
◆ Brain Waves ◆

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The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

Winter 2006-2007

Once More with Feeling... 10 Years Later

by Matthew Gross

On February 23, 1997, I was on the observation deck of the Empire State Building. Three of my male friends and three of my female friends were with me. An older man opened fire. He killed the lead guitarist in my band and he shot me in my head. That is how I became brain injured.

Around two years after that incident, there was a charity event for me being held at the New Music Café in New York City. There were bands playing. I got on stage and I performed the Bob Dylan song "Highway 61." The fact that I could only remember the first verse showed that I had problems remembering full songs. Some people would call that performing. For me, performing is playing for at least half of an hour. I practiced lots of songs that I wrote and I played them in a few different clubs. I didn't feel like any of my performances were "there."

My current Community Skills Program therapist, Heidi Lewis, suggested recently that I should go to a philosophy group called the Socrates Café, and one night she took me to The Sanctuary Café in Little Falls, NJ. We noticed that they had musical performers who played there. One night I was hanging out with my friend, Nancy Fischer. We stopped by The Sanctuary Café to get something to eat. Nancy spoke with the owner and got me my show on the 13th of January 2007.

On the day of the performance, my mother, Gail Thorson, and her husband,

Jeffrey Thorson, drove down from Connecticut. They helped me make a list of all of the things I would need to take with me to my performance that evening. My father, Peter Gross, helped me pick out the amplification. My father drove my equipment and me to the concert. I helped take the equipment inside. My stepfather set up the equipment and he took pictures. My father was the sound man.

When I looked out into the crowd, I saw my family, my therapist, and almost everyone from my Kessler Brain Injury Support Group. If I did not have a traumatic brain injury, my music career would have been in a different place. However, since I am traumatically brain injured, it was great that almost everyone from my support group showed up. Thank you.



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Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Amy, Craig, Elizabeth, Emily B., Emily P., Jesse, Kimberly, Megan, Nancy, Nick, Peter, Qadir, Rebecca, Robert, Thomas, Timothy, William—and also to our new neurorehabilitation specialists—Dianne Fedrow, B.S., Sonya Mocariski, M.S., CRC, CCM, LPC, ABDA, ABOVE, and Paul O'Brien, M.P.A., SRES. We also wish to acknowledge Joyce, one of our current clients, and apologize for the oversight in not including her name in *BrainWaves* when she started Community Skills Program.

Our clients and staff continue to be involved in many interesting, varied activities. Some of them follow; more will be mentioned in the next issue of *BrainWaves*.

- Ted W. (former client of Community Skills Program) wrote to tell us he relocated to Elkin, NC four years ago, and just recently completed a phlebotomy course at a local community college. He is hoping to get a job at the Red Cross. Good luck, Ted!
- Will is now driving himself to and from Meals on Wheels where he volunteers twice a week.
- Robyn is volunteering twice a week in the laundry department at a nearby retirement community, and is doing very well.
- Beth participated in a five-day church retreat.
- Joe is volunteering as a shelver at a local library.

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- Bob W. is working full-time in the parts department of a tire and auto store.
- Howard vacationed in Florida for a week with his family.
- Matt played the guitar and sang at The Sanctuary Café on January 13th. His neurorehabilitation specialist, parents and stepparents, and members of his brain injury support group at Kessler attended. He performed well and was invited to give two more performances. (If you have not already done so, please read Matt's article on the front page of this issue of *BrainWaves*, "Once More with Feeling...10 Years Later.")
- Orville has completed several 100-piece jigsaw puzzles and is also reading *Two-Minute Mysteries* by Daniel Sobol. Each story is one and one-half pages long and ends with a question, asking the reader how the detective in the story reached his conclusion.
- Congratulations to Mark Gehman, B.A., one of our neurorehabilitation specialists, and his wife, Amy, on the birth of their third child. Melody Anne Gehman was born on December 14, 2006 at 10:43 p.m. At birth she was six pounds and seven ounces and 18½ inches long. Melody has an older brother, William (Will), and an older sister, Julia.
- We also wish to congratulate Laurie Modiano, B.S., OTR/L, one of our neurorehabilitation specialists, and her husband, Dan, on the arrival of their second child. (They already have a four-year-old, Marissa, now a big sister!) Alyssa Elaina Modiano was born at 4:38 a.m. on January 30th. She arrived weighing eight pounds and 12 ounces, and was 21 inches long.

