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# ◆ Brain Waves ◆

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The Community Skills Program® Newsletter

Winter 2011-2012

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## Once More With Feeling... Optimism

Maybe it's because spring is coming, which often brings a sense of renewal as plants and flowers magically appear. Or maybe it's because there is good news for the nation on its improving economy. Or maybe it's for some deeply personal reason. But whatever the reason, the feeling of optimism is always welcome. It is especially helpful during periods of uncertainty or stress. This past year has had many such periods, due to proposed changes in eligibility for services received by persons with disabilities, reduced funding, and even a moratorium on new applications for the CommCare waiver program for persons with traumatic brain injuries.

The *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* ([merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com)) defines optimism to be: 1) a doctrine that this world is the best possible world; and 2) an inclination to put the most favorable construction upon actions and events or to anticipate the best possible outcome. Optimism conveys a sense of hope and belief in the desired outcome. In brain injury rehabilitation, optimism helps the individual with a brain injury to persevere through arduous therapies in an effort to reach personal goals. Optimism gets family members through those terrible times when they are waiting for their loved one to emerge from a coma. Optimism fuels their energy when caregiving becomes exhausting. And optimism helps them to provide the long-term support and reinforcement that many individuals with brain injuries need.

For providers in the field of rehabilitation, optimism is very likely the result of the countless opportunities to see

how people with disabilities, and their family members and significant others, manage to put the most favorable construction on the circumstances they would not have chosen or expected to have. This year, that knowledge has helped providers to persevere in finding ways to continue to offer the best services possible despite reductions by some funding sources.

It is a rare and wonderful thing to get to interact on a daily basis with people who show such resilience, fortitude, and optimism. The example they set is a reminder of how life can change in an instant *and* how determination and optimism can lead to accomplishment of personal goals and a meaningful life. Optimism helps to facilitate the drive to make progress, and we all know that "success breeds success." So, whether it is learning to walk again, striving to bench press a pre-injury weight, connecting with former friends, making new friends, returning to work, going back to school, resuming driving, or volunteering time and talents, optimism is key.

### Inside this Issue

*Introducing...*

*Lisa F. Miller..... page 2*

*Spotlight...*

*Augustine Bucco..... page 3*

*Tips On..... page 5*

*Upcoming Events..... page 6*

*Did You Know?? ..... page 7*

*For Information..... page 7*

## Update

- Welcome to our new clients—Andrew, Darrell, Eric, Jeffrey, Michael, Patricia, and William; our new neurorehabilitation specialist—Alison Bogovich, M.S.W.; our new office assistant—Suzanne Steinrock (who was working with us through Gage Personnel, but has now been hired); and our new part-time secretary—Macy Santee (who was also working with us through Gage Personnel, but has now been hired).

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*.

- In December, Howard (a client of Community Skills Program) and his significant other, Sylvia, became engaged. They have plans for a September 2012 wedding. Congratulations, Howard and Sylvia!
- Susan regularly prepares meals for herself and her family. She enjoys watching cooking shows on the *Food Network* and the *Cooking Channel*. She also occasionally searches the Internet for recipes.
- Gus continues to do well at The Art Institute of Philadelphia, where he is enrolled in a culinary arts diploma program. In January, he was invited to be one of four students to participate in a cooking competition in Harrisburg, PA. Gus and his school took second place in the competition. (See pages 3 through 5 for the Spotlight article on Gus.)
- In January, Dona received medical clearance to return to competitive

*(continued on page 2)*

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## Update continued (from page 1)

employment on a part-time basis. She immediately began the process of attempting to return to work while continuing one of her two volunteer jobs.

