
◆ Brain Waves ◆

Volume 21 Issue 3

The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

Fall 2005

Once More with Feeling...From Confusion To Accomplishment

Each member of our Vocational Adjustment Group (that meets every Tuesday in Philadelphia, PA) was asked to look back in time and describe what they went through before reaching their present stage of recovery. The feeling that all four recalled, and shared in common, was confusion. Sam described it in a way that others agreed was the way they also felt. He said, "When just sitting and looking out at the world, there was the feeling that something was wrong, but not knowing what was wrong." He added, "I made a chart to see how active I was. Many things I could not do."

Jennifer said she was in a coma for four and one-half months. She said, "Besides the confusion, I was angry about everything. I was a bitch, and every sentence that came out of my mouth included the 'F word.' I was pissed." She remarked that she did not remember that behavior, but was told by her twin sister what her behavior was like. Jennifer added, "I know I was angry about everything, though."

Rick (who required brain surgery) said, "Before the surgery, I could read a book, but afterwards I couldn't read this watch (pointing to the watch on his wrist). I couldn't sound words out. In trying to say watch, I knew the word I wanted to say, but I could not say it. I could only say, 'wa, wa.' I lost how to read. I was always tired, and sometimes could sleep for 14 hours after going to sleep at night." Sam said he also was "so mentally tired."

Stewart did not experience an acquired or traumatic brain injury as the others did, but experienced a developmental

disability. He said that, when he was a little boy growing up, he was easily tired and, when tired, his speech would be slurred. He said, "I got tired easily and my words were not clear. I couldn't think straight, and I also had an equilibrium problem when I got tired. I would sway when walking. In high school, I could not pronounce words properly and was given a hearing test. Then I was given speech therapy."

The contrast in behaviors each group member revealed is remarkable in many ways with respect to their accomplishments today. Sam, an electrician, is a full-time employee of Tastykake; Jennifer works part-time on a volunteer work trial basis as a clerk in a neighborhood medical clinic of Thomas Jefferson University Hospital; Rick is employed as a visitor experience facilitator at the Please Touch Museum, on a permanent part-time basis; and Stewart is a full-time mail clerk at the United States Attorney's Office. Notwithstanding the remarkable recovery in function that each has demonstrated, however, some

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Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Alan, Anna, Daniel N., David H., James, Joshua, Monet, NiNa, Patrick, and Samantha—and also to our new neurorehabilitation specialists—Paul Carberry, M.A., LPC and Casey Rech, B.S.

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 *Brain Waves*.

- Patty hosted two small tea parties at her home recently.
- Jeremy is doing well on his new part-time job as a maintenance worker at a high school.
- Kim B. is taking a class on drawing of interiors, as part of her interior design curriculum.
- Mike B. continues to work as a seasonal groundskeeper for a cemetery.
- Matthew continues to work as a dining room maintenance worker at McDonald's.
- Terry continues to run his catering business and recently catered an event for over 500 people.
- Jeffrey continues to work as a floor technician for a janitorial company.
- Neil continues to perform his janitorial job at Petco very well.
- Paul is volunteering as a teacher's aide in a preschool class at a child development center and as a teacher's aide in a kindergarten classroom at a center for special learning.

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Spotlight: Fredric (Rick) Tepper



Spotlight: Rick Tepper

Spotlight: Please tell us about yourself.

Rick: I am 35 years old. I live on my own and I work part-time...and I do as much as I can do.

Spotlight: What do you like to do for fun?

Rick: I go out with friends to restaurants and movies and museums.

Spotlight: Tell us about your family.

Rick: My mother and my sister live in Los Angeles, California; my father, his wife, and my younger sister live in Jenkintown, Pennsylvania...with their dog.

Spotlight: Is your family supportive of you?

Rick: Yes.

Spotlight: In what way?

Rick: Well, along the way we have gone to doctors' appointments together, to a couple of brain injury conferences and to the family/team meetings together. They just try to help me out with whatever I need. If there is anything I can't tackle on my own, they're there to assist me with what I need. My mom flew in from California for the most recent family/team meeting. She scheduled her visit over the date of our meeting and she plans to do that again in the future sometime.

My dad is always present at the meetings.

Spotlight: I understand that you had an AVM. Could you tell us a little about what that is?

Rick: It is an arteriovenous malformation (AVM). Mine is located in the vision section of the brain and it has burst about four times. The first time I was five and there was no way to operate, so Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) just monitored me and waited until the bleeding stopped. The second time I was seven and I was the first successful operation at CHOP for the repair of an AVM. Then it happened when I was 26 and they had to operate twice that time because it burst twice. I had to go to Chicago Northwestern University to have the surgery because I needed a certain team of doctors and apparently Chicago Northwestern University was the only place I could go at the time. The team at Chicago Northwestern University believes there will be no more bursts and that the reason it burst again when I was 26 was because that area was more pronounced as it matured. After the first surgery, I lost part of my right peripheral vision and after the second surgery I lost the rest of the right peripheral vision. Before it was just the bottom, but now it is the whole thing.

