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# ◆ Brain Waves ◆

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Volume 23 Issue 1

The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

Spring 2007

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## Once More with Feeling... Determination

Members of the Vocational Adjustment Group that meets every Tuesday evening in Philadelphia, PA have demonstrated that determination, though not at all easy to sustain, is necessary to get and hold a job. When the brain is damaged, or when during its development some miscue affects its functioning, the road ahead is not at all easy to travel. As aptly said by Jennifer, and agreed upon by other members of the group, "That road has many potholes." Each member of the group has a job; however, Jennifer is a part-time volunteer clerical assistant at Jefferson Medical Care. Other members are Sam, an electrician at Tastykake; Howard, a dishwasher/kitchen worker at the DoubleTree Guest Suites Hotel; and Stewart, a mail clerk at the United States Attorney's Office. Members were asked to describe to the *BrainWaves*' reading audience their will to succeed while at the same time dealing with unwanted circumstances.

Stewart gave an example of such a circumstance. He said, "Sometimes, I just want to get words out, to say something, but then something gets in the way and blocks them." In opposite manner, sometimes Jennifer has not been able to initiate expression of a thought, but her responses to expressions made by others have been quick. Jennifer sustained a brain trauma that left her in a coma for four and one-half months, but, as she stated, "Here I am. I'm working for a medical clinic, filing, sorting mail, shredding, and pulling charts when patients are to be seen." Stewart's significant accomplishment is also a source of

discomfort at times. He has held his job for 15 years. He believes there are times when he is "out of the loop" and finds that to be very distressing. Decisions and changes in procedures are sometimes made, he stated, but he has not been asked to participate in meetings about them while other workers in his unit have been. Nonetheless, he remarked, "I just do the best I can." He often makes that statement. He gives credit to his mother for his work ethic. "She backed me," he said. He enjoyed telling how, when he was notified by telephone, after being interviewed, that he had won the job he now holds, "My mother invited me to celebrate by having a drink at the Barclay Hotel. We had a bang," Stewart said. Stewart continued, "I believe that following good health habits is the most successful thing that I have done; eating properly and performing Yoga are most important among the things I do. I like to learn, also, and use my computer to search for information."

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## Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Andrew, Barbara, Brittany, Courtney, José, Kim, Lindsay, Mayumi, Megan, Retha, Robert and Tara.

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*.

- Orville is volunteering at a local church, assisting with maintenance tasks, and he and his wife also volunteer at a food pantry one evening a week. Recently, he tried using a treadmill at the gym where his wife goes and she then purchased a gym membership for him so they can go to the gym together. He has also been assembling a 750-piece jigsaw puzzle.
- Howard had his annual performance review at work and has earned a commendable 3% increase. Congratulations, Howard!
- Marissa has increased her work hours on her job as a sorter/marker.
- Kara has been working part-time and independently arranging her public transportation. [Please see the interview with Kara in "Spotlight," which begins on page 3.]
- Adam continues to volunteer part-time and engage in social activities of his choice.
- Patrick was named "Employee of the Year" by Sam's Club, his employer, and received an \$800 bonus. Excellent work, Pat!

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

Sam said, "I was confused—there was a lot of confusion—and I was afraid, sometimes near panic after my accident. I thought I was going to get stuck on being useless once I left the hospital and returned home. There were times when I thought I knew the road to take that would get me away from what I was feeling, but the road would get washed out. I would take another road, but it would be blocked. But then, at some point, I can't remember when, I began to relearn some things and that gave me some confidence. I then knew that I had to get on with my life and, especially, meet my family responsibilities. That is what began to motivate me. I didn't yet have full confidence, but I answered an ad by a company that needed an electrician. I had an interview and got the job. I felt that somehow I would learn again and know the things I knew before; however, I was dismissed from three jobs in two years before getting the job I have now. I am now in the final quarter of holding my present job for three continuous years. My biggest accomplishment is doing my work with confidence—fixing things, problem-solving, and not having to ask for help to do things."

