
◆ BrainWaves ◆

Volume 25 Issue 1

The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

Spring 2009

Community Skills Program's New Developments

We are pleased to share with you our exciting new developments. Foremost is the change in our organizational structure in New Jersey, to improve our ability to respond to persons referred to Community Skills Program in a more timely manner, in order to implement their individualized program plans as soon as possible. In addition to improving our efficiency in responding to referrals for services, the change will enable us to respond more quickly to the ongoing needs of our active clients (and their family members and significant others). Our staff will benefit as well, as our supervisory and administrative staff will be more readily available. To do this, beginning July 1, 2009, we will have a program coordinator for northern New Jersey and one for southern New Jersey (as we did many years ago in the 1990s) and more client services liaisons. Nina Geier, M.S., M.P.T., PT, ATC, CBIS, our current program coordinator for New Jersey, will assume the position of program coordinator for northern New Jersey. Maria Zakula, M.A., CBIS, who was a member of the staff of Community Skills Program from 1987 to 1989, returned to Community Skills Program in August of 2008 as a client services liaison, and will be the acting program coordinator for southern New Jersey. When the lease for our office in Wall Township, NJ expires on August 31, 2009, we will move that office to a more central location in northern New Jersey, to further enhance our ability to provide more efficient services. Our main office in New Jersey will continue at its present location in Marlton, NJ.

In addition to having two program coordinators in New Jersey, René Kauffman, B.S., CTRS, one of our neurorehabilitation specialists, is currently being oriented to assume a position as a client services liaison in northern New Jersey. She will report to Ms. Geier. Additional client services liaisons are anticipated in strategic locations in New Jersey and will report to the program coordinator in his/her part of the state.

In Pennsylvania, there are three (and maybe four) neurorehabilitation specialists who will begin to receive orientation and training for positions as client services liaisons. More information on those staff members will be included in the next issue of *BrainWaves*. They will report to our director, Sally Kneipp, Ph.D., CRC. (She is also an LPC and LRC in New Jersey.) Specifically, we will be expanding our service capacity by adding a client services liaison, more neurorehabilitation specialists, and office space in the greater Harrisburg/

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Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Angela, Anju, Catherine, Emily, Frances, Gerald, Linda, Michael I., Michael L., Michael S., Rebecca, Richard, Robert D., Robert S., Sandy, Steven, Vivian and William—and our new neurorehabilitation specialists—Jacqueline Anderson, B.A., Niah Bononno, B.A., Erin Coulehan, M.S.W., and Sandra Siegel, M.S.Ed., NCC.

Our clients and staff continue to be involved in many interesting, varied activities. In each issue of *BrainWaves*, we mention some of their activities.

- José B. now has a workout routine at the gym that lasts approximately one hour; he is going to the gym five times a week and looks forward to his time there. He is also volunteering at a local food bank.
- Jackie continues to volunteer at an aquarium where she answers guests' questions at various exhibits. She recently added a second day each week of volunteering in the zoological records department at the aquarium. Also, Jackie recently joined a fitness center and has been attending the gym and pool three times per week.
- David paid all of his bills on time in April!
- Paul began attending Opportunity Project in April and also was initiated into the Knights of Columbus on April 16, 2009.
- Dan continues to use Sundays as his day of rest, enjoying his time to relax and perform activities of his choosing, such as reading.

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Our New Developments continued (from page 1)

Mechanicsburg/York area. We will also have a new client services liaison for the Schuylkill/Berks counties in Pennsylvania and will be adding a client services liaison in southeastern Pennsylvania as well. These changes will enable us to expand our capacity to serve the individuals referred to us by the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Head Injury Program, the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, insurance companies, and private payers, etc., and individuals who qualify for funding through the CommCare, Independence and OBRA Waiver Programs. We are happy to report that we are now an approved provider for these programs. (Bear with us while we get a better handle on the procedures for getting referrals started through the waiver programs.)

In addition to the individual and group services we are already providing, we are planning to add some additional groups, in the Schuylkill/Berks counties and very likely in southeastern Pennsylvania (suburban areas surrounding Philadelphia).

And last, but not least, through our parent company, Counseling and Rehabilitation, Inc., we have founded Counseling and Rehabilitation Training Institute. (The trademark/registration is in process.) This initiative will enable us to provide more continuing education opportunities for professionals in the fields of brain injury and vocational rehabilitation, providing a resource for them to obtain continuing education units/contact hours required to maintain their professional licensures/certifications.

More on these developments will be included in upcoming issues of *BrainWaves*. If you have any questions in the meantime, please call Dr. Kneipp at (610) 376-3380 or (215) 735-7603.

