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Happy Holidays!

from the BIAW office to your home...

May you have a holiday season that is filled with peace, hope, and joy.

Best wishes for a healthy and happy 2015!

From the BIAW Board of Directors and Staff
Dear BIAW friends,

I am in awe at the amount of support individuals and families affected with brain injury give to one another. I cannot explain how great it felt to see friends who know each other through brain injury come out to the Walk for Thought & Picnic in October and reconnect, to see new friendships being formed, and hearing similar stories from the other Walk locations.

I am also very grateful for the support our organization receives from individuals, families, the community, providers, sponsors, support group facilitators, and our members by the giving of time through volunteering, monetary donations, and the sharing of information that benefits the brain injury community.

I feel blessed to be part of an organization devoted to making a difference in the lives of the families we serve. As I reflect on everything that has been accomplished in 2014, I appreciate everyone who has helped BIAW help others. Thank you!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! My hope for you is a safe and happy holiday season.

With HOPE,

Kasey Johanson, BA, CBIS
Executive Director
Welcome new Directors to the BIAW Board

Please join us in welcoming Kevin Pasqua and Perry Schroeder to our Board of Directors!

Kevin Pasqua

Kevin J. Pasqua is the Owner and Executive Director of LearningRx in Brookfield. LearningRx is the national leader in one-on-one Cognitive Skills Training (Brain Training). Kevin and his team have provided over 1000 hours of cognitive skills focused on improving cognitive function for individuals that have impaired cognitive function as a result of TBI or concussion.

Kevin has a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Wichita State University and a Master’s degree in Business Administration from Southern Methodist University. Prior to LearningRx Kevin was employed by Johnson Controls Inc. for 28 years and served in several key leadership roles, including Vice President and General Manager of US/Canada Power Solutions, President of Johnson Controls Japan, and Vice President of Latin America Building Efficiency.

He currently serves as Vice President of the BAB Properties Board, which provides affordable housing to the blind community, Assistant Scout Master in the Boy Scouts of America Troop 71, and is an Ambassador and Chairman of the Ambassador Committee to the Pewaukee Chamber of Commerce. Kevin has served as Vice President of the volunteer board for the YMCA of Japan, board member of the YMCA of the Down Town Milwaukee branch, and volunteer ski instructor of blind and amputee skiers with the National Sports Center for the Disabled.

Kevin is married to Jill Pasqua, and resides in Brookfield Wisconsin. They have three school-aged children.

Perry Schroeder

Perry Schroeder is the President/CEO of Cornerstone Consulting, a software development and information technology consulting firm. Cornerstone Consulting specializes in developing custom software applications for small to mid-sized companies in the southeastern Wisconsin geographical area.

Perry was born and raised in a suburban Milwaukee area and graduated high school from West Allis Nathan Hale High School. He has a Bachelor of Business Administration from UW-Whitewater, with a major in Management Computer Systems.

Perry was previously Vice President of the Board of Directors with Variety, The Children’s Charity of Wisconsin. Variety provides life-enriching assistance to Wisconsin children challenged by physical disabilities. He was on the Executive Committee and they worked with the Executive Director to implement board best practices for non-profit management. In addition, Perry worked with the Executive Committee and the Executive Director on board development.

Prior to being the Vice President of Variety’s board, Perry was a director on the board for five years. He was a member of the annual golf planning committees that planned the Ben Marcus Memorial Golf Classic and the Variety Spring Outing. He was the chairperson on the Technology Committee and worked with full-time staff to improve Variety’s technology platform.

Perry is married to Laurie Schroeder and resides in Pewaukee, Wisconsin.
My Second Life, by Paul Ceretto

Only by joy and sorrow does a person know anything about themselves and their destiny.
-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

On September 8, 2008, I fell off a building on my former college campus, and I lay dying for more than six hours. Blood was filling my lungs, and I was hardly breathing. At seven the following morning, a maintenance man found me and called for help. They had to resuscitate me, and after they did, I was in a coma for more than a week.

That was how I ended a three-decade-long drug and alcohol habit. It took me thirty years to fall ten feet. When I surfaced from my coma, I was told I had suffered a traumatic brain injury. The only thing I could think of was a cigarette.

“Hey, you got a cigarette?” I asked.

