



**BRAIN INJURY
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OF LONDON
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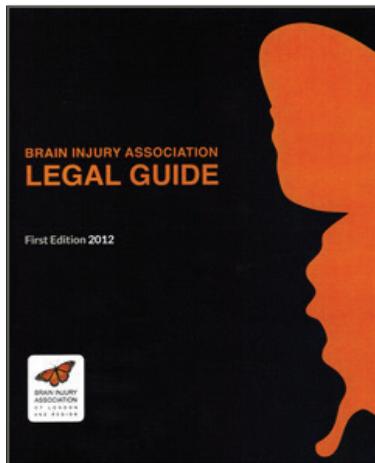
Winter Issue December 2013

THE MONARCH

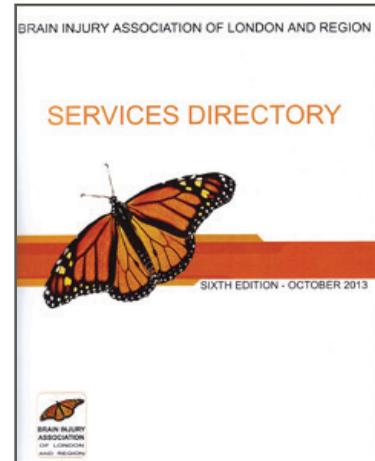
Extraordinary Survivors



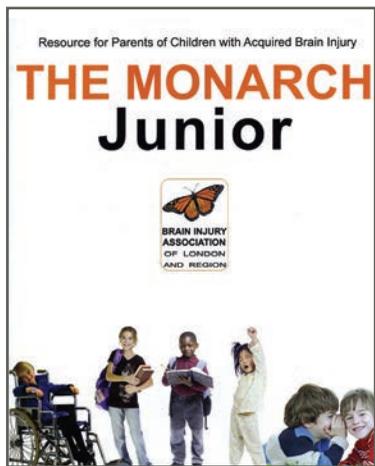
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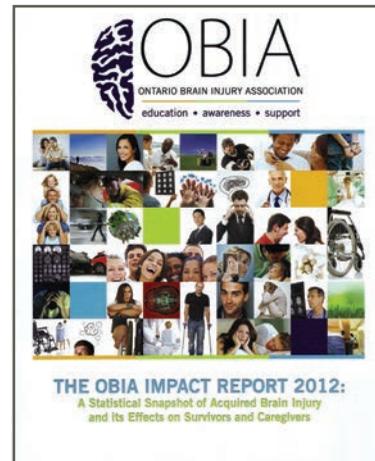
This legal guide is published by BIALR, in collaboration with Harrison Pensa, and is in its first edition. It is designed to provide straightforward accessible explanation of key legal issues and fundamental legal rights of those who have suffered brain injuries and their support teams. Print copies are available from the BIALR office and electronically on the website.



This directory is published by BIA London and Region and is in its 5th edition, and the 6th edition is in the works. It is designed to help individuals suffering from the effects of a brain injury identify and locate the services in London and Region. (Print copies are available from the BIALR office and electronically on the website.)



This resource is published by BIALR and is in its first edition. This compilation of articles is designed as an informational resource for parents of children who are suffering from the effects of an acquired brain injury. Print copies are available from the BIALR office.



The OBIA Impact Report 2012 is published by the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA), with support and funding provided by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation. It is designed as an easy to read statistical snapshot of acquired brain injury and its effects on survivors and their caregivers. Electronic copies are available on the OBIA website.

Online Resources:

Brain Injury Association of London and Region - braininjurylondon.on.ca

Ontario Brain Injury Association - obia.ca

Brainline.org, preventing, treating, and living with traumatic brain injury - brainline.org

Brain Injury Association of Queensland - synapse.org.au

National Resource Center for Traumatic Brain Injury (Virginia Commonwealth University) - www.tbinc.com