Update continued (from page 1)

- In April, George began volunteering at a local hospital once a week; he does data entry in the volunteer services department. Also, he continues to do his own laundry and has successfully been using a Flip Fold, an adaptive tool that allows him to fold shirts and sweaters using only his right hand.
- Al selected and worked on some craft projects in April; he gave them to his mother and sisters as gifts for Easter. Al also continues to perform his workout routine three times a week, using exercise equipment in his basement.
- In April, Ken attended a volunteer luncheon hosted by the hospital where he volunteers. He reported having a nice time, especially meeting some of the many other volunteers at the hospital.
- Steve O. gave a presentation on the play *True West* to his class at Centenary College, where he is enrolled in an American literature course; he is awaiting his grade.
- Wes created a personalized word search puzzle using family names and familiar places; he is eager to share it with his family.
- Gail continues to volunteer independently in the health information department of a local hospital and to do well.
- In April, Steven R. began working part-time in the produce department at his local Stop & Shop. He independently sets up his transportation to and from work, using Access Link services. Also in April, Steven finished a project of sanding and painting two chairs.
- José R. is currently pursuing volunteer opportunities at a theatre and at a cultural arts center, and continues to work on art projects for family members and friends.
- Stefani Hallinger, M.S.W., received her master's degree in May 2009, from the Temple University School of Social Administration in Harrisburg, PA. Congratulations, Stefani!
- Community Skills Program held its annual staff retreat on April 24 and 25, 2009 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Philadelphia, PA. Scott Peters, M.S., OTR/L, clinical director of the Short-term Intensive Residential System at ReMed, was our guest speaker. He presented on neuro-behavioral challenges following traumatic brain injury and on substance abuse issues. Please see some of the photographs from our retreat, on our website (www.communityskillsprogram.com).
- **Congratulations to Carol Bardsley!** Those of you who know Carol Bardsley, a member of Community Skills Program's staff since 1997, already know that she is a skillful therapist who has demonstrated strong commitment to her clients and the field of brain injury rehabilitation. She is an active member of the brain injury support group that meets monthly at St. Mary Medical Center in Langhorne, PA, and routinely provides transportation to enable other people to attend.

What you probably don't know is that Carol is committed to dogs as well as to people, and is now a certified dog trainer. She began her studies with the Animal Behavior College (ABC) on March 14, 2008, to obtain her certification in dog training. On May 12, 2009, she was told that she **graduated with honors** and is now able to use her new credentials, ABCDT. We congratulate Carol on this accomplishment. She will continue to work with Community Skills Program, and also train dogs. You may want to tell your friends with dogs (who need training) to give Carol a call, at (267) 474-6550.

Spotlight: Amanda Fisher



Spotlight: Amanda Fisher

Spotlight: Tell us a little about yourself.

Mandy: My name is Amanda Fisher, but everyone calls me Mandy. I grew up in many different places, but the one I can recall most memories of is Maine. I now live in Macungie, PA, which is close to Allentown, PA. I have a mother, father, and two older sisters, Jessie and Cori. Jessie has three children, Kayah, Lana, and Jake. I am 22 years old and I feel like my brain injury happened for a reason. My brain injury saved my life.

Spotlight: What do you mean?

Mandy: Before the accident, I was hanging out with the wrong crowds and making decisions that were not the best. The decisions I chose to make then were interfering with my social life with my family, my schooling, and most of all my health. After my accident, I realized that I was so close to death that it made me appreciate how important the little things in life are, like my family and not settling on things.

Spotlight: Settling on what types of things?

Mandy: Before the accident, I chose the people to hang out with and the

things I was doing before considering school and my health. I never had high self-esteem, so I never pushed myself. Now I know that, if I do not take risks, I will never succeed in life.

Spotlight: How did your brain injury occur?

Mandy: On February 2, 2007, I was on my way to school (I commuted to my college classes), I hit black ice and crashed between a telephone pole and a tree. The PennDOT crew was out checking the road conditions and found my car. They called “911” and I was air-lifted to Lehigh Valley Hospital. I was at Lehigh Valley Hospital for five weeks in the neurotrauma unit. I then went to Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital. They were not going to admit me at first, because I was not making much progress. I was in a coma for two months. However, they said that, because I was so young—20 years old—I had a better chance of making improvement.

Slowly, I started making progress. I would open my eyes but not be able to focus on anything or anyone. One day during occupational therapy, I was asked to pick up a yellow block in front of me (there were three different colored blocks). I followed the command and picked up the yellow block! It was a big relief to my family because this proved that I was actually thinking. I had to relearn how to do everything—go to the bathroom, swallow, stand up, etc.—before I could leave the inpatient unit at the end of March 2007. I then was able to return home, but had to continue at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation for outpatient services four days per week.