Tips On...Safety Planning

by Paul Harrington

(current client of Community Skills Program)

Safety is a social issue that concerns everyone. Natural disaster, terrorism, and violence are things you can never truly be prepared for but you can make preparations. You can put yourself in a better position by having a home evacuation plan, smoke alarms, a safety kit, an emergency travel kit, and a communications plan in place at your home. You should have more than one escape route from your home in case of emergency and you should practice each route for evacuation. Having a clear pathway in and out of your home could be crucial to your safety. You should have smoke alarms on all levels of your home to alert you if there is a fire. You should remember to change smoke alarm and other batteries every six months. You should review with your family how to call 911 and how to apply basic first aid.

You should have a number of things centrally located in your home in case of an emergency that would require your staying at home. Some of them are:

- 1) Bottled water (three gallons per person)
- 2) Non-perishable food items like canned food (and a can opener) and granola bars
- 3) An alarm or whistle to signal for help
- 4) Flashlight with working batteries
- 5) First aid kit
- 6) Iodine tablets or unscented bleach to disinfect water—one drop of bleach will disinfect one gallon of water.
- 7) A working phone that doesn't need electricity
- 8) Plywood and/or plastic to seal your windows and doors
- 9) A radio with working batteries
- 10) Fire extinguisher

In case of emergency evacuation and dislocation, you should also have an easy-carry bag with things you may need. Are you ready to leave if there's a neighborhood evacuation for something out of your control? Do you have a plan for where and how to re-connect with your family? Here is a list of things you should consider to include in an emergency travel bag:

- 1) Copies of identification like driver's license, credit card, health insurance, house deed, birth certificate, and phone listings
- 2) Set of house and car keys
- 3) Cash
- 4) Bottled water
- 5) Flashlight with working batteries
- 6) Radio with working batteries
- 7) Prescriptions and personal care items like contact lens solution, eyeglasses, toothpaste, and wipes
- 8) Small first aid kit
- 9) Rain gear like a poncho
- 10) Regional map
- 11) Child care items

Making these preparations can give you peace of mind regarding your security; it also sets a good example for your family.

[The following resources were used in the creation of this article: www.readyregion.org, www.redcross.org and www.whatsyourrq.org. Please access these web-sites for more ways to be prepared.]

Spotlight: David Loynds



Spotlight: David Loynds

Spotlight: I understand you were featured in the *BrainWaves* Spotlight in the summer of 1999. To update the readers, please tell us a little bit about yourself.

David: Alright. I'm David Loynds. Right now I'm 44. I'll be 45 tomorrow; January 12th is my birthday. I live in Brookhaven, which is located in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. I currently live with my parents. My younger sister lives with her family in a community right next door to ours, in Aston, and I am the godfather of her two children, so that's how I keep in touch with her.

Spotlight: Tell us a little bit about your life before your accident.

David: I am a graduate of Swarthmore College where I received a bachelor of science degree in engineering. After graduation, I worked for a while at Boeing Helicopters as an engineer/computer technician. After two years working there, I had become a senior engineer. Just having become a senior engineer, I had a car accident the next week. I had an automobile accident on Route 322 (the Killer Conchester) and I went into a coma for about a month or so.

Spotlight: In terms of your accident, what injuries did you actually have?

David: In the accident, I had a traumatic brain injury.

Spotlight: Where did you go for your treatment or rehabilitation?

David: I originally went to Crozer-Chester Hospital, but they eventually moved me from the hospital to the Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation facility where I lived for awhile, receiving therapy and counseling and so on.

Spotlight: What kind of changes did you experience after your traumatic brain injury?

David: I have a few difficulties. I have a great deal of trouble with my right leg and foot and this problem tends to lead to a certain degree of imbalance and, consequently, I have a messed up gait. Perhaps more important than my physical problem, at least in my view, is I have a problem with my recollection. I have a great deal of difficulty with my short-term memory.

Spotlight: Do you have any other areas that you see as being challenging for you?

David: I think, principally, for me the problem recalling things and keeping track of where I'm working and what I'm working on and what I'm working with. The short-term memory has been something that has really impacted me most of all, I would say.

Spotlight: Did you get to return to your job at Boeing after your accident?

David: I returned to Boeing but it was in a reduced capacity. I tried working there for a couple of years. I eventually just had to leave because I wasn't really doing what you would call gainful employment. I was being babysat. I wasn't doing anything really that could be considered engineering—nothing which could be considered useful. So, I left. After I left Boeing, I began working with Community Skills Program.