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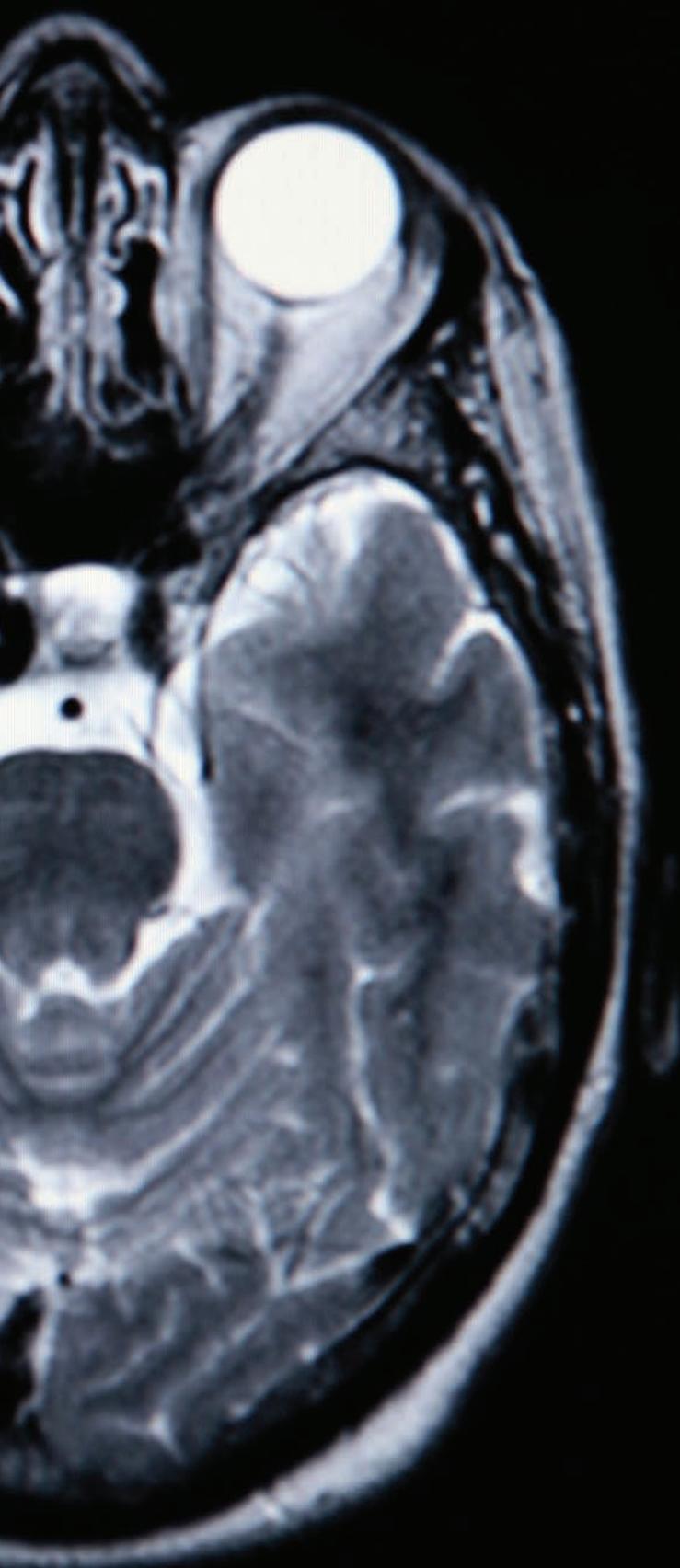
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Letter from The Executive Director

It is hard to believe that we are already nearing the end of 2013. Many themes of The Monarch focus on the various difficulties that one may encounter following an ABI. For this issue, we are highlighting people who are making an impact following their injury in local, national and international areas. Make sure to check out each individual stories about Troy Adams, Kerry Goulet & Kevin Pearce.

In September, we co-hosted the 12th Annual Brain Injury Golf Classic with H.A.B.I.T (Helping Acquired Brain Injury Treatment). Many thanks to the golfers, sponsors, donors for another successful tournament! You helped both charities raised close to \$37,000!

Our Casino was a resounding success in spite of a blizzard. Many folks turned out to show their support of the Association. I want to say a special thank you to Nick Papparella for emceeing the evening events and to our guest speaker, Kerry Goulet who travelled all the way from Toronto in the storm to be with us (and adding some excitement to the live auction).