Spotlight: What was it like when you came home from Good Shepherd?

Mandy: When I first came home, my older sister, Jessie, and her three children all lived at our house, which at first was very useful because it got me

back on track with the real world versus the hospital world. But at the same time, it was very noisy, which was overwhelming for me. The house was very hectic. However, they had prior obligations that made them move back to Maine. Then, my other sister Cori moved in to help support me in my transition back into life outside the hospital.

I still had a hard time swallowing; I had to drink nectar-thick liquids and eat pureed food. In a way I kind of miss the pureed salads! They were my favorite! I could not concentrate on watching a television show or listening to music because the slightest thing ruined my focus. To go to the bathroom, I had to use a “potty chair” and in the shower I had to use a shower chair so I would not fall. When I slept, I had to use a bed rail so that I would not fall out of bed, and my bedroom was moved to the main floor because I could not go up and down stairs.

Spotlight: What else do you remember about the process?

Mandy: Throughout the whole process, the main support came from my nurses, and the other hospital staff, but mainly my family. The thing I will always remember is the scrapbook my sister Jessie made me. The scrapbook had all pictures of my family in it with their names and things I should remember about my family. I loved looking at it in the hospital.

Both of my parents had to give up a lot because of my situation. My mom gave up the most. She quit her job to stay home with me full-time, to be there and take me to all of my therapies. I owe a lot of my recovery to my family support, especially from my mom.

Spotlight: Have things gotten better?

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Spotlight continued (from page 3)

Mandy: Things have gotten better 120%! I basically learned steps to live my life independently by not relying on someone. If I had to be left alone for a week, I could make myself dinner, take my medications, and take care of myself. I can shower, go to the bathroom, and walk up the stairs, all on my own without any help. I just recently went through the driving program at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital and I can now drive again! It feels good to not have to rely on my parents for everything.

The best thing through this process is that I reconnected with my family. Before the accident, I was not close to my family, but now I realize how important they are and I do not know what I would do without them. I never knew the effect that a family's love could have on your life. Always knowing that someone will support you no matter what you do. Now that I have that, it feels....remarkable!

Spotlight: What kind of things are you involved with now?

Mandy: I am basically trying to get my life restarted. I started going back

to college at Lehigh Carbon Community College. I'm starting off slow, going part-time, to see if I can still handle getting a college education. So far, after a couple of semesters, I am doing pretty well. I am getting A's and B's. I am planning on continuing with classes to get a job in the medical field. After my experience, I realize what an important role a medical staff member has.

I also recently started volunteering at the Lehigh Valley Hospital in Allentown, PA, with my neurorehabilitation specialist, Megan [Mandy is referring to Megan Rohrbach, M.S.S., LSW]. I work in the volunteer office running errands, passing out flowers and mail, and returning belongings to patients. This volunteer job helps me work on my stamina, which will help me in the career that I am choosing. This volunteer job is also helping to get my foot in the door for a paid job in a hospital setting.

I also go to the gym at Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Hospital three times a week. I like going to the gym at Good Shepherd because I know that, if anything would happen to me while exercising, the staff there would be able to assist me properly. When I first started going to the gym, I met with a staff member there who helped me

make a plan and set goals for exercising.

I also take part in Community Skills Program's Therapeutic Activities Group once a week with two other clients from Community Skills Program. The group takes place in everyday situations to see how we react to everyday life. For example, we have gone to the Camden Aquarium, movies, out to eat, and miniature golfing.

Spotlight: What other types of activities are you working on during your one-to-one sessions?

Mandy: Megan helps me work on organizing, planning, budgeting, self-esteem and activities of daily living that will help me to one day be completely independent. One major thing we are working on is me not relying on my mom's assistance all of the time. I used my mom a lot for everything. Through my recovery process, my mom was always there for me and I always look to her for answers. I am now learning how to manage and take control of my own decisions.

For example, recently my sister Cori also moved back to Maine due to other circumstances. Therefore, I decided to move into the basement where Cori originally was, to start to be more independent. The basement is like its own apartment with my own bedroom, bathroom and kitchenette. Megan has been helping me do everything necessary to be able to live down there on my own without any assistance. For example, we made a list of the things that I needed for the apartment. Then, we went out and bought all of the items I needed. I now maintain a more independent lifestyle without my parents' help.

Spotlight: Do you have any words of advice for others recovering from a brain injury?