Howard is in his 17<sup>th</sup> year of employment with the same employer. "My biggest accomplishment," he said, "is being able to deal with situations that are in my life right now. I'm doing a good job handling problems that are the result of my brain injury. Memory is my biggest problem. I was put in this situation because of my injury, but I'm dealing with it really well. Some of the same problems I could not deal with before, I can deal with now because I know what my problems are. I will never drive a car, for example,

but I'm able to deal with what I cannot do. I was motivated by the people in Community Skills Program who trained me. I always challenge myself to do things and I have dogged determination. I always want to do things in the right way, to do the best I can. I was 12 years old when I was injured. My learning curve has bumps in it, but I've made it through that. I'm happy at the point where I am right now, doing the best I can. It is difficult though to deal with what could have been, especially when I see old schoolmates, who are married now, with their children."

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## Update continued (from page 1)

- Matt G. performed again (playing the guitar and singing) at the Sanctuary Café.
- Barry has joined LA Fitness and worked with a personal trainer on two machines targeting his upper body strength.
- Jesse obtained part-time employment as a dietary aide at a skilled nursing and rehabilitation center.
- Will continues to volunteer at Meals on Wheels and to increase his productive activity in general.
- Lorine attended the Philadelphia Garden Show on March 5<sup>th</sup> with her sister, went to a luncheon with friends in New York City on March 10<sup>th</sup>, and attended a lecture, "From the Gay Nineties to the Roaring Twenties," at a local Jewish Community Center on March 20<sup>th</sup>. She has already signed up for a line dancing class and more lectures on various topics.
- Matt C. continues to perform well his dining room maintenance position at McDonald's, and has learned to use a public bus for transportation.

- Dustin continues to maintain full-time work as a meat and seafood clerk at a grocery store and is also taking an introductory course in graphic design at a local community college.
- Kevin continues to work part-time as a replenishment associate in the pantry department at Kmart.
- Ari continues to do well on his job as a store clerk at Petco.
- Bob is performing very well in his full-time job as a driver/deliverer for a tire and automotive services' company.
- Nina Geier, M.S., M.P.T., PT, ATC, CBIS, our program coordinator in New Jersey, and Sally Kneipp, Ph.D., LPC, LRC, CRC, ABVE, our director in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, attended the *State of the Science 2007 Conference on Community Integration of Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury*, in Arlington, VA on April 12 and 13, 2007, sponsored by a grant from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) to the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Community Integration of Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury at Memorial Hermann/The Institute on Rehabilitation Research in Houston, TX. Topics addressed issues related to employment, education, transportation, cultural diversity, parenting, friendships, intimacy, recreation, meaning in life, spirituality, and social action networking.

Following the conference, Ms. Geier and Dr. Kneipp went immediately to the Mid-Year Meeting of the Brain Injury Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, on April 13 and 14, 2007. They participated in the meeting of the Task Force on Cognitive Rehabilitation, chaired by Keith Cicerone, Ph.D., and, as co-chairs of the Task Force on Community-Based Treatment, they met with their task force for a stimulating and productive meeting.

## Spotlight: Kara Grady



*Spotlight: Kara Grady*

**Spotlight:** Thank you for agreeing to be featured in the *BrainWaves* “Spotlight.” Please tell us a little about yourself.

**Kara:** I am 28 years old. I live with my mother. I have one sister and two brothers. And, I have a traumatic brain injury.

**Spotlight:** I understand you sustained your injury when you were very young, Kara. Can you tell us how you were injured?

**Kara:** I was injured when I was four, almost five, years old. I got hit by a car when I was crossing the street. It was my sister’s birthday. I was crossing a street, chasing a cat.

**Spotlight:** Do you know where you received medical treatment and rehabilitation following your injury?

**Kara:** I went to Cooper [referring to Cooper University Hospital in Camden, NJ]—that was when I was in a coma. I was in a coma for five and a half weeks. After the coma, I was transferred to the Seashore House [referring to Children’s Seashore House of Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, located in Atlantic City, NJ at that time].