Spotlight: Please tell us a little about your life prior to the most recent AVM.

Rick: I had a career as an automotive service advisor, I had a girlfriend, I was socially active, and was very much into driving in my car. I enjoyed it.

Spotlight: Where did you receive treatment initially?

Rick: CHOP.

Spotlight: Where else have you received treatment?

Rick: Chicago Northwestern University. I also went to rehabs and stuff. After Chicago, they sent me home and I couldn't do anything, so finally we were able to get me into Bryn Mawr Rehabilitation Hospital. I had neuropsychological evaluations, and physical therapy and some cognitive rehabilitation therapy. I then applied for assistance through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). OVR paid for me to go to MossRehab for outpatient rehab at the Drucker Brain Injury Center and the staff there taught me all kinds of stuff about activities of daily living and vocational skills. Then I moved to Connecticut for a little while with my girlfriend and became involved with the Bureau of Vocational Services (BVS). When I came back to this area, I became involved with OVR again.

Spotlight: What changes have you experienced since the AVM?

Rick: Well, after the AVM I couldn't read anymore and I'm slowly working towards being able to do that again. I lost my right peripheral vision permanently. I have a prism in the right lens of my eyeglasses, which were designed at Philadelphia College of Optometry. Because of that I lost my driver's license, so I can't drive anymore. I get tired easily. There was a time, at the beginning, when the doctors would point at their watch and I could only bring out the "w" sound. I couldn't complete the word "watch," but I knew exactly what it was and I would get very frustrated with that. Some of the words were hard to remember and that would bring frustration. I knew what it was in my mind, but I couldn't say the word. I would get really angry with myself. It took a long time before all my vocabulary came back. My short-term

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Spotlight...

continued (from page 2)

memory is difficult, too; I have to write everything down. I also don't have a good sense of what 5 or 10 minutes is.

Spotlight: Describe the kinds of compensatory strategies you use to help you on a daily basis.

Rick: I have a Palm Pilot and, as soon as I make an appointment with someone, I have to put it in there because I'll forget it if I don't enter it. Or if I get a name and phone number, I have to put it in there because I'll forget it right away. I learned how to use the Palm Pilot while I was at MossRehab and then I taught other people how to use one and I have been using one ever since. I also use a watch to keep track of time.

When I first moved into my apartment, I used the picture we took (referring to Carol Bardsley, M.A., CPCRT, program coordinator, Community Skills Program, and interviewer) of my medication box, to help me remember how to fill my medication box correctly. Now I can do it without the picture, but I still have the picture. Also, when I first moved to Center City Philadelphia, Jason (referring to Jason Osher, B.S., neurorehabilitation specialist, Community Skills Program, who worked with Rick from 2003 to 2005) and I made a map of the bus routes to help me learn the routes because I didn't remember anything. Now I am pretty good at remembering where most of the main streets are...and all of the Starbucks!

I use timers a lot, especially when cooking. I also set my alarm clock earlier than necessary when I need to get up for work or an appointment, so I am not late.

Spotlight: Please tell us about your living situation.

Rick: Prior to my AVM, I lived with my girlfriend in the suburbs of

Philadelphia, PA. Now I live on my own in Center City Philadelphia, which is totally different. I have been living in Center City since the summer of 2003, which is when I first rented an apartment there. I then moved into my current co-op apartment in the fall of 2003. Prior to living on my own after the AVM, I lived with my mother in Bucks County because I was not able to live on my own at that time.

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

Rick: I met you guys at the first annual Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania conference and I told my OVR counselor that I would like to work with Community Skills Program. Services began on August 20, 2002. *[Editor's Note: Anita Pulliam (now Anita Diggs) was the OVR counselor who referred Rick to Community Skills Program when he lived in Bucks County. When he moved to Center City Philadelphia, his case was transferred to Crystal Mangir, his current OVR counselor.]*

Spotlight: How did or does Community Skills Program staff assist you?

Rick: They helped me with what I needed in writing a resume and organizing myself and finding volunteer work and finding a job and with transportation training and the support group (referring to the Vocational Adjustment Group he attends one time per week on Tuesdays from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.), which talks about different topics to expand my mind.

Spotlight: Are you employed at this time?

Rick: Yes, at the Please Touch Museum, which is within walking distance from my co-op (apartment).

Spotlight: How many days per week do you work?

Rick: I currently work part-time, three days per week—Wednesday, Friday and Saturday—for 7½ hours each day.

Spotlight: How did you obtain the job?