Last year at this time, we introduced our new Sponsorship Catalogue. I am pleased to say that overall, the Sponsorship program was a success. We recently conducted a survey of this year's sponsors and were quite pleased with the positive responses we received. We are currently, making some minor revisions and I will then begin to contact supporters to secure the sponsorships for the upcoming 2014 year.

The At Risk workshop offered in October, provided 90 registrants with great information about child welfare and our duty to report. The conference committee is currently working diligently to plan our 17th Annual ABI Conference for April 9, 2013.

The Fundraising Committee is now hard at work preparing for our 14th Annual fundraiser. To change things up this year, we will be hosting the event at Centennial Hall with 'The Piano Men' performances by Jim Widder. The event will start a bit later, signature appetizers from local establishments will be available to sample in a more relaxed type setting.

We look forward to continuing to provide support, education, advocacy and raising public awareness about ABI in 2014. We hope you have a happy, safe and healthy holiday season.

Donna Thomson

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website: www.braininjurylondon.on.ca

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Don't miss out - Register Today!

Our annual conference, formerly The Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Conference will now incorporate Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) of all ranges of severity, from mild to severe. Our new conference name is, Rehabilitation following Mild to Severe Traumatic Brain Injury. With this new and exciting direction, we will also be showing abstracts at the event! There will be over 15 abstracts displayed.

This is a must-attend event for healthcare practitioners who contend with traumatic brain injury in their practice: physicians, therapists, nurses, social workers, program service manager, researchers and service providers from rehabilitation, insurance and legal organizations.

Participate in interactive discussions, workshops and plenary sessions in this one-day forum that will familiarize you with rehabilitation in all areas of traumatic brain injury. Workshops will focus on topics of emotional and behavioural consequences of TBI, including the implications for practice; manual therapy following TBI; goal management and a workshop on catastrophic impairment presented by Oatley, Vigmond and McLeish Orlando.

For More Information Visit:

<https://ers.snapuptickets.com/UHN/TBI2014Conference>



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RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE



OBIA continues to conduct research on ABI in Ontario and in 2012 released **The OBIA Impact Report 2012: A Statistical Snapshot of Acquired Brain Injury and its Effects on Survivors and Caregivers.**

Through your participation in our Research Study, you provide us with the information needed to report on brain injury statistics across the province, allowing us to better inform policy makers, government officials, service providers and the general public.

For information about our Research Study or to request an OBIA Research Questionnaire, please contact: Katie Muirhead at 1.800.263.5404 ext. 229 or kmuirhead@obia.on.ca

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Highlighting Our..... Volunteers



Gary Phelps

Tell us a little about yourself?

I am an accountant with personality at Davis Martindale. I work with my team at Davis Martindale to quantify financial losses incurred by individuals and businesses after negative circumstances affect their ability to work or operate. We work on loss claims that occur throughout Ontario and beyond. I have the pleasure of working with my wife Jessy who is also an accountant and partner with me both at home and at Davis Martindale. We have three great children, Jase, Taylor and Jordan who keep us busy and enjoying life to its fullest.

How long have you been volunteering with the Brain Injury Association?

I have been volunteering as the Treasurer and a member of the Fundraising committee at the Brain Injury Association for approximately 8 years.

Why did you choose to volunteer with the BIA?

I chose to volunteer at the Brain Injury Association because over the years, through my love of sports and my work with personal injury claims, I have had the pleasure to become acquainted with many individuals who have sustained head injuries. I learned about the many challenges these individuals and their family and friends have living with brain injury and recognized that there was a need to help. I also have a great interest in the prevention of brain injuries in children.

What makes you come back to BIA year after year?

I come back to the Brain Injury Association year after year because the need for its services never diminishes. Over the years I have met and worked with many great people while volunteering. Currently there continues to be a great need for volunteers and donors willing to contribute their time and/or financial resources to the prevention of and support of those living with brain injury.

Do you have a favourite moment from your time here that you can and would like to share?

