
◆ BrainWaves ◆

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The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

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Once More with Feeling...Vigilant

As explained in past issues of *BrainWaves*, Ray Finley, Ph.D., facilitator of the Vocational Adjustment Group (that meets in Philadelphia, PA every Tuesday evening from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m.), often begins the session with a statement he has written on the chalkboard. The statement is intended to focus the discussion and each member of the group is asked to respond to the statement. On March 3rd, the statement was:

This is a time for you to be vigilant. What that means is to stay watchful and alert, and do your work well.

Dr. Finley asked, "What does the statement above mean to you?" Sam, who is an electrician, said, "It means to take the initiative, and don't slack off." Stewart said, "Go forward." Howard said, "Do your job the way it is supposed to be done and don't make stupid mistakes." Dr. Finley then asked, "What is going on now that I asked you to think about these kinds of things?" Howard replied, "There are layoffs now," and Sam added, "And there are more people to replace you."

Howard is quite sensitive about his situation. He is a dishwasher at a hotel and remarked, "I could be replaced at any time, with what I do." Sam attempted to ease his concern, by reason of the fact that Howard has always been so dependable and willing to fill in when other dishwashers have called out sick. In such instances, he has worked overtime at times or has been willing to reschedule his day off.

Howard explained the impact of having fewer staff. He said that, when he works the nighttime schedule, he is expected to complete all tasks (i.e., mopping the kitchen, disassembling the

dishwasher if not done by the dinnertime dishwashers, and cleaning the bar area). He said that, because of the downturn in the hotel business and cuts in employees' hours, all of the foregoing duties are expected to be completed in six hours now, when formerly an eight-hour period was allowed. Additionally, he cannot clean the bar until after it closes at midnight. Howard appeared concerned about his job security, so Sam suggested he meet with his neurorehabilitation specialist the next day. Members were silent while he wrote a note to discuss with her individually the issues raised in the group.

During this stressful economic recession, when everyone knows or has heard about someone who has lost his/her job or faced a reduction in work hours and pay, the group offers its members a place to express concerns. The group members help each other strategize and come up with solutions. They agreed that remaining vigilant, performing their best work, and demonstrating their value to their employers are good ways to handle the situation.

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Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Adrienne, Daniel, George I., George K., Jim, Linda, Lucy, Paul and Sarah.

Our clients and staff continue to be involved in many interesting, varied activities. As usual, in each issue we mention some of them; more will be mentioned in the next issue of *BrainWaves*.

- José R. hosted a lunch get-together with five of his friends. With the assistance of his neurorehabilitation specialist, he planned the menu, created a shopping list, and prepared the food. Also, José has been successfully using a memory binder that includes his daily schedule, a calendar, and pages for him to make notes about his activities.
- Steven completed and submitted his final paper for his college course from the Fall 2008 semester. He also began classes for his new course, Literature of the American West, for the Spring 2009 semester.
- With the assistance of his neurorehabilitation specialist, Alfred has begun using e-mail to communicate with his family members and friends.
- José B. continues to perform home maintenance projects; in January, he repaired the plumbing in his kitchen and bathroom.
- Virginia has been engaging in tasks to improve the organization in her home; she uses a filing system to organize her papers, and cleaned off two tables in her kitchen, a desk, and the top of a dresser in her bedroom.

(continued on page 6)

Tips On...

Our New Therapeutic Activities Group

Because Community Skills Program serves clients in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in their own homes and communities, there can be considerable distances between clients. Sometimes, as luck (or good planning!) will have it, we have clients in close enough proximity to one another, and with similar or compatible enough personal goals, to be able to offer group activities as well as individual treatment. The group activities, held in community locations, provide opportunities to address the cognitive-communication and socialization issues that are common following a brain injury.

Since the fall of 2008, we have had a Therapeutic Activities Group for three individuals (one female and two males) in the Berks and Lehigh county area who are in their 20's and whose social lives have changed dramatically since their injuries. They are all making great progress, but are experiencing the loss of friendships they once enjoyed and, like most of us, sometimes took for granted.