**Spotlight:** Since you were of school age at the time of your injury, did you receive therapies at school?

**Kara:** Yes, I had speech therapy, OT [occupational therapy] and PT [physical therapy] at my school and at my house. I also had cognitive rehabilitation therapy.

**Spotlight:** So, you had therapies through school and at home until you finished school. When did you graduate from high school?

**Kara:** I went to school at Burlington County Special Services for awhile. I was in the color guard there. I graduated from Haddon Township High School in 1998.

**Spotlight:** Did you continue your therapy after graduating from high school?

**Kara:** I didn’t have therapies right after high school, but later I went to Bancroft [referring to Bancroft Neurohealth] to work on job skills. After that, I went to a school in New York, called Maplebrook [located in Amenia, NY], but I didn’t stay. I decided to come home. I also had treatment for awhile at MossRehab Drucker Brain Injury Center [in Woodbury, NJ].

**Spotlight:** When you went to Maplebrook, was that the only time you lived away from home?

**Kara:** No, I also lived in an apartment in Voorhees, NJ, at Bancroft, after I came home from Maplebrook.

**Spotlight:** Would you like to live on your own in the future?

**Kara:** Yes, I would. I still need to get better at cleaning my room, cooking, and paying bills.

**Spotlight:** I know that, during your treatment with Community Skills Program, you are working on inde-

pendent living skills. On what kinds of things are you currently working during treatment?

**Kara:** We’re working on cooking.

**Spotlight:** And, how is that going?

**Kara:** Good! On Monday, I made pasta fagioli. I made it on the stove, not in the crock pot.

**Spotlight:** Do you use any safety precautions or strategies when you cook?

**Kara:** I have a device that holds the pot for me, so it doesn’t slip on the stovetop. It’s safer for me because my right hand is weak and tight. I use a cutting board that has suction cups on the bottom and little nails on it so the food doesn’t slip, so I don’t need to use my right hand. I also have a food chopper that works *genius*.

**Spotlight:** When you are following recipes, are there any strategies you use to compensate for your memory or to organize things?

**Kara:** I use a dry-erase marker so I can cross the ingredients off as I use them, so I can follow the recipe better.

**Spotlight:** You mentioned that your right hand is weak. What other physical limitations do you currently have?

**Kara:** Well, I can lose my balance easily if I’m not paying attention.

**Spotlight:** What about any cognitive problems you have...with attention or memory?

**Kara:** My memory is pretty good, but I think I sometimes have short-term memory loss.

**Spotlight:** Do you do anything to compensate for your memory?

**Kara:** I should, but I don’t do it all the time. I was told I should write things

*(continued on page 4)*

## Spotlight continued (from page 3)

down, but I don't do it so much. I have some checklists to remind me about things to do around the house.

**Spotlight:** When we started working with you, you had a job. Where was that?

**Kara:** I was working at Rack Room Shoes, but it was only on Wednesdays. They didn't need me anymore because the store was closing. But, I didn't like it that much anyway; I like working with kids. But, that's okay because it helped me figure out what I wanted to do for work.

**Spotlight:** When you lost your job at Rack Room, your neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program worked with you to find volunteer work. What kind of volunteer work do you do?

**Kara:** I found Interfaith Caregivers [located in Haddonfield, NJ] and started to volunteer with them. I volunteer at the Haddon Township Library; I'm on a list and they call me when they need me. And, I found Saddler's Woods [a conservation association]. Saddler's Woods is right behind my house.

**Spotlight:** What kinds of things are you doing as a volunteer for Saddler's Woods?

**Kara:** I was helping to find the Latin names for birds, spiders and insects. I still have to finish that project. I also went to plant trees on Arbor Day. I think there is another day in the Spring when they're going to plant trees. I don't know if I am going to be able to do because I'm working.

**Spotlight:** You mentioned work. Where are you currently working?

**Kara:** I'm working at the Garden State Discovery Museum [in Cherry Hill, NJ]. And, it's the best job I've ever had! I found it with help from

Goodwill of Southern New Jersey [with funding through the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services]. I have job coaching at work. There are people who still come to the museum to do job coaching and check on me.