Spotlight: In the 1990's, you received services through Community Skills Program to work on regaining some of your skills. What kind of accomplishments did you have during that time?

David: For a while, I was living on my own in an apartment in Swarthmore. While there, I started working at the college at a reduced capacity in the Swarthmore College Library, shelving books and so on.

Spotlight: What kind of things did you work on in your apartment?

David: Living skills, such as laundry, meal preparation, and other things such as balancing my checkbook or attempting to (laughing), and going to the market.

Spotlight: How did living in the apartment work for you over the years since the 1990's?

David: I eventually left the apartment because I was not really capable of being more independent. I decided to basically move back from the apartment to my ancestral home with my parents, so I moved back in with them and that is where I am still living at this time.

Spotlight: How do you like living at home with your parents?

David: It's alright, but I really would prefer to live in my own facility and take care of my own situation at my age and living experience. Although living at home has not been that stressful, it is not something that I want to continue doing for the rest of my life.

Spotlight: As far as your job at Swarthmore College, are you still working there at the library?

David: I am working at the library but I am doing totally different tasks. In

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the past, I was label-making in the main library. I am no longer working for the main library. I left the main library in May.

Spotlight: In what part of the library are you working currently?

David: Currently, I am working at the Friends Historical Library, where I am shelving books. Essentially, I am doing anything that the library staff needs me to take care of doing.

Spotlight: Recently, in May of 2006, you took on a new position at Swarthmore College. Tell us about it.

David: I left working for the main library and I am now working in another building for the Alumni and Gift Records Department. Essentially, I am a file clerk. While working as a file clerk there, I am working in the afternoons for the Friends Historical Library in the main library, so I am working at both locations.

Spotlight: Since starting your new job at the Alumni and Gift Records Department, you received services from Community Skills Program. How was this arranged?

David: This situation was arranged by a woman named Cyndy Touhsaent who is one of the heads at the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and she is helping to set up my work with the new library.

Spotlight: How did Community Skills Program assist you in learning your new job tasks?

David: I have a woman named Kathleen Meade who is in charge of keeping track of my doing whatever tasks are put forth by the alumni records group. [Kathleen Meade, B.S., MT-BC, CBIS, who conducted this interview, is David's neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program.]

Spotlight: What kind of job tasks have you had to learn?

David: Filing the many, many records (essentially, slips of paper) with information regarding the many alumni. I work primarily with the alumni records and anything concerning Swarthmore Alumni (thousands of them) that come in on slips of paper. I use an alphabetizing strip to place the papers in order. Next, I put these alphabetically placed slips into folders in a file cabinet. Eventually, these papers go into the main folder section known as the "permanent files" of the alumni records.

Spotlight: Tell me what kind of challenges you face at your work?

David: Again, it has always been about my short-term memory problems. When a new task is promulgated to me, it takes a while for me to incorporate that new task into my daily activities to be able to handle the often intricate details of the task. Kathleen Meade and OVR have offered assistance in this area in the form of checklists and reminders for me of the various steps needed for each task.

Spotlight: I was going to ask you what kind of strategies you use on the job.

David: I utilize my checklist system.

Spotlight: Do you currently use the checklist that you used in the beginning?

David: I've pretty much incorporated most of the checklists that I have had over the years. Even with a brain injury, you can begin to make them into your actual lifestyle skills. The need for checklists now basically involves new tasks or perhaps even really, really more difficult tasks that need some reminders.

Spotlight: So, now that you've been at your new job assignment for over six months, do you still have to use these detailed checklists each time you're working?

David: I use the checklists mostly as a reminder of things. I don't need to

refer to them quite as often as I did in the past. They've become a little more rote to me and as a general reminder I have one directly in front of me at work. I can refer to that if I am uncertain as to what is the next step I need to take. They're there only as a reminder.

Spotlight: What do you like most about your new position?

David: I like the opportunity for socialization—a chance to interact with other people at the worksite. I like the satisfaction that I garner from actually completing tasks and the enjoyment that I generate by actually doing something that I think is a worthwhile aspect of this job—that I'm actually helping my boss to move further on and perhaps not having to do some of what I would call the piddling things that I am doing.

Spotlight: How about the least favorite part of your job? What is that?