Social isolation is common following a brain injury. Persons with brain injuries frequently report that their friends visited them while they were in the hospital, but stopped coming around after they were discharged and went home. They understandably miss their friends and often feel hurt and/or angry. They report having difficulty finding ways to make new friends, particularly if they are not working or in school. They also say that, when they do have a chance to meet new people, some of them "just don't understand" what it is like to have a brain injury and are not very tolerant of some of their problems, like their tendency to forget things.

Group members have expressed appreciation for the opportunity to

discuss their feelings with other people who have been through what they have. They voice recognition that each person is an individual and what each of them has experienced since their injuries may be different, but that there are some common experiences as well, and some commonly-expressed concerns about what their futures will be like. At their age, they want to know such things as whether they will be able to drive again, if they will be able to return to work—and to what kind of work—and if they will find intimate relationships.

The neurorehabilitation specialists in the group (Megan Dissinger, B.A. and Megan Rohrbach, M.S.S., LSW) assist the clients in determining which one of them will be responsible for leading the group each week (with assistance as needed). The group leader's responsibilities include coming up with ideas for the major activity for the day and for making sure everyone is aware of other important logistics, such as where they will meet, where they will have lunch, how much money they will need, etc. This planning process requires the use of their executive functions and, frequently, compensatory strategies.

So far this year, the activities have included going bowling, making pottery objects at Paint Some Pottery, going to the movies (*Paul Blart: Mall Cop*), going to the Reading Public Museum, playing pool, and having lunch at a variety of affordable eateries. In addition, two of the group members worked on the word search for this issue of *BrainWaves* (see page 5). Another will appear in the next issue of *BrainWaves*.

There is, of course, time for the group members to discuss specific issues of importance to persons of their age, such as reasonable cellphone use and when and how much to text people, when or if it may be time for a driver's evaluation, etc. The group is off to a great start and we are looking forward to new members joining soon.

Upcoming Events

- The Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc. (BIANJ) will hold its annual seminar, *Brain Injury Perspectives*, on May 20 and 21, 2009 at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel in Eatontown, NJ. This year's seminar will address research, recovery and long-term quality of life issues related to brain injury rehabilitation. Workshop discussion topics include post traumatic stress disorder, developments in neuroimaging, self awareness and brain injury, adolescents and brain injury, relationships and sexuality, mental health issues, life care planning, and guardianship. Keynote speakers for this seminar include Cynthia Masters and John Whyte, M.D., Ph.D. Ms. Masters is a nationally-recognized motivational speaker. Dr. Whyte is a physiatrist and experimental psychologist specializing in traumatic brain injury rehabilitation. He directs the Moss Rehabilitation Research Institute and is professor of rehabilitation medicine at Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia, PA. For more information on the seminar or to register online, go to www.bianj.org, or you can call Joanna Boyd at (732) 745-0200.
- The Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc. (BIAPA) will hold its annual conference, *Brain Injury Moves Ahead: Creating a Community of Partnership*, on June 22–23, 2009 at the new Lancaster Marriott and Convention Center in Lancaster, PA. This year, BIAPA issued a Call for Presentations, inviting submissions for presentations in concurrent sessions to be held or for posters to be displayed. There will be three educational tracks for the seminar: 1) New Alternatives in Treatment; 2) Activism and Advocacy; and 3) Improving Quality of Life. More information will be available soon on the BIAPA website, www.biapa.org.

Spotlight: Ray McCarthy



Spotlight: Ray McCarthy

Spotlight: Ray, tell us a little about yourself.

Ray: My name is Ray McCarthy. I've lived in Barnegat, New Jersey my whole life. Things were going well for me. I had a good job, I had a lot of friends, and I was having a good time. And then everything changed on September 24, 2004 when I was in a car accident. A helicopter had to fly me to the hospital, and I was in a coma for three weeks, they tell me. I went to JFK [Ray is referring to JFK Johnson Rehabilitation Institute in Edison, NJ] for about a month, which I don't really remember, and from there I went to Hartwyck [Ray is referring to JFK's Hartwyck at Oak Tree in Edison, NJ] for about five months of rehab. I came home in a wheelchair, then moved to a walker, and then started walking on my own. I eventually went to outpatient rehab at PLUS-NJ [Ray is referring to PLUS NeuroRehabilitation in Egg Harbor City, NJ] for about a year and, just as I was finishing up there, I started with Community Skills Program.

Spotlight: How are things going for you now?

