608 or e-mail her at tmiletik@parf.org.

- The 3rd Annual Creativity Expo will be held July 15 through July 26, 2006 at the Raritan Valley Community College Art Gallery, Route 28 and Lamington Road, North Branch, NJ. The expo is hosted by the Visual and Performing Arts Department of Raritan Valley Community College and will feature the creative works of persons with brain injuries. The Opening and Artists Reception will be held Saturday, July 15th from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. For more information about the expo or if you would like to participate, you can contact Vince Diorio by phone at (609) 397-1048 or (800) 374-0071, extension 220, before 5:00 p.m., or by e-mail at vincentd54@msn.com. Also, you can check out www.geocities.com/braininjuryartsnj for more information on the expo and/or to see photos from last year's show, which featured the works of 25 participants.

- The Joint Conference of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) and the American Society of Neurorehabilitation (ASNR) will be held this year in Boston, MA at the Sheraton Boston Hotel, 39 Dalton Street, Boston, MA 02188 (617/236-8033), Wednesday, September 27 to Sunday, October 1, 2006. The Brain Injury - Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group (BI-ISIG) of ACRM will be holding its functions on Thursday, September 28th; in addition to the "Meet the BI-ISIG" event and Annual General

Business Meeting, the BI-ISIG will host its annual Sheldon Berrol Memorial Chautauqua in memory of Sheldon Berrol, M.D. This year's Chautauqua will be a panel discussion, moderated by Tessa Hart, Ph.D., on the topic of Person-Centered Planning. It promises to be thought-provoking and stimulating. In keeping with the tradition of the Chautauqua, members of the audience will have opportunities to discuss philosophical and ethical issues. Information on the panelists will be included in the next issue of ***BrainWaves***.

For more information on the conference and to see the preliminary program, you can access the ACRM website (www.acrm.org); call the ACRM national office at (317) 915-2250; fax the office at (317) 915-2245; or e-mail to acrm@acrm.org.

If you do plan to go, we suggest you make your hotel reservations immediately, since the hotel block is limited. Single and double rooms are \$199 per night, plus applicable taxes. Please call 1-800-325-3535 and be sure to identify yourself as part of the 2006 ACRM-ASNR Joint Annual Conference. Hope to see you there!

Once More with Feeling...

continued (from page 1)

things in, is the best course of action when you're uptight. They also recommended exercising, seeing a movie, listening to music, walking, and "just doing something," as the way to go when feeling uptight.

Spotlight: José Sanchez



Spotlight: José Sanchez

Spotlight: Please tell us about yourself.

José: My name is José Sanchez. I was born in Puerto Rico. I came to the United States when I was one year old and moved to Massachusetts. I liked sports, the country and the woods around where we lived, so it was pretty nice growing up in Massachusetts. I now live by myself with the help of Community Skills Program—a guy named Kevin. [José is referring to Kevin Wright, M.S., LPC, his neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program.]

Spotlight: Tell us about your living situation.

José: I live by myself in Philadelphia PA, near the Frankford Transportation Center. My place is an efficiency that is very small. It's a pretty nice place. It's kind of quiet, and some of the neighbors are nice and some are really outrageous. It's okay for now, though it is very small.

Spotlight: Tell us about your family.

José: I have a very nice family. They love me and they try to help me in any way they can. I came to live in Philadelphia because my brother was living here and I have many cousins and, now, many friends who live in the

city. I met my former wife in Philadelphia, got married, and had my two daughters. Their names are Lakisha Sanchez and Alexia Sanchez. Lakisha is 15 years old and Alexia is 12. I was married for about 12 years and then I got divorced. My former wife and I have a good, on-and-off relationship—sometimes we get along well and sometimes we don't, but we are connected by our two children.

Spotlight: Is your family supportive of you?

José: My family is very close; being Hispanic, that is how we are. When anyone in the family is “down,” everyone tries to help and, when we are up, we are all up.

Spotlight: What background/training have you had?

José: I went back to Puerto Rico when I was nine years old. My dad had a landscaping business where I learned landscaping and tree surgery. I left school when I was in the ninth grade; I was living in Puerto Rico at that time. From about 1983 until 1988, I worked part-time as a landscaper in my father's business in Puerto Rico. From 1988 until 1989, I worked as a full-time tree surgeon for my father's company.

In 1989, I moved back to Massachusetts and obtained a certificate in culinary arts while in the Job Corps in Massachusetts. I then worked as a full-time prep cook for various restaurants in Massachusetts, including Ponderosa and Holiday Inn. From 1991 until 1999, I worked full-time as a manager for a delicatessen in Philadelphia, PA.