I have had many favourite moments while volunteering at the Brain Injury Association. Rather than choosing a favourite moment, I would rather mention my favourite experience which clearly is the overall feeling of satisfaction I have with being a part of this organization. While I have been involved the Association's budget has more than doubled and the number of services and people served has increased by an even greater amount. This growth is clearly because of the continued selfless hours of work by many volunteers and the much needed and appreciated funding provided by many great sponsors. I must say, being one of six men wearing a dress at our "Bikers and Bridesmaids" event is a memory many have refused to allow me to forget.

What would you say to someone that is considering volunteering with BIA?

To those considering to become volunteers or sponsors with the Brain Injury Association, I have one thing to say.... What a brilliant idea!

Just A Note To Say Thank You!



Jamie Fairles

Tell us a little about yourself?

I have had 8 brain surgeries for 2 benign brain tumours, 2 cases of meningitis and an assault which robbed me of my mobility. I have a Bachelors of Arts in Combined Honors Film Studies and English which I now realize is merely a very expensive wall hanging. That is why I am currently in pursuit of my Bachelors of Social Work degree through the University of Manitoba's Distance Delivery program because that is the only Canadian University that offers a degree in social work online and I don't believe my poor balance and coordination could manage a busy campus quite yet. I try to give back to those less fortunate by providing a survivor's viewpoint and opinion to both the London board as well as on the board of the Ontario Brain Injury Association. I am also newly married with a 1-year-old daughter.

How long have you been volunteering with the Brain Injury Association?

I have been volunteering at the Brain Injury Association since after my assault in 2005. I was urged to apply to the board of directors after my rehabilitation therapist who sat on the board, thought that it suited me. My mother and I were 2 of the first 10 people in the province trained as mentors and the same year I was appointed to the board was the same year I was "promoted to Peer Support Coordinator.

Why did you choose to volunteer with the BIA?

I first chose to volunteer here because not only is it the closest brain injury association to me, but it gives me a place to do meaningful work.

What makes you come back to BIA year after year?

I come back here year after year because the people I work with have become my friends. I actually call Donna Thomson, my I.A.M. (Informally Adoptive Mother)

Do you have a favourite moment from your time here that you can and would like to share?

During my time with the Brain Injury Association of London & Region there have been many moments I cherish, but the one that sticks out in my mind the most is when in Donna submitted my name for OBIA's volunteer of the year 2008 and I actually won!

What would you say to someone that is considering volunteering with BIA?

For those who are thinking about volunteering here, I can honestly say it does not feel like work. It is a fun environment where people work hard to raise awareness and educate the public about one of the most grossly unknown and misunderstood disabilities.



DUAL MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM

Brain Injury Association of London and Region & The Ontario Brain Injury Association

Invite you to belong to both organizations for one low fee!

Further information and the application form can be found at

www.braininjurylondon.on.ca under "How to help"




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The Monarch is published by the Brain Injury Association of London and Region.

Opinions expressed in the articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Board of Directors.

All articles remain in their submitted un-edited form to preserve the original views and intent of the author.

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Peer Support Coordinators Report

When the Peer Support Coordinator's from the eleven Community Associations from various regions in Ontario met in Niagara Falls on November 18, the day before the provincial conference, we were told that OBIA is in the process of developing a post-partnership survey for both the mentors and the partners to complete once they have successfully completed a partnership. This is great news because now that the formal evaluation of the Peer Support Mentor Program has been finished for about a year, (double check before going to print) this will give great feedback from the participants themselves which then is used to secure funding to continue this much needed and tremendously helpful program. The theme of this month's issue is Inspirational brain injury survivors, and if you ask me, all the mentors in the program are inspirational because they selflessly devote their time and energy conversing with others affected by this tragically hidden and misunderstood disability to inspire them to continue on in life and that it does get better. The Brain Injury Association of London & Region will be holding its next mentor training sometime in the spring so if you think you have what it takes and your ready to inspire somebody, give the office a call!



Jamie Fairles

Peer Support Coordinator
519-642-4539

editorial@braininjurylondon.on.ca



Looking To Get Involved?