Mandy: Life is always going to have its setbacks and downfalls. But you



Mandy recently passed her driver's evaluation and is driving again.
Congratulations Mandy!

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Creativity Corner

Word Search: Spring & Summer Sports

by Andrew Graham and Adam Wertz (clients of Community Skills Program)
and Megan Dissinger, B.A. and Megan Rohrbach, M.S.S., LSW (neuropsychology specialists)

In our last issue of *BrainWaves*, we featured a word search entitled *Dessert!* by Andrew, Adam, Megan D. and Megan R., which they created during one session of our Therapeutic Activities Group, of which Andrew and Adam are members. In this Spring issue, we are featuring a *Spring & Summer Sports* word search that the group created using Discovery Education's Puzzlemaker website (<http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com>); we have mentioned this website in previous *BrainWaves* issues.

Instructions: Hidden in the block of letters below are the names of spring and summer sports. 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 and have fun!



Baseball
Croquet
Diving

Golf
Soccer
Softball
Swimming

Tennis
Track
Volleyball



C	M	K	D	A	P	T	T	R	A	C	K
E	R	N	B	D	U	A	H	L	U	U	K
S	C	R	O	Q	U	E	T	L	V	J	A
I	E	U	O	Q	E	D	N	A	N	Z	K
G	N	I	M	M	I	W	S	B	X	I	L
V	F	T	R	E	Q	N	G	Y	S	Q	L
D	L	P	E	J	K	V	N	E	I	N	A
Z	O	N	C	J	Q	U	I	L	N	Y	B
N	G	K	C	O	J	A	V	L	N	K	T
P	X	X	O	H	O	I	I	O	E	R	F
B	J	F	S	O	Q	T	D	V	T	Q	O
N	L	L	A	B	E	S	A	B	O	U	S



Turn to page 7 for the solution.

Announcing...

The 2009 Creativity Expo



The 2009 *Creativity Expo* will be held on Saturday, July 11 through Tuesday, July 21, 2009 at the Raritan Valley Community College Student Art Gallery in North Branch, NJ. There will be a special artists' reception on opening day, July 11th, from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m., with food and beverages provided. The *Creativity Expo* is a non-profit event dedicated to exhibiting the work of people with acquired or traumatic brain injuries. This is the sixth consecutive year for the event, which features art using a wide variety of mediums, including poetry, painting, woodworking, crafts, live music, doll making, crochet, sculpture, jewelry making and more. If you feel inspired to display your artwork or just want more information, call Vincent Diorio at (703) 297-7726 or 1-800-374-0071, extension 220, or you can e-mail him at vincentd54@msn.com. You can also see photographs from past Expos at www.geocities.com/braininjuryartsnj.

Spotlight continued (from page 4)

can never give up on believing in yourself or the possibilities of what you can become. It's easy during a recovery to feel like there is no point in trying to get better and to want to just give up. I think you always have to remember someone out there in the world could have it way worse than you do. So prove to yourself, and everyone else around you, that you can get over this little hump, because, in the end, the feeling of recovery is worth the hard and painful journey it took you to get there.

[Editor's Note: Many thanks to all the people who have been, and continue to be, instrumental in Mandy's rehabilitation, and the funding sources that have supported her efforts.]

Third Annual David's Drive

The third annual *David's Drive* will be held on Tuesday, September 15, 2009 at Penn Oaks Golf Club, 150 Penn Oaks Drive, West Chester, PA 19382. *David's Drive* is sponsored by the Council on Brain Injury (CoBI), which was created by ReMed in May 2007, in memory of Dr. David Strauss. The mission of CoBI is to fund education related to brain injury, conduct and support research for improved treatment, and advocate for improved services. Events at *David's Drive* include a golf tournament, reception and dinner, silent auction, and a golf clinic. To obtain sponsorship information or to learn more about *David's Drive*, call Rose Marie Dalton at (484) 595-9300, extension 119, or e-mail her at rdalton@remed.com. Online registration is available at www.davidsdrive.org.

The Mechanicsburg, PA TBI Support Group has a new location!

HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Mechanicsburg, 175 Lancaster Boulevard, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 (717/691-3700), is the new meeting site for the Mechanicsburg traumatic brain injury support group, which meets the second Tuesday of every month from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The format of the group is informal with open discussions and social and emotional support for survivors, friends, family members, caregivers and professionals. For more information, contact Paul Kautz by phone at (717) 580-6129 or by e-mail at pkautz@aol.com.

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*Serving individuals with brain injuries in
New Jersey and Pennsylvania.*



Spring is here!

BrainWaves

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