David: I don't know that there is anything that really weighs so heavily on me that you would call it the least favorite. I know that everyone can find a least favorite part of a job, but I don't find anything that deleterious that I would call it that. The least favorite thing is when I am working in the final step of my task, which is to take the files and put them into their permanent positions for filing. It really becomes frustrating when you go in certain areas, especially where there are so many tightly-packed files that it is almost impossible to place one more slip of paper in the file, and I grumble and complain about them never having weeded out the files because they are just too tightly packed. That is probably my pet peeve with this job.

Spotlight: David, how do you like working at your alma mater?

David: Well, I have to tell you, I went through a period of time when I sort of worried, "Oh man, this is not engineering." I loved what I used to do but what I love now even more is...I love the people here, and the job is not so strenuous that I can't handle it, but it

Spotlight... continued (from page 4)

is also not so inane that I become bored with it. So the job really fits nicely into my new capabilities.

Spotlight: When you're not working, what do you like to do for fun? What are your interests?

David: I love working on my computer. It's kind of funny...What I like to do is to file things. Oh, this is embarrassing—I have collections of websites. I like to look at them. The worldwide web is an amazing tool and it just provides me with hours and hours of entertainment. Basically, that sort of thing is a hobby to me and I've had other hobbies in the past but I haven't really carried them over that much recently.

Spotlight: How about music?

David: I used to be a French horn player. I was probably the top French horn player in my school district but that was in the past, because once you don't practice your horn, your lips go totally to....

Spotlight: How about listening to music? Are you a music buff?

David: I am a huge music buff, actually. I have gone the gamut from classics (Beethoven, Bach and Brahms) to new age music, many of the popular...I'm going to show my age a little bit. I go back to people like Phil Collins and so on, and this is, of course, the next millennium. Music, in general, is really important to me. We'll just leave it at that.

Spotlight: What do you see as your strengths?

David: Now one of my strengths is my attention to detail—more than it used to be. I think that is something that the people at the alumni records group appreciate more now. I am a stickler for paying attention to the nuances of a given record and knowing how all that is necessary for storing these things.

Spotlight: What other strengths do you have?

David: I have, although Kathleen would probably say otherwise, a good sense of humor (laughing).

Spotlight: I do think you have a good sense of humor. You are very quick-witted.

David: So, it works out very well for me. And I am a relatively nice guy. When people say that about themselves, it sounds kind of silly, but I am very even-tempered and I like to think that I am fairly likeable.

Spotlight: Do you have any goals for your future?

David: My goals are to get the heck out of here (I'm just kidding). My goals are basically to continue in the vein that I find myself in now, but to make it better. To increase my education in the library science area, since this is my new venue and my new occupation. It might not be a bad idea to increase my knowledge of library science.

Spotlight: What have you learned through your life experience?

David: Never, never say, "Never." Always strive to achieve the goal that you used to think was so lofty and far removed. Try for it anyway, because even though you may not reach that point, you will at least have furthered your position. Always strive, always strive.

[Editor's Note: We would like to thank Cyndy Touhsaent, rehabilitation counselor with OVR, for arranging job coaching services for David. Also, many thanks to the staff at Swarthmore College—Ruth Krakower, Director of Alumni and Gift Records, the Alumni and Gift Records staff, and the staff at Friends Historical Library—for their ongoing support of David, and to David's parents and David's past treatment providers for their role in his success.]

Creativity Corner

More crafts from Maureen Kehoe!!!

In our Fall 2005 Issue of *BrainWaves*, we shared some photos of Maureen Kehoe's (current client of Community Skills Program) crafts. Here are some more photos of crafts she has made and displays in her home during the holidays. Great job, Maureen!



To see the photos in color, check out our website, www.communityskillsprogram.com.

My Experiences with Adaptive Winter Sports

by Adam Greene

(with assistance from Rita Greene, Adam's mother,
and Laurie Modiano, B.S., OTR/L, CBIS, Adam's
neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program)

Both my parents were interested in skiing and, when I was about four years old, they took me to Windham, New York to ski. I enjoyed myself so much that I became a black diamond skier (able to ski the most difficult terrain) by the age of seven years old. I think I went skiing just about every year, until the age of 10, when I was seriously injured, struck by a car while walking home from school.