We are looking for individuals to become mentors in our Peer Mentor Program. Mentors provide support and share information and resources with partners who are coping with a similar ABI-related situation. We are in particular need of mentors who are family members and caregivers. Visit our website or contact our Peer Support Coordinator for more information.

www.braininjurylondon.on.ca

Brain Injury Support Groups

If you or someone you love has experienced a Brain Injury, you may benefit from participating in one of our many support groups. Groups meet either monthly or weekly and offer you the chance to learn more about living with ABI. Discuss common issues and problems or have fun in a positive environment.

| | |
|--|--|
|  <p>Huron County Support Group Meets the last Monday of each month At the Huronview Home for the Aged 77722A London Road Clinton, On. N0M 1L0 7:00 - 9:00pm</p> | <p>London Social Leisure Group Meets the first Thursday of each month Cornerstone Clubhouse 781 Richmond Street London, On 6:00 - 8:00pm</p> |
|  <p>Perth County Support Group Meets the last Tuesday of each month Zehrs Markets 2nd Floor Community Room 865 Ontario Street Stratford, On 7:00 - 9:00pm</p> |  <p>Oxford County Support Group Meets the last Tuesday of each month Dundas United Church 285 Dundas Street Woodstock, On 6:30 - 8:30pm</p> |
|  <p>Perth County Social Leisure Group Meets every Wednesday of each month Central United Church 194 Avondale Avenue Stratford, On 1:00 - 4:00pm</p> |  <p>Elgin County Support Group Meets the second Wednesday every month At the Real Canadian Superstore 2nd Floor Community Room 1063 Talbot Street St.Thomas, On 6:30 - 8:30pm</p> |
|  <p>London/Middlesex Support Group Meets the last Thursday of each month First Baptist Church London 568 Richmond Street (parking in rear) London, On 7:00 - 9:00pm</p> | <p>Elgin Social Lesiure Group Meets every Thursday of each month At the Christian Reform Baptist Church 320 Elm Street St.Thomas, On N5R 9:30 - 12:00pm</p> |

Never Give Up

Written By: Tina Bickell & Stephanie McGill

Smiling and radiating positivity, Tina Bickell is a regular fixture at the Perth Social Leisure group. Lead by Jennifer Vanderkant and located in the heart of Stratford. It is here where Tina and others share their struggles and their triumphs with one another. I had the pleasure of visiting the Perth Social Leisure Group better known as “the Grateful Heads”, where they were kind enough to share with me, their personal stories of how each of them were injured and what they now face on a daily basis. I could sense that these individuals are less like a group but more like a second family for one another. New faces and old faces, laughs and tears come rain or shine the Grateful Heads are together every Wednesday supporting one another.

Tina was just one of the many wonderful people I was fortunate to meet while visiting the Grateful Heads. Her story inspired me to ask her if she would share it with the rest of the world and she bravely agreed.

One morning I woke up feeling unwell, instead of going for a run I went back to bed. Within seconds of returning to bed I had a stroke. After the ambulance came for me and had taken me to a hospital I couldn't move parts of my body, I could barely breathe and couldn't walk, talk, eat or see; only at times, was I even aware of anyone in the room with me.

After a few days in ICU my thoughts became clearer and I realized how grim and serious the situation was. I was so devastated at everything that was taken away from me and cried knowing that my life had changed. I wished that I could forget what my life was like before the stroke so I would stop comparing it to what it had become. I had been very active, running daily and going to the gym and now I was bedridden and requiring someone's help.

At best, it was said that I would need long term care. The likelihood of being able to walk or eat normal food was highly unlikely. Hearing stories of other people beating the odds made me **believe** that I could as well. While looking at some photos of friends, family, and the old me staring back, I decided that I was going to beat the odds, take my life back and walk again.

The progression of my recovery was slow but eventually the ability to speak returned. Movement began to return to my left leg and arm. My balance was improving and I graduated from a wheel chair to a walker and cane and began learning how to walk again. My right eye shifted back into alignment, minimizing the double vision and restoring my eyesight.

The recovery has been long and an uphill battle with many bumps along the way. Life can be cruel and hard. There have been bad days where I am both physically and mentally tired, but I just **believe** that if I **work hard** and **never give up** things will continue to improve and it will all be worth it!