“No,” a nurse said, leaving the room, letting me sit with the beeps of the machines.

I had absolutely no idea what was going on, or how badly I was injured. I didn’t know that even if the nurse had thrown me an entire pack of cigarettes, I would not have been able to go out and have one because I could not walk on my own.

After two weeks I left the ICU and transferred to an acute care floor. They said, because of my age, I needed intense therapy. While I was in acute care, I realized what true human beings are, and I came to realize that I was not one of them. I was a fool. During this time, my family and the hospital staff would say, “Well, I hope this is it for you. I hope you change.”

One night I again asked a nurse, “You got a cigarette?”

“No.”

I fell back on my pillow, and I thought about how many times I had tried to quit this life: the drugs, the liquor, the cigarettes. How many times had people heard me say I was going to quit? Not even my near death could convince them I was serious.

I sat up, and said out loud, “I’m going to change!”

Second Chances

When I put my head down that night, I turned away from all the nonsense that led me to fall. I could do nothing about the past, but I could change every step from here on out. It was the birth of what I consider my second life. I believed then, as I do now, that I have had two lifetimes in one over-all existence.

This second life would be built on the integrity of my actions, so every day I gave the therapist my best, and I gave myself my best. It was all I could do.

The fall on my head left me seeing double, but I had not realized it until a morning shower. My
face was paralyzed on the right side so I resembled a stroke victim. I had broken my right scapula and my right wrist. I had a scar along my ribs where a tube was put in to suck the blood out of my lung. I was in a wheelchair, unable to walk.

After about a month in acute care, I was transferred to the sub-acute floor. It would be there that I would question my entire existence as a human being. Everyone I met in sub-acute care, from patients to staff, had an immense influence on the development of who I would become, who I have become.

Every day I pushed myself both physically and emotionally. I worked hard at all my therapy sessions, did more of each therapy on my own time, and spent the bulk of my off-time in the office of my rehab specialist.

A rehab specialist is like a caseworker. It was in her office that I did an intense investigation of myself. I questioned every belief. I went above and beyond my daily therapy. During these five months, I began to reshape my belief system. I made a promise to myself, and the “new” Paul kept his promises.

The day I left sub-acute care was a sad day for me. I loved everyone there; they were my family. We would be together forever though, for my heart would carry them the rest of my life.

My work was far from done, because I had no life to get back to, so I had to build one. I sought help, and I realized that I had some emotional problems. In fact, I was an emotional nightmare. I read books about emotion.

I was quick to anger but didn’t know what to do when I got angry, until one day, when I was angry; I sat down on the floor and again talked to myself: “This is your anger, Paul, yours to deal with. No one can help you; you have to help yourself.”

The only way I could look at the anger was to write about it. When I wrote about it, I could see it, relive what I was angry about, and use that energy for a more productive outcome. With words, I saw who I was. I fell in love with words. I wrote a book about what happened to me; it took me a year.

After that year, I took a class on creative writing; I learned from other writers, and became a writer. It is my destiny, the reason I am here, and the reason I survived near death. I never question that. My TBI taught me the truth of my existence.

“The brain injury has been my saving grace. Unlike most people who suffer a TBI, it has been a lifesaver.”

About the Author: Paul Ceretto experienced a TBI in 2008. He enjoys writing, walking, and music. Paul is on BIAW Speakers Bureau and a contributor to BIAW News.
The Gift of Giving, By Brian Johanson

This time of the year we are inundated with mass commercialism in the form of retail stores pushing Black Friday deals and internet sites hyping Cyber Monday specials. At the same time we are deluged by multiple requests for charitable donations during the holiday season in the form of bell ringers, door knockers, phone callers, and e-mailers. There seems to be a long list of people who want to save us money or use our money for a greater cause. And even though we may get a little burned out with all of the high-pressure sales, obnoxious commercials, and never-ending marketing, it isn’t all bad. I mean, saving money is good right? And giving presents is good, too. Giving to charities or non-profits is good also as there is no shortage of good causes that could use additional financial help for programs, services, and/or operating costs. The problem is that if you are like most people, you may not have enough expendable income to go around. Sometimes we place so much emphasis on money that we forget there is more to giving than just writing out a check. Another option is volunteering your time. Writing articles, public speaking, organizing, serving, and/or advocating are several ways you can volunteer and support your favorite charitable organization.