Ray: I'm a lot better than I was. To me, the main thing is that I can drive again. I couldn't drive for four years and that was awful for me. Now I can drive, and it's great.

Spotlight: What was it like, returning to driving?

Ray: It was awesome. Clare at Bacharach was great. [Ray is referring to Clare McLaughlin, OTR/L, CDRS, certified driving instructor at Bacharach Institute for Rehabilitation in Pomona, NJ.] We did driving therapy once a week. It took a lot of work and it didn't happen right away. There were steps—it was a whole process. At one point, Clare made me stop driving therapy, and that was an awful day for me. She said I needed to improve some of my skills before returning to driving therapy. She spoke with you [Ray is referring to Eric Share, B.S., CBIS, his neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program, who conducted this interview], and came up with a plan for what I could do during our sessions to get me back to driving. We worked on some of my cognitive skills for months. We didn't drive together; we just worked on the skills I needed to allow me to drive again. I made it back, and I finished driving therapy with Clare. Then I passed my driving test with the state, and my doctor, Jacinth Reid-Artist [Ray is referring to his physiatrist at Bacharach Institute for Rehabilitation], gave me permission to return to driving. It's all done now, and I'm very happy it worked out so well. It took so long, but looking back, that's okay.

Spotlight: Do you have any restrictions on your driving?

Ray: Well, I have my license and I'm allowed to drive wherever I want. But I don't have good control of my right arm and right leg, so I'm only allowed to drive vehicles that have been modified with a left-side accelerator pedal and a spinner knob on the steering wheel. It's expensive to get those modifications, but I'm happy to do it if it means I can drive. I had to do

it to both of my cars. I have a show car, a 2000 Audi S4, but I also bought an older pickup truck for everyday driving.

Spotlight: What else have you accomplished in your recovery?

Ray: Work has always been really important to me. I was a McDonald's manager for years, and then I began working for Coca-Cola, first as a merchandiser and then as a salesman, which is the job I had when I had my accident. Not working all those years was awful. You and I, along with my parents and Janet Stoothoff [Ray is referring to his Medicaid Waiver nurse case manager with Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey] met every month during my Community Skills Program treatment and, when it was decided that I was ready to try working again, we planned that I would start by volunteering. I'd never heard of volunteering except at places like hospitals, but you helped me realize it was a good way to help me return to work. You came up with the idea that I could get a job detailing cars. Pretty much my favorite thing is cars. I used to run car shows, and I wash my own car at least twice a week. I did that even before I started driving again. So it was a good fit to get a job doing something I already knew how to do and liked doing.

I had a connection at a local car dealer, and you followed up on that. I volunteered in the dealership's detailing shop for a month, and then we changed that to a paid position. I worked part-time for two months and, on December 10, 2008, I began working full-time. At first, you were there whenever I was, but as I got better at the job, you were around less and less. By the time I started working full-time, you just dropped by

(continued on page 4)

Spotlight continued (from page 3)

sometimes, and now you just call my boss every couple of weeks, because we all agree that I don't need any help at the job site anymore.

Spotlight: You must really love cars.

Ray: Cars are my favorite hobby. I started getting interested when I was about 16, when I had older friends who could drive. Then I got interested in making them look their best, and that led to entering car shows. I eventually started organizing and running car shows, with friends and by myself. I really love import cars, especially Audis. I bought my Audi before I could drive again. It sat in the driveway and I started it every now and then. When it looked like I was going to be able to drive again, I bought the pickup truck for everyday driving. I didn't want to drive my "toy" at first. I didn't trust myself at first. I waited until I was more confident that I really was safe to drive. Even after I finished driving therapy and after I passed the state driving test, I still felt I needed more practice and experience before I could drive my "toy."

Spotlight: What has been the hardest thing to deal with since your injury?

Ray: The way my life was versus the way it is now.

Spotlight: What's different?

Ray: In some ways, it's totally opposite of what it was. I used to have 50 good friends; now I have two or three. I have new people I associate with, like members of my new car club, but they're not my friends yet. To go from that many friends and a ton of associates to two or three friends and maybe a few more associates is really different. And even with people around me, I still feel lonely a lot of the time. Having a girlfriend would be great. I haven't had a relationship since my accident, and that stinks. You always tell me to give it time—that things will develop as I continue to be

involved in my community. I just don't like waiting. Also, I'm making less money than I used to. I'm happy to work, and I hope to someday move up to a better job. But I'm very motivated to work, and to work hard. That feeling hasn't changed at all.