In 1999, I began to abuse drugs and alcohol and was not able to maintain a full-time job. I worked only periodically in some “odd jobs,” including assisting my brother with banquet set-ups. In 2001, I was able to get clean and sober, and I obtained my

General Education Diploma (GED). In May 2004, I obtained full-time employment as a tree surgeon for McFarland Landscape Service.

On December 8, 2004, I fell 50 feet out of a tree in which I was working. I have no recollection of falling. I was taken to the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, where it was determined that I had injured my back; I sustained a fracture of my vertebrae. I had a spinal fusion and remained in acute care until January 15, 2005, when I was discharged to my brother's house. My brain injury was not diagnosed until just before my discharge.

I then went to Magee Riverfront for outpatient occupational, speech, and physical therapies. They provided me with exercise and a home exercise program to build me up.

My back injury gives me pain, especially when it rains. My physical therapy and home exercise program help me strengthen my back, as long as I don't bend or lift too much, or twist.

Spotlight: You have also been in a work hardening program. Tell us about that.

José: In July 2005, I started in the work hardening program at Magee Riverfront, where I had gone for my physical, occupational, and speech therapy. My therapist was Mai-Lin Simmons, B.S., CVE. I enjoyed the work hardening program because I was doing many more exercises and the therapist stayed with me for the entire two hours, rather than working with several people at the same time. I liked the attention and the exercises were harder.

Spotlight: What about driving?

José: I was using public transportation, but once my doctors gave the okay for me to take a driver's evaluation, I made an appointment with MossRehab

Spotlight... continued (from page 3)

Driving School in Jenkintown, PA. I had never been to Jenkintown, PA but Kevin came with me. I had to have someone drive me there; otherwise, I would be driving without a valid license. The evaluation went well and the instructor said that I passed, but that I drove too cautiously. I told him about my back injury and that I was cautious because I did not want to hit a pothole in the road.

Spotlight: What other things did you focus on in preparing to return to work?

José: Initially, I got tired very quickly; I was not used to walking around. I was only able to stand up for about five to seven minutes, sit in a chair for about one-half hour, and ride in a car for about 15 minutes.

I live about two blocks from Frankford Avenue which has all the stores I need for groceries, a laundromat to wash my clothes, clothing stores and a used furniture shop. I was able to walk there and back (a total of five blocks) to get anything I needed, which at first was far enough. As I built up my strength, I was able to walk farther without getting overly tired.

The other thing was that I did not like to be around too many people at one time. Kevin said it might take some time and experience to learn to handle large groups of people, noise, and the stimulation that is part of daily life. As time went by, using public transportation to get to my therapies and to go to many of my extended family's events, I felt better about the noise.

I also forgot things like appointments, had difficulty concentrating on tasks and following directions, and difficulty planning, organizing, and figuring out what to do in certain situations. Now, my attention is much better. I have ways to plan and organize my schedule, and get the things done that I want to.

In March 2006, with the approval of my doctors, I began to look for a part-time volunteer position. With Kevin's help, I went to Frankford Hospital, which is within walking distance of my place. I filled out an application for volunteering. Dr. Laborde and Dr. Marcotte both want to see a specific job description for whatever position is available, before I accept it, to be sure it will not make my back any worse.

Spotlight: When and how did you get involved with Community Skills Program?

José: In February 2005, I met Kevin from Community Skills Program, and Carol as well. [José is referring to Carol Bardsley, M.A., CPCRT, program coordinator for Community Skills Program in Pennsylvania.] Kevin helped me get the place where I live now.

Spotlight: Specifically, how has the staff of Community Skills Program helped you?

José: Kevin helped me in my planning and in using my day-at-a-glance organizer, getting my medications organized (using a weekly medication box) to ensure I take them as prescribed, and helping me set up a system to refill my medications on time. At our team meetings, which Kevin and Carol both attend, we plan and review how everything is going, and we make sure everyone is on the same page.

Spotlight: How do you spend your leisure time?

José: I enjoy reading books, praying, being with my daughters, and going to church. Sometimes it is exhausting being with my two daughters because they are rambunctious and have so much energy.

Spotlight: What are your goals?

José: I want to go back to where I was before, as far as physically. I want the same things as before—a nice home, a nice car, to send my daughters to

college, and some kind of job that will help me continue to make progress.

Spotlight: Do you have any words of wisdom to share with others?

José: Fear is like running on a treadmill—though it keeps you moving, it gets you nowhere. I choose to leave my fear behind and go forward, progressing like this. There's nothing else you can do but go forward. If you go back, there is nothing there; you're just going to go back and stay in the same mindset, staying where it is comfortable. I just pray to God that I can do all things and keep going forward.