- Ginny has been consistently attending weekly meetings of The Philadelphia Writing Circle, to pursue her personal goal of writing; she works on homework assignments in-between meetings.
- Michael continues to attend a local fitness club, where he performs his recommended exercise program. He also continues to volunteer at his church.
- Adam and his parents have been participating in monthly meetings of Community Skills Program's "Out & About" group. Also, Adam continues to do volunteer work and to work out at Body Zone, following an exercise program developed for him by his personal trainer.
- Paul continues to work toward earning his high school diploma, and has been earning very good grades. He is also continuing to learn to use Braille. In addition, he took a trip to New York City in December with some friends.
- In December, with a little help from her neurorehabilitation specialist, Kathleen made a decorative wreath for the holidays and also made homemade chocolate peppermint bark candy to give as gifts to friends, family members, and her daughters' teachers.
- With his neurorehabilitation specialist, Al planned and enjoyed an outing to a local movie theater, where he saw *Arthur Christmas* and had lunch (the movie theater has a "dine-in" feature).
- Linda has begun participating in a weekly equestrian therapy program, which she reports has improved her

sense of well-being, both physically and cognitively. She also has begun taking Reiki classes and attending lectures hosted by her local Gilda's Club. In addition, Linda painted a portrait of a friend; resuming painting portraits has been a goal she set for herself.

- In December, Nanette started taking cake-decorating classes at her local Michaels arts and crafts store. She has also participated in her local brain injury support group and attended their holiday party in December; she took cupcakes and Rice Krispies treats, which she made. Her children attended the holiday party as well.
- With his new neurorehabilitation specialist, Keila Rodriguez, B.S., Fernando is volunteering 15 hours per week, at three different locations. At Manos Unidas, he has been painting the trim around the doorways and windows of rooms he painted. At an animal shelter, he is responsible for cleaning the cats' cages. At a local church, he cleans medical supplies and durable medical equipment.
- Scott made "Mississippi Mud Brownies," using a recipe in *Southern Living* magazine. He also continues to call the numbers during bingo games at his local fire company, every other Wednesday night, and to attend fire company and township meetings. He has recently begun volunteering at the Humane Society.
- Amelia Christine Hartman was born on January 18, 2012, to Stephanie and John Hartman. Stephanie Hartman, M.S., OT, CBIS, is a neurorehabilitation specialist for Community Skills Program in northern New Jersey. Welcome, Amelia, and congratulations, Stephanie and John!!
- One of our neurorehabilitation specialists, Megan Dissinger, B.A., CBIS, received a certification in horseback-riding instruction for riders with special needs.

## Introducing...

### Lisa F. Miller, New Board Member



We are thrilled to announce the addition of Lisa F. Miller, B.A., CBIS, to the Board of Directors for Counseling and Rehabilitation, Inc./Counseling and Rehabilitation of New Jersey, Inc. (the parent organizations of Community Skills Program®). Lisa joined us on July 19, 1995 and is our Director of Vocational Services for Counseling and Rehabilitation of New Jersey, Inc. In addition to being a certified brain injury specialist, she is certified as a rehabilitation counselor by the United States Department of Labor's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs, and provides vocational services to injured federal employees. She has provided services to clients of Community Skills Program referred by the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Head Injury Program, and insurance companies in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Lisa has been able to balance very successfully her roles as a wife, mother of three children, daughter, and professional. She is very involved in her church's activities and is a diehard fan of the Philadelphia Eagles and Phillies.

We look forward to Lisa's ongoing contributions to our strategic planning and development.

## Spotlight: Augustine (Gus) Bucco



Gus Bucco

**Spotlight:** Please tell us about yourself.

**Gus:** My name is Augustine Joseph Bucco; my friends call me Gus. I am 39 years old and I'm a third-generation Italian-American who comes from a big family. I am very well-traveled. I have been to more than a dozen countries on three continents. I am looking forward to exploring more of what the world has to offer as I make greater progress with my therapy. Currently, I am a full-time culinary arts student at The Art Institute of Philadelphia. I have been fascinated with the kitchen and food for as long as I can remember.

**Spotlight:** How did you get injured?

**Gus:** I was in two auto accidents back-to-back, almost one year apart from each other. In 2007, I was hit from behind while stopped at a traffic light and, in 2008, I was T-boned by a work truck that ran a stop sign. I lost consciousness in both accidents, but the one in 2008 was the worse of the two. I awoke the next day in the hospital very disoriented. I was extremely confused and suffered from

severe anxiety and depression after that.