**Spotlight:** How many days a week do you work at the museum?

**Kara:** I work three days a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, from 10:00 in the morning to 2:30 in the afternoon.

**Spotlight:** What are your job responsibilities there?

**Kara:** I help the kids with arts and crafts, I read to the kids, and I clean up. I do mostly the same things every day, but Thursdays are special days because there is a special class called Mini Masters. The kids copy the art from the masters—like Leonardo da Vinci. It's cool!

**Spotlight:** What do you like best about your job?

**Kara:** I like the kids...I *love* the kids. And, I love the people I work with—they're so cool.

**Spotlight:** How do you get to and from work?

**Kara:** I use Access Link [a paratransit service of New Jersey Transit]. Or, I have my mother pick me up. I have standing times now for my rides with Access Link, so it works out okay now.

**Spotlight:** What strengths do you have that make you successful at your job and when volunteering?

**Kara:** I like people. I have a good outlook on life—positive, not negative. If you have a negative personality, it won't get you anywhere. And, I have a good sense of humor.

**Spotlight:** What challenges do you have in trying to be successful at work or volunteering?

**Kara:** I have to remember to always be on time. If I'm a few minutes late, my

boss understands because Access Link is a little late sometimes. But, I call work and tell them if I'm going to be late. My boss understands because they have other people who work there who use Access Link, too.

**Spotlight:** What other things do you enjoy doing for fun or leisure?

**Kara:** I like to go out to dinner or just hang out with friends. I tried going to the SAIL program [located at the Jewish Community Center in Cherry Hill, NJ]. I'm going bowling with them on Sunday. Oh, yeah, and my mom and I just started to go ballroom dancing at a church nearby. I forget what the church is called. The first hour is teaching and then you can stay and dance for fun.

**Spotlight:** What other things do you do for leisure?

**Kara:** I'm reading a book. I also did a latch hook project; I made a pillow.

**Spotlight:** I know you took some really nice vacations. You like to travel, don't you?

**Kara:** I love to travel. I have my dad's blood. I went to Japan with my mom and my sister. Then, five weeks after that, I went to Ireland with my mom and my aunts.

**Spotlight:** What do you like best about traveling?

**Kara:** Learning different things. I like to travel to see things I've never seen before. We went to castles in Ireland. We walked up to Blarney Castle to kiss the Blarney Stone...for luck. In Japan, we took trains everywhere. The people in Japan were nice and quiet. I've been to Australia, too, but I needed help to climb the steep hills, because of my balance. *Crocodile Dundee* was filmed there.

**Spotlight:** Well, you're a world traveler.

**Kara:** Yeah, I am.

*(continued on page 5)*

## Spotlight continued (from page 4)

**Spotlight:** Kara, you have achieved a lot. What other goals do you have for your future?

**Kara:** Well, I want to be able to live on my own...and, hopefully, get married. And, maybe I could have a child. But, mostly, have a nice successful life... and maybe win the lottery. There's my sense of humor coming out.

**Spotlight:** What advice or words of wisdom do you have to share with others?

**Kara:** Have a positive attitude and never give up on what you want in life. And, never give up hope.



Kara holding the latch hook pillow she made recently.

*[Editor's Note: Many people and providers have been supportive of Kara's rehabilitation efforts, inspired of course by her determination to succeed. Her mother's ongoing support is truly appreciated. Kara has been fortunate as well to have received funding through Allstate and DVRS for the services she has needed. The prior Allstate claims personnel and her current claims representative, Patricia Kilcullen, are to be commended for their understanding of her rehabilitation needs and recognition of her potential.]*