[Editor's Note: Many thanks to José's physicians, Dr. Laborde and Dr. Marcotte, and to José's therapists and certified vocational evaluator at Magee Riverfront, for the fine treatment he has received. Gratitude is also expressed for the effective case management services he has been, and is, receiving from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Inc., and for the management of his claim by Kenneth Heffner at American Interstate Insurance Company.]

Update continued (from page 1)

- On May 17, 2006, at the recent annual seminar of the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc., Nina Geier, M.S., M.P.T., PT, ATC, our program coordinator for New Jersey, received a Lifetime Commitment Volunteer Award at the Volunteer Recognition Reception. She has served for many years on the Program Committee and this past year on the Sports Concussion Summit Steering Committee.



Creativity Corner



Word Search: Spring Flowers

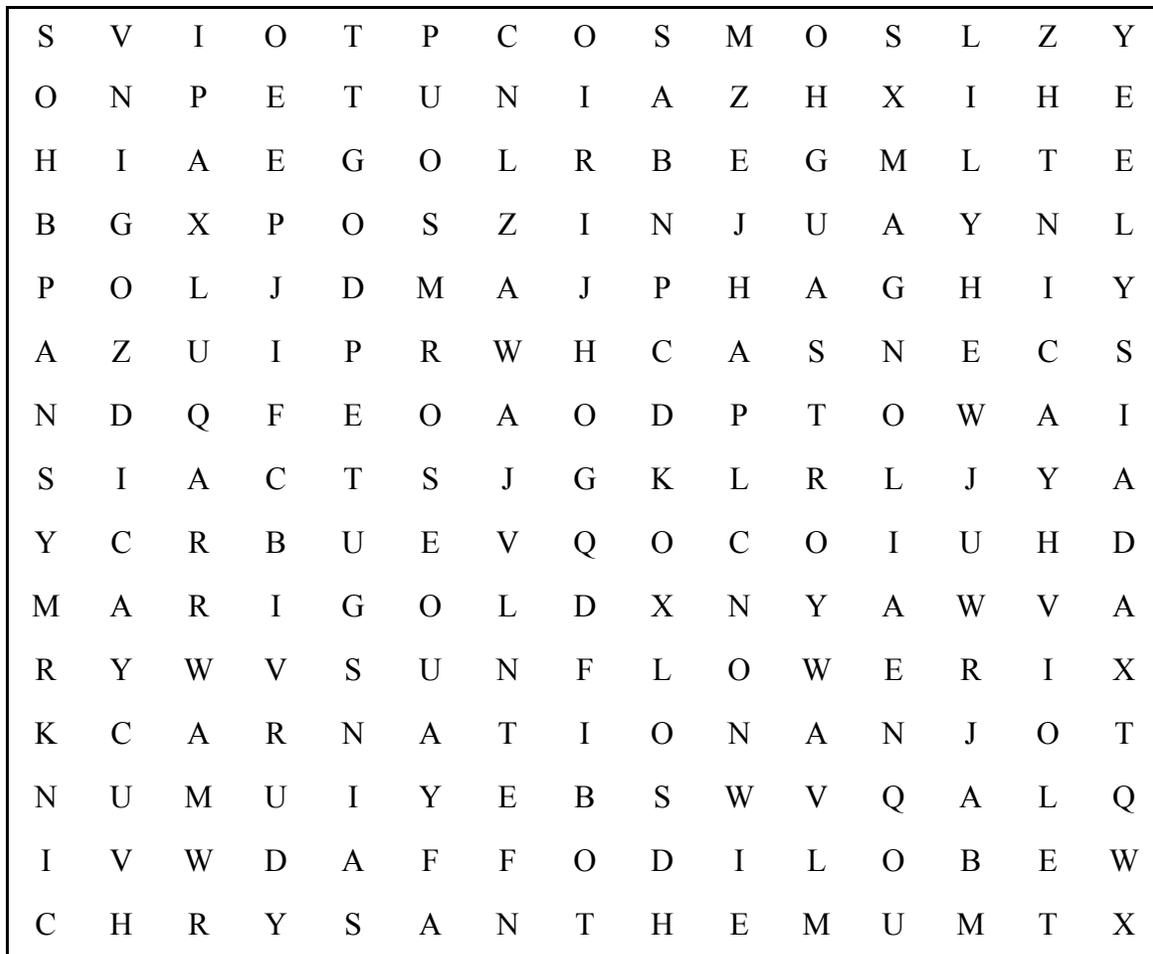
by Kim Lahey (client of Community Skills Program)

Welcome to Spring and the many beautiful, fragrant flowers it brings! Hidden in the block of letters below are the names of 18 spring flowers. They may be written vertically, horizontally, diagonally, forwards or backwards. When you find them, circle them. **After (not before)** you have found and circled as many as you can, turn to page 7 where the solution to the word search is, to see how well you did. Good luck!