**Spotlight:** What problems have you had as a result of your brain injuries?

**Gus:** There have been many—post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD], depression, anxiety, paranoia, and social anxiety, to name some. Physically, I am very limited due to the amount of pain caused by osteoarthritis from trauma, soft tissue damage, and nerve damage, and I still have several surgeries on the table for the future.

**Spotlight:** Do you have any cognitive difficulties resulting from your brain injuries?

**Gus:** Too many to list. At first, everything was affected. I couldn't feed myself right. I couldn't tie my own shoes for a while. I just couldn't care for myself for the longest time. I still have problems with my memory, planning, organizing, decision-making, problem-solving, prioritizing, and initiating. It's a long list.

**Spotlight:** Are you still receiving medical treatment for the effects of your injuries?

**Gus:** Yes, I am. Initially, I was getting a lot of help from a psychiatrist, Dr. Teitelman [referring to Edward Teitelman, M.D. in Pennsauken, NJ], but unfortunately, he passed away. He was the first to diagnose my PTSD and he was my pain management doctor as well. He not only helped to slowly ground me once again, but also kept me on my feet in order to do so. Dr. Teitelman referred me to Dr. Maitz [referring to Edward A. Maitz, Ph.D., of Clinical Neuropsychology Associates in Philadelphia, PA], who diagnosed my cognitive disorder. Dr. Teitelman referred me to Community Skills Program for real-time life assistance. After Dr. Teitelman passed away, Dr. Maitz put me in contact with several doctors before he matched me with Dr. Sadwin [referring to Arnold Sadwin,

M.D., a psychiatrist in Cherry Hill, NJ]. He was very familiar with Dr. Teitelman's work. Dr. Sadwin has worked closely with me on a talk therapy program. I chose to go without pain medication and psychopharmaceuticals and work through my injuries toward the goal of permanent long-term healing. He utilizes techniques and methods to help me get through anxiety, depression, and pain, without the use of pharmacology. This has been my single greatest triumph over my injuries and I still see him every week. I am also treated by Jeanne Doherty, M.D. at Magee Rehabilitation Hospital in Philadelphia, PA. At Rothman Institute in Philadelphia, Zach Broyer, M.D. treats my neck and spine injuries, and Jess Lonner, M.D. treats my knee injuries and is slated to do my knee replacement surgery. A host of other Rothman Institute doctors treat me for my many other injuries.

**Spotlight:** What types of things has Community Skills Program helped you with?

**Gus:** You name it—organization, efficiency, planning, follow-through, memory, time management, initiation. It applies to so many skills. Without all those skills, I would never have been able to start school in August of 2011.

**Spotlight:** When you first started with Community Skills Program, you remained close to home and were reluctant to venture out unless it was absolutely necessary. What changed?

**Gus:** It started slowly, with Dr. Teitelman pushing me to get out of the house. I was shell-shocked after all of the accidents and I wouldn't get into a car unless I absolutely could not avoid it. I was slowly making progress, but then Dr. Teitelman passed away and I slipped back into my shell. Then,

*(continued on page 4)*

## Spotlight continued (from page 3)

Community Skills Program contacted me. They sent over Melissa Hosier, M.A., CBIS, who signed me up for Access Link [referring to New Jersey Transit's accessible transportation service] and set up my appointments with Dr. Doherty. The care that I received from Community Skills Program and Ms. Hosier was just what I needed after losing Dr. Teitelman. I had a brief setback when Ms. Hosier left the program, but Community Skills Program was very accommodating and found a therapist who clicked perfectly with my personality, Eric Share [referring to Eric J. Share, B.S., CBIS, his neurorehabilitation specialist with Community Skills Program]. Eric, Dr. Sadwin, and Dr. Doherty were always telling me I needed to get out of the house, but I just couldn't do it. Eric didn't give up on me. He started to get me out for just a few minutes, even to just go to the produce market for a few minutes to get some fresh ingredients. He kept insisting that we go out almost every time he was here [their sessions are scheduled for two times a week for a total of five hours per week], to do things that interest me. Eventually, I realized it wasn't so bad to be out of the house. Then, he started pushing me to do things as part of an ongoing routine. And that's when I decided to take a big leap. I decided to start school.