I sustained a traumatic brain injury and multiple fractures in my body (left leg, right arm, left part of my face). Right away I was thrust into a coma and I spent a few months in that stage. When I "woke up," I was left with tremors in both arms (particularly on my right side), balance and coordination problems, and visual problems in my left eye. I also had cognitive setbacks.

It was necessary for me to relearn how to walk and I also needed to build up enough courage to put on a pair of skis again. When I was 17 years old, my parents, siblings, and I went to Vail, Colorado to ski because my uncle had a condominium there. Through friends, my parents found out about Vail's adaptive ski program. I worked with a ski instructor there, who encouraged me to try. My instructor told me, "Skiing is one of those abilities that once you've done it, you will know how to do it for the rest of your life." My instructor assisted me to get my confidence back by having me hold a rope that was bringing the beginning skiers part of the way up the mountain and to let go to ski down a few yards. Although it was a short distance, I had to ski down to the bottom of the hill. After I did that a few times, I started to realize this was something I would be able to do again. I later got involved with other adaptive ski programs, particularly the Breckenridge Outdoor

Education Center (BOEC) in Breckenridge, Colorado. I found out about the program through my brother who was visiting a friend there.

The BOEC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to expand the potential of people with disabilities and special needs for meaningful, educational, and inspiring outdoor education. It has been in business for over 30 years (they started in 1976) and now has a large staff of instructors and volunteers. They offer programs for people with physical, cognitive, and sensory disabilities, in such activities as adaptive skiing, snowboarding, and wilderness courses (in the summer). It is a close-knit community. The BOEC is foundation-supported and financial assistance may be available for those who demonstrate true need.

I usually have one or two instructors who are assigned to work with me and guide me down the trail. I make sure that I wear a helmet, sun block, polarized glasses, and my ski gear. I do not use any adaptive ski equipment; however, they do offer such things, like a mono-ski, which is a seated device for people who cannot stand or walk. My instructors reviewed basic maneuvers with me, such as the hockey stop and walking in my skis. Over the years of my attendance there, I have progressed from a green level (beginner) to blue and black levels (intermediate to advanced). As I have ridden on the chair lift, I have seen quite a few wipeouts and was glad I was not one of them!

There is a large house in which my fellow "campers" and I stay while there, called the Griffith Lodge. There is always staff available to help and entertain us. When not out skiing on the trail, I and the other campers might

assist with meal preparation or engage in fun things like playing games or watching TV or movies.

Personnel can be arranged to greet a camper at Denver International Airport and accompany him/her to the BOEC and the Griffith Lodge. Once there, three meals a day are served and assistance is provided to the campers, including helping them to get into and out of their gear.

I never thought I would have so much fun. I hope anyone reading this article would have the same kind of experience I have had while at the BOEC.

Of course, it would be an asset if you had some skiing experience, but I don't believe it is a necessity. The staff is very supportive and they could help assist someone at any level of ability and knowledge of how to ski.

For a person in my position, having survived a traumatic brain injury, I believe I have done quite well. I can't speak for everyone, but I feel skiing is an experience that is quite exhilarating. I think it is a great stress reliever and it has helped me to relearn how to walk and to feel stronger, more balanced, and confident in myself.



Adam after a day of skiing in Vail, CO.

Information on Adaptive Winter Sports (Courtesy of Adam Greene)

Below are some of the organizations in Colorado that offer adaptive winter sports programs. Some of them offer scholarships and/or financial aid to attend their programs:

Brain Injury Association of Colorado
4200 West Conejos Place #524
Denver, CO 80204
Phone: (303) 355-9969
Toll-Free: (800) 955-2443

Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (BOEC)
P.O. Box 697
Breckenridge, CO 80424
(800) 383-2632
Website: www.boec.org
(scholarships and financial aid available based on documented need)

Challenge Aspen
P.O. Box M
Aspen, CO 81612
Phone/TTY: (970) 923-0578
Website: www.challengeaspen.com

Crested Butte Adaptive Sports Center
P.O. Box 1639
Crested Butte, CO 81224
Toll-Free: (866) 349-2296
Website: www.adaptivesports.org

National Sports Center for the Disabled
P.O. Box 1290
Winter Park, CO 80482
(970) 726-1540
Website: www.nscd.org

Vail Resorts
(including Beaver Creek)
Adaptive Programs
Vail Associates
P.O. Box 7
Intercompany V-43
Vail, CO 81658
(970) 754-3264
Email: vailadaptiveprogram@vailresorts.com

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