Rick: Jason Osher helped me locate a volunteer position at the museum in October 2003, and went with me initially to help me learn the job tasks and to build up my stamina to be able to work a full shift. In September 2004, I was offered additional paid shifts, called "on-call" shifts, where I filled in for co-workers who could not work their scheduled shift. I demonstrated that I could work those full shifts and, on April 1, 2005, I was offered and accepted a permanent part-time, paid position as a visitor experience facilitator. *[Editor's Note: This all occurred following the suggestion of a member of the Vocational Adjustment Group, whose daughter is employed at the Please Touch Museum. He provided Dr. Ray Finley, facilitator of the group, with the name and phone number of the person to call. Following Dr. Finley's telephone contact, personal contact was made by Mr. Osher.]*

Spotlight: What are your job responsibilities?

Rick: There is an area where literature is available for people to take home and I stock that area on occasion. One of my first duties of the day is to check that area. On the gallery floor, I watch the children play and make sure everyone is safe and that they follow the rules. I answer any questions they may have. Sometimes I facilitate an area called "Kids Creations," where children can participate in a hands-on activity such as painting. I set it up, facilitate it, and then clean up.

Spotlight: What do you like most about working?

Rick: It gives me a sense of accomplishment.

Spotlight: How do you spend your time on the days you do not work?

Rick: Sometimes I also volunteer at another museum, the Independence

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Once More with Feeling... continued (from page 1)

residuals (of different kinds) with respect to brain injury and developmental issues are still commonly manifested. Adjustment to those residuals, in order to get and hold a job, is the purpose of the Vocational Adjustment Group.

Each of the individuals identified efforts they have made to turn their lives around, toward recovery of some functions, when the confusion began to lift (though no one could pinpoint when that happened). Jennifer said she believes she began to be careful about her language when her sister's children were present. "I did not want them to hear that kind of language," she said. She also said, "I like my work, and I'm motivated to doing good work and getting paid. I'm making my own calls now to Paratransit for transportation." (Her mother once made the calls.)

Sam said he is continuing to sharpen his skills, master the new equipment electricians use today, and improve his understanding of other new techniques. "I need to learn new language used in my field today," he said.

Rick said he began to read again, line by line, by holding his hand beneath the line of words on a printed page. That was a kind of waking from confusion, he said. But neither could he remember when that waking first occurred. He explained, "Now that I can read the words better, I want to improve my understanding of what I read. I read just a little at a time, reading now for understanding. I read small articles for practice," he said.

Stewart said he works hard to keep his focus, not get distracted, and follow each step of opening mail. He explained, "The steps are on the wall—a 'to do' list that explains what to do when a piece of mail is questionable.

Mental focus is critical because a different emphasis is on opening mail. All my energy is on that one thing. I don't have equilibrium problems anymore."

While each of the four individuals has made gains in his or her work performance and related social interactions, Stewart maintains control and determination while carrying in memory the frightful aspect of deaths of mail handlers by anthrax. As Stewart so often says, "I always try to do the best I can."

Spotlight... continued (from page 3)

Seaport Museum. I usually volunteer Monday and Tuesday, but I don't have to show up if I don't want to. I usually spend about four hours each day. I help the full-time employees as they are building sailboats out of wood. The activities are always different, such as cutting, sanding, planing, gluing or staining pieces of wood.

Spotlight: What are your future goals?

Rick: As far as the job goes, I take it as it comes. I don't think about it too much. I reached where I wanted to reach there. I'm not really anxious about trying to get somewhere else. I'm comfortable with where I'm at. I don't feel like I can do too much more at this time.

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

Rick: Don't give up. Things just take time.

[Editor's Note: We wish to acknowledge Rick's past treatment providers for their contribution to his rehabilitation and to thank his parents and Crystal Mangir, his OVR counselor, for their important roles in Rick's accomplishments to date.]

Update... continued (from page 1)

- Daniel is volunteering at his church and exceeding his supervisor's expectations. He uses a backpack vacuum to clean the hallways, vestibules and school office, and is also cleaning and sanitizing the water fountains.
- Jonathan is volunteering in the medical records department at a local hospital, labeling patients' folders and looking up patient information on the computer system.
- Brian continues to perform well his job as a dishwasher at the Crab Barn.
- Kelly has received new assistive technology and will receive training on it, through Easter Seals.
- Jesse is performing well as a crew member at Arby's.
- Tom M. is doing well in his part-time position as an auto detailer.
- Timothy is employed part-time as a prep cook for a catering company.
- Steven is taking a class in Comparative Religions at a local college.
- Don continues to work part-time as a service associate at Giant and as a miscellaneous utility person at Kmart.
- Elizabeth S. continues to perform her job tasks well at the International House of Pancakes (IHOP), where she works as a part-time dishwasher.
- Anthony is working for Wal-Mart as a full-time stock worker.
- Jean has been going bowling with a Stroke Club and scored 145 in one game.
- Kevin N. continues to volunteer as a youth leader for his church.
- Christopher is in the 10th grade now and is preparing to take the SAT for future college admission.