**Spotlight:** How did you decide to go to culinary school?

**Gus:** I just decided. I was fed up with feeling like I was trapped at home, and I have to reestablish myself so I can support myself in the future. Also, these accidents have put such a burden on my mother. She has been by my side through this entire ordeal. I would have to say that she is a big part of the inspiration that I have to move forward—partly to relieve her of the stress from the effects of my injuries.

**Spotlight:** Please tell us about school.

**Gus:** I am currently enrolled in the culinary arts program at The Art Institute of Philadelphia. I study cooking, baking, and pastries, with some of the best culinary arts and baking/pastry instructors on the East Coast. I am honing all of the core skills necessary to eventually work in a professional kitchen. I truly love to cook and I feel that it is a blessing to be able, under these circumstances, to pursue something that I have dreamed about.

**Spotlight:** How has Community Skills Program helped you with school?

**Gus:** Like I said before, it applies to everything. All the basics—memory, planning, organization, follow-through, time management. Without those basic tools, I'd never be able to do anything. We were working on those skills before I even seriously considered school, but since I started school, it's been easier for me to focus on why those skills are so important for me. I have been able, with Eric's help, to sort of map ways around the damaged parts of my brain, find the alleys and side roads that go around the impassable sections. I can still achieve the same outcome; I just have to take a slightly longer route to reach my goal. As long as you keep the basics in check, you can't help but move forward.

**Spotlight:** What specifically did you work on to improve your skills in "the basics"?

**Gus:** Eric helped me organize my notebook, at first. He taught me effective studying techniques. For a while, I thought that cramming the night before a test would be best for me; I figured that, with my brain injury and damaged memory, there was no sense in studying any earlier than the night before the test, because I'd forget things I read any earlier than that. Eric helped me understand that reviewing the material on a regular basis would be a more effective method to help me remember the information. He also helped me establish a routine to manage my time better, which included

making specific appointment times to get assignments done.

I also learned that I am able to retain most memory from hands-on or skilled projects. Eric has helped me to recognize the hope that lies within learning a skilled trade and an art form. I seem to excel in the kitchen, even though I am just getting by with homework and textbook studies. In Italy, they start you in the kitchen at 15 years old. That is when your internship begins, and you don't stop learning about food, culture, and technique until you have either retired or died. History shows that the truly skilled kitchen professionals perfected their skill from working hard and long under Master Chefs in the kitchen. Keeping this in mind, I feel that I will truly start learning my craft once I am able to enter the kitchen and train with a skilled chef.

**Spotlight:** How do you get to school?

**Gus:** I use Access Link. Ms. Hosier initiated this service for me, but Eric is the one who pushed me to use the service so I would stop missing doctors' appointments, and eventually, to get back and forth to class. I still prefer not to drive; the stress can sometimes be overwhelming. Using Access Link is not without its stress—waiting for buses that sometimes do not show and are always late, the hassle of making and keeping appointments. None of this has been a distraction enough to keep me from getting to class. This is the greatest thing of all.

**Spotlight:** What are some goals you would like to reach in the future?

**Gus:** Once I complete the culinary arts program at The Art Institute of Philadelphia, I plan to continue my education along with my therapy until I can re-enter the work force. I was recently accepted into an international culinary program. The French Culinary Institute in New York City

*(continued on page 5)*

## Spotlight continued (from page 4)

has a sister school, The Italian Culinary Academy in Parma, Italy. They accept 100 students per semester to attend this program. Alumni include Bobby Flay. I will spend three months in New York City and six months in Parma, Italy, followed by an internship. I am all set for the January 2013 semester. Hopefully, this is a realistic goal to set for myself; if not, I will continue with the baking and pastry program at The Art Institute of Philadelphia. Either way, I will continue toward my dream of working in a professional kitchen sometime in the future.

**Spotlight:** What are some challenges you still face?

**Gus:** I think I still face all the same challenges, just at a much smaller level than when I started the process. The challenges haven't changed at all; what's changed is how I handle them. At the beginning of every week, I decide that I'm going to be fine until the end of the week. I make myself smile because I'm alive and that's my

job, and then I do it again the next week.