What are you good at? Maybe your skillset includes data entry, accounting, web developing, or graphic design. Figure out what your interests are and offer some of your time to a favorite organization that could use your talents. If you enjoy writing you could offer to write articles for newsletters or websites. The organization may have suggestions for topics, or they may be interested in listening to your ideas. Do you have a compelling personal story to tell about yourself or a loved one? Public speaking is another way to support your favorite organization. If you are interested in sharing your story you could volunteer to be on the organizations Speaker’s Bureau. Service is another way to volunteer. You could volunteer to set up before or clean up after events, serve food, make crafts, or run miscellaneous errands. Maybe you are good at organizing. You could volunteer to be on committees of activities that interest you and help with planning, advertising, or selling tickets. You could even volunteer to help manage the other volunteers! And finally, you could be an advocate. An advocate is a person who speaks for or supports a person, a group, or a cause. This can be in the form of an individual caregiver, raising awareness of an issue close to your heart, or even trying to argue for the rights of others in a legislative capacity.

So in this season of giving, despite what mass marketers may tell you to the contrary, remember that your time and talents are just as important as your dollars and cents. Just find the organization(s) that you wish to support and find the best way that your unique passions, skills and desires can help them to succeed.

Author Bio: Brian Johanson is the co-author of Kaitlyn’s Hope; One Family’s Journey through Traumatic Brain Injury and From Hope to Faith; Kaitlyn’s Hope Bible Study Companion.
2014 Walk for Thought & Picnic—recap

Despite the cold and damp weather on October 4, 2014, the 11th Annual Walk for Thought & Picnic was a great success! Your participation in the Walk and the donations you collected contributed to the success of the event.

We had 361 walk registrations, with 206 in Brookfield, 81 in Eau Claire, and 74 in our newest location, Village of Ashwaubenon (Green Bay).

This year we added the Picnic element to the day’s activities. This allowed the opportunity for all participants to meet, visit, reconnect, and share stories. It was too cold for water and soda, but the coffee and hot chocolate were a “hot” commodity.

A huge thank you goes out to the incredible work of the Walk Planning Committee, including Jessica Drumm, Kasey Johanson, Kelly Kjell, Chastity Krings, Tracy Scholfield, and Anna Verdegan. Without the dedication of the planning committee, this event would not have been possible.

Another thank you goes out to all the volunteers who came out to help with setup, serving, tear-down, and cleanup. And to the volunteers and color guard who presented our flags and sang our National Anthem at each location.

Lastly, a very special thank you to our Honorary Chair at each location: Micki Scherwinski, - Brookfield, Dawn Lima—Eau Claire, and Kayla Coopman—Green Bay. Their stories demonstrated that even though every brain injury and recovery are different, we all have a story to tell.

According to Service Dog Central, only 0.9 percent of individuals with disabilities are partnered with Service Dogs at this time. The definition of "service animal" was changed in 2010 by Attorney General Eric Holder to state the following.

Effective March 15, 2011, “Service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual’s disability. Examples of work or tasks include, but are not limited to, assisting individuals who are blind or have low vision with navigation and other tasks, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to the presence of people or sounds, providing non-violent protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, assisting an individual during a seizure, alerting individuals to the presence of allergens, retrieving items such as medicine or the telephone, providing physical support and assistance with balance and stability to individuals with mobility disabilities, and helping persons with psychiatric and neurological disabilities by preventing or interrupting impulsive or destructive behaviors. The crime deterrent effects of an animal’s presence and the provision of emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not constitute work or tasks for the purposes of this definition.”

When it is time to begin training in the community, one must be able to have full control of their soon-to-be full service dog. It is important to have a list of commands that the dog has learned which will also be used when out in the community. It is important to have word to be used in place of the word “no”. It is not ever appropriate for a Service Dog to lunge at or growl at another individual or Service Dog.

As stated in an earlier article there are many different types of Service Animals, some of which include Psychiatric Service Dogs, Autism Service Dogs, Hearing Service Dogs, Mobility Service Dogs, Seizure alert/response Service Dogs, and more.

Some individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury may find it useful to seek out the use of a Service Dog. A Service Dog may assist an individual with TBI in any of the following areas for the needs of the individual.