While Tina has been healing and working hard to recover what she has lost. She has found an opportunity to raise awareness about brain injury, by teaching herself to sew mittens and hats for the winter months. She uses beautiful and very warm materials that come in a wide range of colors and sizes, but what makes them most unique are the inspirational messages that she adorns on them.

We thank you again Tina for letting us share your motivating story and wish you and the rest of the Grateful Heads all the best.





Parkwood Acquired Brain Injury Survivor and Family Education Series 2014

This eight-week series explores topics of interest to Southwestern Ontario residents recovering from an acquired brain injury, their families, friends, and caregivers. The goals of the series are to share information, provide opportunities to meet other individuals and family members affected by brain injury, and to encourage peer support.

Parkwood Hospital, part of St. Joseph's Health Care London, is hosting this series. It will be broadcast by videoconference to communities within Southwestern Ontario so people can view the series and interact with speakers without having to travel to London. At the time of publication, the following communities will have sites to access the series via videoconference: Chatham, Windsor, Woodstock, Grand Bend, Owen Sound, and Stratford. Details regarding specific locations within these communities will be provided in the upcoming months. Additional sites may be added prior to the start of the series and will be confirmed in the March edition of the Monarch.

The education series will run Tuesday evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 pm, March 25 – May 13, 2014.

Topics for this year's series will include:

- Brain Injury 101
- Practical Strategies for Managing Your Life
 - Role Changes Following ABI
 - Mental Health and ABI
- Coping with Vision Changes and Noise Sensitivity Following ABI
 - Survivors' Stories



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An Indirect Road To Publishing

Written By: Timothy Slykhuis Author Of Starfish Sky

I am a dyslexic brain injured guy. Becoming an author has never even been dream of mine. But what I did have was a view from the inside world of brain injury. I think getting a brain injury is one of the most common reasons why people want write a book. My reasons to write Starfish Sky were different. I wanted to provide a vision for hope for those who have none.

Over many years I'd learned about the brain and developed affective strategies for brain improvement. I personally knew many people whose lives were falling apart with a desperate need to understand and to have strategies for brain improvement. When I looked back at my life I knew that my story was different. By the end the reader will have learned things about brain injury but also some universal truths.

Starfish Sky Started to be written in 1997, 8 years after my brain injury. With my poor memory and mental tiredness, the function of putting my thoughts on paper in a coherent way without restating the same idea in three or four different ways in one paragraph, was challenging. All the basic functions involved in the writing process had to be relearned. Needless to say my computer with its spellcheck function was invaluable.

The book was basically finished by Christmas 2008. The next challenge, finding a publisher and an editor can be just as daunting. "I'm just a dyslexic brain injured guy" not a noteworthy personality nor the skilled wordsmith publishers are interested in spending their time and money on.

I was just about giving up hope, but was luck to find Baico Publishing, in Ottawa. The owner personally reads every manuscript and decides from there if the book will be published.

Now that the book is published an equal challenge is to have it seen and read. That's where you can come in!



STOP CONCUSSIONS

I raced down the ice and around an opposing defenseman, heading towards the net on my off-wing. I opened up in front to shoot. This would be my defining moment. But then, the defenseman had fallen, swung his stick, and took my feet out from under me. The next thing I remembered was waking up in a hospital with five German doctors standing over me. My German was non-existent at the time. I was scared.

Growing up, my dream was to be in the NHL. Although I never got the call to the big leagues, Germany was my chance to make it big. I knew that I had hurt my head and shoulder but I didn't know to what extent. I experienced minor headaches and pain in my left shoulder. The medical team was more concerned with my shoulder. My brain was only mentioned in passing and I was advised to stay in the hospital for 10 days for observations.

In those days, the player made the call to return to the game. So I went back the next Friday and didn't miss a single game. I never noticed anything lingering from my injury. While playing I suffered some fogginess and confusion but was still playing at a high level, so I took it all in stride. Even through the off-season, I continued to live a normal life, fighting off the confusion, moodiness and fatigue.