**Spotlight:** How has having a brain injury changed your perspective on life?

**Gus:** That's a good question! [He thinks silently for a moment.] It's helped me realize that anything good in life can only be achieved through hard work and consistency. Everything used to be easy; now nothing comes easy anymore. The old me could do anything without breaking a sweat. The new me breaks a sweat at the thought of doing anything.

**Spotlight:** Do you have any advice for other individuals recovering from a brain injury?

**Gus:** You need to try to meditate on the positive and not focus on anything else. If you have a roof over your head and someone who can help you, that's all you really need. I had to totally humble myself to constantly ask for help and I still do; if I didn't do that, no one could help me. It's been a slow road for me, but I keep getting better and stronger, physically and mentally. You can do it, too.

## Tips On...

### Some Great Recipe Websites

While not all of us have lofty culinary aspirations like Gus (see Spotlight article on pages 3 through 5), most of us have needed (or wanted) to cook or bake at some point in our lives. There are many websites available now that make it easier to do so. We have provided information below on three recipe websites that we liked and found easy to use:

- **Allrecipes.com** has over 4,000 free recipes, organized by many different categories, such as by meals (e.g., appetizer, breakfast, main dish, salad, soup), by ingredients (e.g., beef, chicken, seafood, vegetarian), or by cooking methods (e.g., barbecue, healthy, slow cooker). In addition to searching for recipes by using keywords, you can also search by listing ingredients you have on hand and want to include in the recipe. This website also provides a menu planner that produces a corresponding shopping list for recipes. Favorite recipes can also be saved in an online recipe box. Recipe instructions are typically easy to follow, and nutritional information, cooks' reviews, and "how-to" videos are provided for many of the recipes.
- **Foodnetwork.com** also has thousands of free recipes, including recipes from famous *Food Network* chefs, such as Rachael Ray, Emeril Lagasse, Paula Deen, and Bobby Flay. In addition to the usual keyword searches, you can search for recipes by category, such as Wallet-friendly Recipes, Cooking with Kids, 30-minute Meals, Weeknight Faves, and seasonal categories, such as winter produce, homemade soups, comfort foods, and hearty chili. Each recipe includes, at a glance, the



Gus in front of The Art Institute of Philadelphia

*(continued on page 6)*

## Upcoming Events

- On March 22, 2012, the Annual Conference of the Council on Brain Injury (CoBI), entitled *New Advances in Brain Injury Rehabilitation*, will be held at Sheraton Station Square in Pittsburgh, PA. For more information, go to CoBI's website, [www.councilonbraininjury.org](http://www.councilonbraininjury.org).
- On April 5, 2012, the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Association (PRA) will hold its 2012 Professional Development Institute, entitled *Advancing Employment Strategies: The Changing Landscape*, at Central Penn College in Summerdale, PA. For more information or to register, go to [www.parehab.org](http://www.parehab.org).
- In Spring 2012, the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc. (BIAPA) will host four benefit walks/runs throughout Pennsylvania: on April 14<sup>th</sup> at Tyler State Park in Newtown, PA; on May 19<sup>th</sup> at Harrisburg Area Community College in Harrisburg, PA; on May 26<sup>th</sup> at East Goshen Park in West Chester, PA; and on June 2<sup>nd</sup> at Johnstown Central Park in Johnstown, PA. Funds raised from these events will benefit people who have had brain injuries, and their families. For more information, go to [www.biapa.org](http://www.biapa.org).
- On May 17 and 18, 2012, the Annual Seminar of the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey, Inc. (BIANJ) will be held at the Sheraton Eatontown Hotel and Conference Center in Eatontown, NJ. This year's seminar is entitled *Brain Injury: Building Resilience*. For more information, call Joanna Boyd at (732) 745-0200 or e-mail her at [jboyd@bianj.org](mailto:jboyd@bianj.org), or go to the BIANJ website at [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org).
- On May 18 and 19, 2012, the Mid-Year Meeting of the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) Brain Injury-Interdisciplinary Special Interest Group

(BI-ISIG) will be held at the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel in Nashville, TN. Following the BI-ISIG Mid-Year Meeting, the ACRM will sponsor Cognitive Rehabilitation Training on May 20 and 21, 2012, at the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel. For more information about these two events or to register, go to [www.acrm.org](http://www.acrm.org).