1. Signal the handler to important sounds such as the smoke alarm, doorbell, etc.
2. Assist with mobility/balance
3. Alert/Respond to seizure
4. Alert/Respond to anxiety
5. Provide an excuse to leave an overwhelming environment
6. Bring medications
7. Medication reminders
8. Bring a beverage
9. Call 911
10. Backpacking medical related supplies and/or information
11. And more.
Flashing lights. Crowded stores. Loud family gatherings. The holiday season should be joyful, but it can often be overwhelming to someone who is living with traumatic brain injury.

If you are living with TBI, share these tips with your friends and family. If someone you love is living with TBI, the tips below can help you plan in advance to make the holiday season happier and more relaxed for all of your friends and family.

These great ideas came from members of BrainLine’s wonderful online community.

1. Identify – in advance, if possible – a quiet place to go at gatherings if you are feeling overwhelmed. This gives you a chance to take a break, and lets your loved ones stay involved in the festivities.

2. Avoid crowded stores and order gifts online instead.

3. If you are shopping in stores, remember to make a list in advance and plan your trips on week days – either early in the morning or late at night when there are fewer crowds.

4. Wear a cap with a brim or lightly tinted sunglasses to minimize the glare of bright lights in stores or flashing lights on a tree.

5. Wear noise-reducing headphones or ear buds. These are also great gift ideas for loved ones with TBI if they don’t already have them.

6. Ask a friend to go with you to stores or holiday parties. They can help you navigate crowds and anxiety-producing situations.

7. Plan in advance as much as possible. And ask your hosts what their plans are so you aren’t surprised by anything.

8. Volunteer to help with the holiday activities that you enjoy the most and are least stressful for you.

9. Remember to ask for help and accept help if it is offered to you.

10. Ask someone you trust to help you with a budget to avoid overspending on gifts.

11. Take a nap if you need a break.

12. Remember that it’s okay to skip the big parties and plan to celebrate in a way that makes you comfortable and happy.

13. Check in advance to see if fireworks are part of outdoor celebrations – and skip them if they make you uncomfortable.

14. If flashing lights bother you, ask your friends and family to turn off the flashing feature on Christmas tree lights or other decorations when you visit their homes.

15. You can let your host know in advance that you may need to leave early. It will help you feel comfortable if you need to get home or to a quiet place and it can also help avoid any hurt feelings.

From www.BrainLine.org
What has BIAW been up to?

- Preparing the application process for the Certified Brain Injury Specialist training & testing to be held during March 2015: Brain Injury Awareness Month. (date of training: March 19, 2015)

**October 2014:**
- BIAW exhibited at the Catholic Charities Brain Injury Conference in Janesville.
- BIAW exhibited at the Fall Keys to Success Conference at UW-Stout

**November 2014:**
- Representatives of BIAW were presenters at the Western Wisconsin Care Conference in La Crosse.
- Kasey Johanson and Audrey Nelson attended the Mayo Regional TBI Advisory Council meeting in Rochester, MN
- A representative of BIAW was a speaker for an open-forum Q&A at a brain injury support group.

**Event Planning—SAVE THE DATES:**

- 2015 Golf Outing, “Chip In for Brain Injury,” will be held June 1, 2015.
- 12th Annual Walk for Thought & Picnic will be held on October 3, 2015.

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**Research Opportunity:**

**A Research Study about Social Communication**

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison are looking for participants between the ages of 18-60 for a study about social communication in adults with and without brain injury. Findings from the study will be used to improve treatment for adults with brain injury, so that their therapy can focus on the most useful communication skills.

The study involves 2-3 visits to the University of Wisconsin-Madison where participants work with researchers in the Department of Communication Science and Disorders and with some other researchers in the Department of Computer Science. Participants are asked to complete a few surveys, do a few tasks on language and memory, watch videos, and play some games with robots. Participants are paid $25 for each visit (or session) hour they complete in the study. Visits are scheduled at times that are most convenient for participants.

Contact:
Erica Kesin Richmond at (608) 262-7467.
Brain Injury Alliance of Wisconsin extends sincere appreciation to the following individuals, families, and/or organization who supported the Alliance through new/renewal memberships and/or donations during the last year. (We apologize for any omission or errors in our list and request that you contact the Alliance office to report any oversight.)

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