Creativity Corner



Word Search: Leisure Time

With the hustle and bustle of the holidays quickly approaching, we are reminded of some of the leisure and recreational activities in which we participate. Following are some of our favorites. These words are hidden in the box of letters below. They may be written vertically, horizontally, diagonally, forwards or backwards. When you find the hidden words, 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. When you have finished the word search, see if you can think of at least 10 of your own leisure/recreational interests. Good luck! And, don't forget to take some time to relax a little, too, this holiday season.

baking
bicycling
bingo
bowling

cooking
crafts
decorating
drawing

exercising
gardening
movies
painting

puzzles
reading
scrapbooking
sewing

singing
swimming
walking
yoga

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

[Solution: Turn to page 7.]

Creativity Corner... continued



Fall Craft Collection

We would like to share with you a collection of pictures depicting some of the crafts that Maureen Kehoe (current client of Community Skills Program) has made and displays in her home during the fall season. Very creative, Maureen!



Upcoming Events:

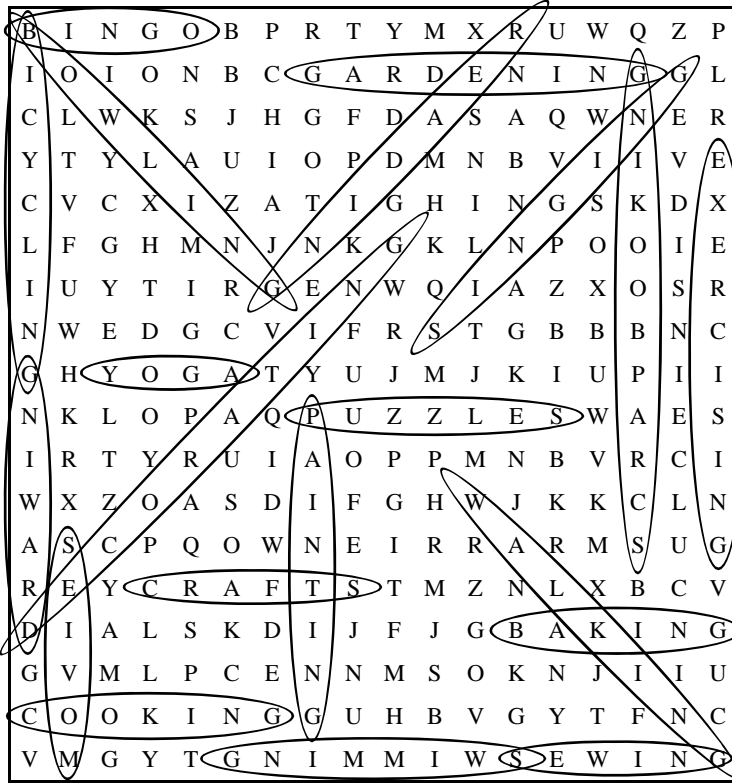
Save the Dates!

Plan to attend the 2nd Federal TBI Interagency Conference, March 9-11, 2006, followed by the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine's Brain Injury - Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group (BI-ISIG) Mid-year Meeting, March 11-12, 2006, at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland. The focus of the Federal TBI Interagency Conference is on integrating models of research and service delivery and will give you opportunities to learn about the latest scientific findings of federally-sponsored research in traumatic brain injury. For information on the conference, call Ms. Jessica Semidey at (973) 243-6812 or Ms. Cherie Davide at (973) 243-6813, or e-mail www.tbi-interagency.org/.

The BI-ISIG Mid-year Meeting will begin at the same location on the afternoon of Saturday, March 11, 2006 and will conclude on Sunday afternoon, March 12, 2006. During the BI-ISIG Mid-year Meeting, the task forces of the BI-ISIG meet. Typically, these meetings are very productive and enjoyable. The task forces are open to new participants; membership in the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) and the BI-ISIG is required but can be a "BI-ISIG membership only" for those who qualify. The current task forces are: Assistive Technology, Cognitive Rehabilitation, Community-based Treatment, Disorders of Consciousness, Long-term Issues, Pediatric/Adolescence, Prognosis, and Treatment Theory.

For information on the BI-ISIG Mid-year Meeting, contact Dr. Thomas Felicetti at (215) 750-4300 or Dr. Sally Kneipp at (215) 735-7603.

Word Search Solution: Leisure Time



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Editor:
Sally Kneipp, Ph.D., LPC, LRC

Publication Assistant:
Lisa Sechrist

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Community Skills Program®
Counseling and Rehabilitation, Inc.
1150 Berkshire Blvd., Suite 245
Wyomissing, PA 19610
(610) 376-3390
FAX (610) 376-3392
E-mail: CSPNJPA@aol.com
Website:
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