- On June 25 and 26, 2012, the Annual Conference of the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania, Inc. will be held at the Lancaster Marriott and Convention Center in Lancaster, PA. The theme for the conference is *Improving Quality of Life: Practical Approaches and Cutting-edge Strategies*. For more information, go to the BIAPA website at [www.biapa.org](http://www.biapa.org).
- On September 29, 2012, the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey, Inc. will host its annual *Walk for Thought* event, to help support people living with brain injuries. There are two sites for the event: in Northern New Jersey at Saddle River County Park in Paramus, NJ, and in Central New Jersey at Mercer County Park in West Windsor, NJ. For more information, call Joanna Boyd at (732) 745-0200 or e-mail her at [jboyd@bianj.org](mailto:jboyd@bianj.org).
- On October 2, 2012, the Council on Brain Injury will host its annual *David's Drive* golf tournament at White Manor Country Club in Malvern, PA. For more information, call Rose Marie Dalton at (484) 595-9300, extension 119, or e-mail her at [rdalton@remed.com](mailto:rdalton@remed.com).
- From October 9 to 13, 2012, the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine (ACRM) and the American Society for Neurorehabilitation (ASNR) will hold their Annual Conference in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, at the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre. This year's conference is entitled *Progress in Rehabilitation Research*. For more information, go to [www.acrm.org](http://www.acrm.org) or [www.asnr.com](http://www.asnr.com).

## Tips On... continued (from page 5)

cooking time and level of difficulty (i.e., easy, intermediate, difficult).

There is also a "Quick Recipe Finder," where you choose a meal (e.g., breakfast, lunch), an ingredient (from an A to Z list), and the preparation time (e.g., 15 minutes or less); you can also select a specific *Food Network* chef if you wish.

There are also links to the television show episodes and shopping links as well.

- [Realsimple.com/food](http://Realsimple.com/food) is a great resource for quick and easy recipes, simple meal-planning ideas, and cooking techniques. The enhanced recipe search allows you to select the main ingredients you want to use (or exclude), the course or occasion, the type of cuisine, the cooking method, and dietary considerations. The website has quick links to their A to Z Ingredients Guide, Slow Cooker Recipes, Recipe of the Day, Favorite Family Dinner Recipes, and Most Popular Chicken Recipes, to name a few.

The A to Z Ingredients Guide provides information on choosing, storing, preparing, and cooking fresh produce and recipe ingredients. You can select recipes based on specific ingredients, and "how-to" videos are included for many of the ingredients/recipes. For example, under the ingredient "eggs," there are "how-to" videos on how to scramble eggs, poach eggs, and hard-boil eggs. There is information on the different types of eggs, how to store eggs, and many, many recipes using eggs.

The "Dinner in 15" feature allows you to select a recipe (all of them ready in 15 minutes or less) based on a main ingredient (e.g., chicken/turkey, fish, vegetables, eggs, cheese) and the type of dish (e.g., soups/salads, sandwiches, no-cook, kid-friendly, five ingredients or less).

# Did You Know??

## March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

As emphasized by brain injury associations, a brain injury can happen anytime, anywhere, to anyone. Brain injuries do not discriminate. Did you know that 1.7 million people, including 475,000 children, will sustain a brain injury in the United States each year? An injury that happens in an instant can bring a lifetime of physical, cognitive, and behavior challenges. You cannot plan for a brain injury, but once it happens, you need to know where to go for help. Early, equal, and adequate access to care will greatly increase overall quality of life. For more information about brain injury, you can go to the Brain Injury Association of America’s website at [www.biausa.org](http://www.biausa.org). You can also visit the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ) website at [www.bianj.org](http://www.bianj.org) or the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania (BIAPA) website at [www.biapa.org](http://www.biapa.org). [Please note: As of January 1, 2012, BIANJ changed its name to the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey; previously, it was the Brain Injury Association of New Jersey.]

To read about some upcoming events in New Jersey and Pennsylvania that support brain injury awareness, please see page 6 of this newsletter.

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