## Upcoming Events

- The Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc.'s 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar, entitled **Faces of Brain Injury**, will be held on May 16 and 17, 2007 at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel and Conference Center in Eatontown, New Jersey. The overall purpose of this seminar is to identify opportunities and strategies for supporting, advocating for, and working with persons affected by brain injury. The seminar will provide information related to social challenges, behavioral and psychological interventions, medical challenges, and advocacy. Keynote speakers are Al Condeluci, Ph.D., Carolyn Rocchio, Joseph Romano, Esquire, and Michael Wilmore, MPAS-PA-C. Seminar topics include: Assistive Technology, Blast Injuries and Veterans' Issues, Behaviors and Cognition, Financial Planning, Legal Issues, Pharmacology, and more. For more information or to register, go to [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org) or call (732) 738-1002. Please note that you can register for either one or both days of the conference. Also, if you are interested in an exhibitor application and/or sponsorship or advertising opportunities, please contact Joanna Boyd by phone at (732) 738-1002, extension 228 or by e-mail at [jboyd@bianj.org](mailto:jboyd@bianj.org).
- The 2007 Williamsburg Conference, entitled **Rehabilitation of the Adult and Child with Brain Injury: Practical Solutions to Real World Problems**, will be held on June 7 and 8, 2007 at the Williamsburg Hospitality House Hotel and Conference Center in Williamsburg, Virginia. This year's conference is sponsored by Brain Injury Services, Inc., the National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury, and the Virginia Commonwealth University Traumatic Brain Injury Model System Program. The conference will focus on three core areas:
  - 1) community integration and long-term needs;
  - 2) cognitive and vocational rehabilitation and compensatory strategies; and
  - 3) pediatric brain injury and academic reentry.
 Lectures, break-out sessions and panel discussions are designed to enhance professional skills. It is possible to register for both days or for only one of the two days. Continuing education credits will be awarded for rehabilitation counselors (CRC), case managers (CCM) and social workers (NASW). For more information, you can call Linda Nowsherwan at (703) 451-8881 or e-mail her at [llee@braininjurysvcs.org](mailto:llee@braininjurysvcs.org).
- The 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc., entitled **Building a Network of Supports: A Lifelong Commitment**, will be held on June 25 and 26, 2007 at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey Hotel (formerly the Wyndham) in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. More information about the conference will soon be available online at [www.biapa.org](http://www.biapa.org) or by calling Amy Lucas at (717) 657-7608 or e-mailing her at [alucas@parf.org](mailto:alucas@parf.org).
- The 84<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine is being held in conjunction with the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Society of Neurorehabilitation, October 3 to 7, 2007, at the Renaissance Washington, DC Hotel. The theme of the **2007 ACRM-ASNR Joint Annual Conference** is "Rehabilitation Research Without Borders." During the conference, the Brain Injury Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group (BI-ISIG) will have its annual Chautauqua. The topic of this year's Chautauqua is "Controversies in the World of Sports Concussion." More information, as well as online registration, will be available in June at [www.acrm.org](http://www.acrm.org).

## Tips On... The Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center

In the last issue of *BrainWaves*, Adam Greene shared information about his fulfilling experiences at Breckenridge Outdoor Education Center (BOEC) in Colorado. Some of our readers expressed an interest in learning more about BOEC, and we encourage interested persons to access BOEC's website at [www.boec.org](http://www.boec.org), or telephone BOEC at (970) 453-6422 for more information. The following is a brief summary and some highlights for our readers.

BOEC was established in Breckenridge, Colorado (in the Rocky Mountains) in 1976, so it now has over 30 years of experience in providing outdoor, experienced-based education. It is a non-profit organization whose aim is to serve *all* people. Their instructors are trained to work with persons with disabilities, to assure their access to enriching outdoor activities. BOEC offers programs year-round for individuals and groups; adaptive skiing and snowboarding programs are offered in the winter.

The BOEC Wilderness Program, offered year-round, is a wilderness course that gives participants an opportunity to experience challenges and personal growth in a natural setting. Whether it is a single- or multi-day group course, all wilderness courses are specifically tailored to accommodate group members' physical and mental abilities. Course activities can include: rock climbing, canoeing, backpacking and hiking, whitewater rafting, a high ropes course, camping, hand cycling, sea kayaking, orienteering, fishing, wilderness first aid, avalanche awareness, and more. The Wilderness Program is designed to build confidence, promote skills for healthy living, advocate ecological

awareness, strengthen communication, emphasize abilities, and challenge one's self, all while having a good time.