Spotlight: What sorts of activities are you busy with?

Ray: Besides working full-time, I work out at my gym about three days a week, and I joined a car club. I used to run a car club—I was the boss of my car club—but now I belong to another one. It's only been a few months, but I've already entered my car into car shows, and I have a bunch of trophies already. It's a really good feeling to win trophies again. I put a lot of time into maintaining my car and making it look good, and it's nice when other people, strangers, look at my car and decide it's the best one of its kind, or even that it's the best in the whole show.

Spotlight: Is there anything you would like to tell other people in your situation?

Ray: That's a tough one. I guess people can learn from me that they shouldn't give up. There were lots of times I wanted to give up. There were lots of awful times when it never seemed it would get any better. All those years I spent not driving and not

working, spending most of my time inside these same four walls—that was awful. I always wanted to get out and do things. But I did get help in how to do it. I didn't always understand why or how what you did with me would help me, even though you tried to explain it to me. All I know is that, even though my life isn't back to exactly what it was before, I'm happy that I'm driving and working again. I'm happy but not satisfied, if that makes sense. It took a lot of hard work and a lot of time, and I have a feeling there's still some of that stuff ahead of me.

[Editor's Note: Many people and providers have been supportive of Ray's rehabilitation efforts. His parents, Paul and Linda McCarthy, have been strong advocates for him. Ray's treatment was funded through the New Jersey Medicaid Waiver Program for Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury. Ray's case managers at Visiting Nurse Association of Central Jersey are to be recognized for their understanding of Ray's rehabilitation needs. It is important to note that Ray is now successfully working full-time and no longer requires the comprehensive rehabilitation services available through the Medicaid Waiver Program.]



Ray standing next to his award-winning show car—a 2000 Audi S4.



Creativity Corner



Word Search: Dessert!

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

The winter holiday season is a time when families and friends often gather together to enjoy a festive meal. And, what better way to end a meal than with a great dessert! This became the topic during one of our Therapeutic Activities Group sessions and the members decided to create a word search puzzle using the dessert theme. We tweaked the puzzle a little bit using Discovery Education’s Puzzlemaker website, <http://puzzlemaker.discoveryeducation.com>. (The features of this website were highlighted in our “Tips On...” article in the Summer 2008 issue of *BrainWaves*.)

Instructions: Hidden in the block of letters below are the names of 10 desserts. 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. Happy hunting!



Cake
Chocolate
Cookies

Cupcake
Donut
Jello
Pie

Popsicle
Pudding
Strawberry



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

Turn to page 7 for the solution.

Did You Know??

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

The Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA) has designated March as **Brain Injury Awareness Month**, to increase public awareness and education about brain injury. There are still many persons in the public who are unaware of brain injury and its effects on individuals and their families. Because of the large number of brain injuries, it is often referred to as the “silent epidemic.” It is important to raise public awareness of the consequences of brain injuries so that more steps can be taken to prevent them.

This year’s focus is on **sports and concussions**, especially youth sports. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an estimated 1.6 to 3.8 million sports- and recreation-related concussions occur in the U.S. each year. BIAA emphasizes that a concussion is a type of traumatic brain injury caused by a blow or jolt to the head. According to BIAA, the sports or recreational activities that account for the most concussions are bicycling, football, basketball, playground activities and soccer. The severity can range from mild to severe, and signs and symptoms may be noticeable immediately, or it may take days or weeks before they are evident. Most concussions do not involve loss of consciousness, but can affect the ability to function effectively at home, school or work. One’s ability to carry out daily activities can be compromised. Seeking medical attention immediately following an incident is crucial.

For more information about brain injury, call BIAA at (800) 444-6443 or visit their website at www.biausa.org. Educational and awareness materials are available for download on the website. To learn more information about what events are taking place in your community or state during March, contact your local brain injury association or go to biausa.org and click on “state offices.”