Astro
Carnation
Chrysanthemum
Cosmos
Daffodil
Daisy

Hyacinth
Iris
Lily
Magnolia
Marigold
Pansy

Petunia
Rose
Snapdragon
Sunflower
Tulip
Violet



Turn to page 7 for the solution.

Our Annual Staff Retreat

Those of you who are familiar with Community Skills Program know that we provide services in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in the homes and communities of our clients. We have four offices (in Marlton and Wall, NJ, and in Philadelphia and Wyomissing, PA) for administrative functions and for staff meetings, but our staff are so spread out over New Jersey and Pennsylvania that there is only one time every year that everyone who works for Community Skills Program gets together. That is for our Annual Staff Retreat, usually held on a Saturday and Sunday in Philadelphia, PA. This year we again held our staff retreat at the DoubleTree Philadelphia Hotel; the event planners do a fine job and the cookies at the DoubleTree are *wonderful*.

The staff retreat gives the management of Community Skills Program opportunities to inform the staff of the current scope of professional activities and new initiatives being undertaken. Then, the main thrust of the staff retreat is staff development and continuing education (though it is also just great fun for everyone to meet any new staff members they haven't met before). This year our primary educational topics were on vocational planning, presented by Lisa Miller, B.A., director of vocational services for Counseling and Rehabilitation of New Jersey, Inc. (parent company of Community Skills Program in New Jersey), and the development of compensatory strategies for cognitive impairments, presented by Laurie Modiano, B.S., OTR/L, one of our neurorehabilitation specialists. Small group tasks and presentations were part of the design to prepare staff to apply what they learned.

We thought you might like to see some pictures of us in action at the retreat. We will also be putting some of the in-service training content on our website, www.communityskillsprogram.com.



Lisa F. Miller, B.A., director of vocational services for Counseling and Rehabilitation of New Jersey, Inc., introducing a new Vocational Planning Worksheet intended to assure that selected job objectives are realistic.

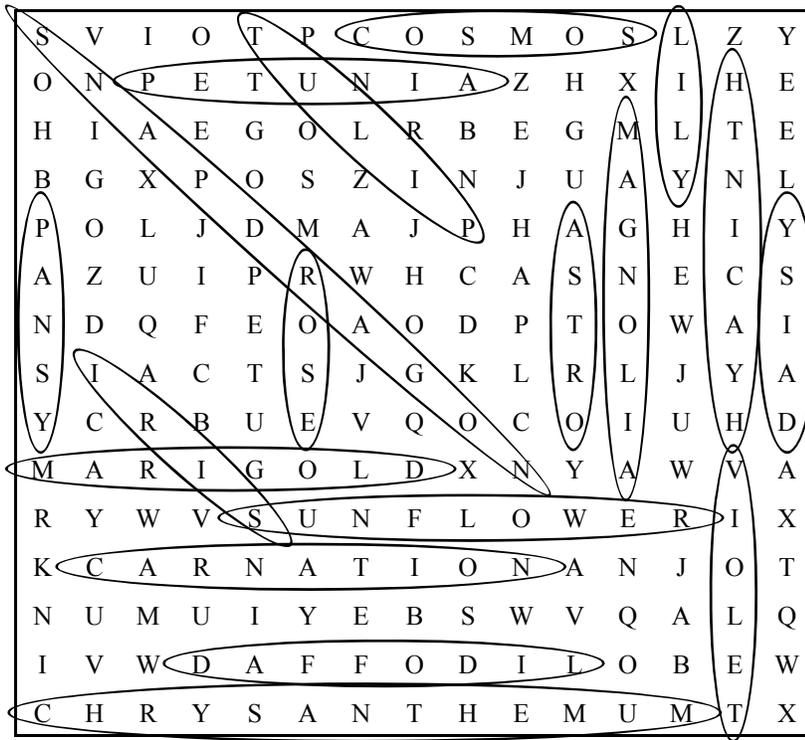


A small group discussion



Nina Geier, M.S., M.P.T., PT, ATC, program coordinator for New Jersey, watching intently as Carol Bardsley, M.A., CPCRT, program coordinator for Pennsylvania, described the scope of our services and new initiatives in Pennsylvania.

Word Search Solution: Spring Flowers



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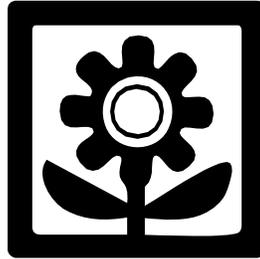
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