This year, the Brain Injury Association of Colorado is offering a five-day adventure camp for persons 18 years and older who have sustained traumatic brain injuries. It is called the Brain Injury Association of Colorado's Outdoor Adventure Challenge at the BOEC, and will be held at BOEC's Scott Griffith Lodge. Participants will be able to participate in adaptive whitewater rafting, rock climbing, a high ropes course, canoeing, fishing, kayaking, and other activities such as arts and crafts, games, camp fires, and a dance. The activities are designed for participants to have fun and to take on challenges that may lead to greater independence and self-esteem. The staff, volunteers and buddies lend support and assure a safe environment for persons of varying levels of ability.

This summer, the five-day Outdoor Adventure Challenge will be offered three times: June 10 to 15, July 15 to 20, and August 5 to 10, 2007. For information, especially if you wish to participate, please contact Linda Heesch, Brain Injury Association of Colorado, 4200 W. Conejos Place, Suite #524, Denver, Colorado 81201, by telephone at (303) 355-9969, ext. 310, or by e-mail: [camp@biacolorado.org](mailto:camp@biacolorado.org).

*[Editor's Note: Alan Greene, the father of Adam Greene who relayed his experience at BOEC in the last issue of BrainWaves, will be a contributor to the Summer issue of BrainWaves, sharing his perspectives as a parent.]*

## Would You Recognize a Sports Concussion?

When enjoying the warm weather and participating in outdoor sports and activities, it is important to take precautions to assure safety and well-being, such as wearing a helmet when bike-riding. However, as we all know, sometimes accidents happen even when we believe we have made every effort to prevent them. When accidents do occur, it is important to immediately get any needed attention. This means being alert to the signs and symptoms of a potential problem.

The Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc. (BIANJ) convened a Sports Concussion Steering Committee with a focus on preventing sports concussions, particularly in youth sports. A Concussion in Sports Consensus Statement can be viewed online at the BIANJ website, [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org); it has a link to [www.sportsconcussion.com](http://www.sportsconcussion.com). We recommend you view the information online for more details, but we want to provide you with the definition of concussion accepted by the committee, and some signs and symptoms.

A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI), induced by mechanical forces that immediately disrupt the normal functioning of the brain. You can have a brain injury without losing consciousness.

Signs and symptoms may be barely noticeable initially but can last days, weeks, months, or longer. **Early signs** are lack of awareness of surroundings, headache, dizziness, nausea or vomiting. Late signs or symptoms include headaches, light-headedness, poor concentration, trouble with memory, fatigue, irritability, sensitivity to bright lights, sensitivity to loud noises, anxiety and/or depression, and sleep disturbance.

# Announcing...

## Creativity Expo 2007

*Dedicated to exhibiting the work of persons  
with acquired or traumatic brain injuries.*

**Attention:** Visual artists, musicians, craftsmakers, poets, writers, woodworkers, etc.: Display your talent at the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Creativity Expo.

To exhibit your work, you must have an acquired or traumatic brain injury. Space is reserved for all who wish to contribute. The deadline for intent to participate is June 15, 2007.

**Location:** Raritan Valley Community College Student Art Gallery in North Branch, New Jersey.

**Dates and Times:** The exhibit will be held from Saturday, July 14 through Wednesday, July 25, 2007. The opening will be held on July 14<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Beverages and snacks will be provided.

If you are interested in participating, please telephone Vincent Diorio at (609) 397-1048 or (800) 374-0071, extension 220, or e-mail him at [vincentd54@msn.com](mailto:vincentd54@msn.com). To see pictures from the Creativity Expo 2006, go to [www.geocities.com/braininjuryartsnj](http://www.geocities.com/braininjuryartsnj).

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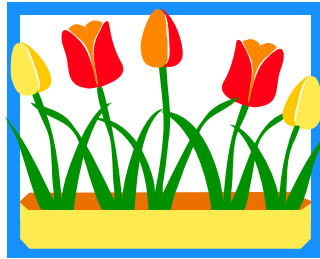
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