Update continued (from page 1)

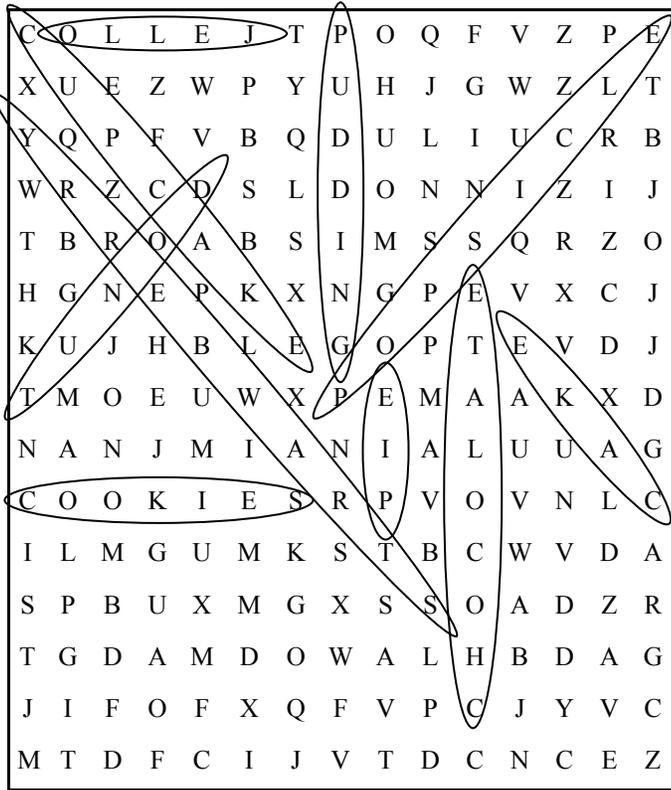
- Wayne has been attending diabetes management counseling. He also resumed attending high school wrestling meets, which he enjoyed prior to his brain injury.
- In January, Abner began taking English as a Second Language (ESL) classes at his local library. He is determined to earn his United States citizenship, and has expressed great enthusiasm toward his ESL classes. Thus far, he has attended all of his classes and has been taking notes, as well.
- Ann Marie has begun using her filing system, with her sons’ assistance.
- Pat received \$1,000 from Ann Ferren Charity, Inc. toward the purchase of a new vehicle. He used this money, plus \$500 of his own money, as a down payment on a used vehicle. In addition, he was approved for an automobile loan for the remaining cost of the vehicle.
- Michael continues to volunteer in the occupational therapy department of a local medical center. He has been effectively using his index cards as a strategy to remember his work tasks. In addition, he participates in an exercise routine and chess club meetings.
- Douglas continues to improve in his use of **Quicken** financial software to keep track of his bank balance and spending, as well as to pay his bills.
- Reggie has been improving his skills in planning and organizing trips into the community. He has visited several malls in his community and is becoming more familiar with surrounding communities as well.
- Ken continues to volunteer once a week in the human resource department at Doylestown Hospital, where his duties include alphabetizing paperwork and filing. He also

volunteers once a week at the Bucks County Free Public Library. In addition, Ken performed a duet with his mother during the Christmas Eve service at Grace Gospel Chapel, where he attends Sunday services and participates in a men’s Bible study group.

- Lorine and her sister have begun volunteering every Thursday at a local daycare center.
- Kirk has been working on a new craft project—a model of a log cabin—that he plans to display at this year’s **Creativity Expo** in July.
- In December, Jacalyn began a new volunteer position at a local aquarium, where she interacts with guests at two separate touch exhibits. She said she especially enjoys her interactions with the children who visit the exhibits.
- Adam’s stamina and endurance have improved and new chores have been added to his routine; he now takes out the trash, and he cleaned his entire room without showing any signs of fatigue.
- Congratulations to Casey Rech, B.S., neurorehabilitation specialist, and Maria Zakula, M.A., client services liaison, who passed the certification exam of the Academy of Certified Brain Injury Specialists and will now be able to use the CBIS designation for this accomplishment.

[Editor’s Note: Community Skills Program is committed to the ongoing staff development of all of its personnel, and provides funding for the preparation and application process for each neurorehabilitation specialist to become certified as a brain injury specialist as soon as he/she is eligible. Community Skills Program also sponsors the membership of each neurorehabilitation specialist in his/her state’s brain injury association (Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc. or Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc.) and the Society for Cognitive Rehabilitation, Inc. (SCR).]

Word Search Solution: Dessert!



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