Everything changed in mid-February, 1990. I was traveling down the autobahn at 200 kilometers an hour when my left arm went numb. I felt tightness in my chest and became very dizzy. As I stepped out of the car to get some air, my legs buckled and down I went. My girlfriend at the time dragged me into the passenger seat and sped off to the hospital in Eschweiler. A team of doctors met me in emergency and gave me every test known to man. After a few days and a continuing bout of tests, I was told I had a clean bill of health and was released.

I continued to feel ill, but played the final three weeks of the season. Heading home, I was anxious, forgetful, paranoid and depressed; even suicidal. I was thirty, playing pro hockey and making money playing

the game. Something was just not right. I was starting to think I was going nuts. I was scared because I had to get it together. Earlier in January, I had signed a two-year deal to become a player and coach of the Timmendorf Ice Bears in the Third Division.

When I arrived in Winnipeg I thought things would settle down in my own environment. Instead, I spiraled down. I needed proper medical help. I was referred to a psychiatrist and after a few visits told that I was suffering from anxiety and depression and needed medication. He sent me to see a psychologist, knowing how important it was to send me back to Europe. Back to the game that defined my life.



His one theory that I had damaged my brain from injuries in hockey fell on deaf ears. I went on medication and once I was stable went to therapy. When I was well enough, I travelled back to Germany. I reached out to a good friend and tremendous coach, Don Depoe, to help me prepare for the upcoming season. He took away much of the stress of preparation, which allowed me to deal with my demons. When my father and I arrived in the new city of Timmendorfer Strand, Germany, it was quite evident that I was not ready to stand alone. Everywhere I went, my father served as an

adult babysitter. On the ice, you couldn't see what I was dealing with, and that my father was picking up the pieces of my life. All of this from not dealing with an injured brain. All of this because I had insisted on sucking it up.

Once I retired in 2001, I decide to volunteer my time with the Canadian Spinal Research organization and that is where I began my friendship with Barry Munro, Ron Ellis and Keith Primeau. In 2006, my personal journey continued with a partner, Keith Primeau. We have written a book CONCUSSED and have started an educational platform to help people understand the cause, effects, and consequences of concussions. I encourage you to visit stopconcussions.com, and stop people like me from "sucking it up."



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Ask A Lawyer



Gna Dang
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Occupiers' Liability - Precautions During the Holidays

As it starts to snow and the holiday season approaches, preparations begin for the large holiday family dinners and New Year's Eve parties. For some of us, this may be the only time in the year we invite friends and family to our homes. The planning typically revolves around various tasks that must be completed, and perhaps delegated, before the arrival of the first guest: who should we invite (or who can we avoid inviting)? What should we cook? How should we decorate the house? Who's doing the cleaning and when must it be done by? How many or what gifts should we buy, and for whom? However, very few people, including home owners/renters with a brain injury and home owners/renters inviting guests with brain injury, give a lot of thought to whether the accessible areas of their home is sufficiently safe for guests. In all cases, it is prudent to discuss the safety of your home with other people prior to hosting a house party.

Under the Ontario Occupiers' Liability Act, occupiers, which includes owners or renters of the premises, have a "duty to take such care as in all the circumstances of the case is reason-

able to see that persons entering on the premises...are reasonably safe while on the premises." Needless to say, this responsibility extends to any guest at any time of the year so the following comments should be kept in mind at all times. However, the circumstances of holiday gatherings tend to increase the risks of accidents for many reasons, including, particularly, a greatly increased consumption of alcohol.

Slip and fall incidents are common and can result in significant injuries, including head trauma. Stairs are likely the most dangerous part of anybody's home. Consider whether the stairway to your basement is very steep, has a loose handrail, has no handrails at all, or has only one handrail. Perhaps the steps are constructed at irregular heights? Maybe you recently finished your floors with extra shiny and glossy coats, making it much more slippery for guests walking in socks? You may think your guests would not wander to other areas in your home, but what if they did so in search of another bathroom because the main one is occupied? You should consider the precautions you can take to make your home safer for your guests. Why

not lock that basement door during the event? Lay down some rugs over that shiny coated floor, or suggest that your guests enter your home barefoot?

Other significant areas of risk include the outside areas of your home. During the winter, ice may form on your driveway or front walk in a matter of hours. Consider watching the weather forecast and proactively salting your driveway if there is a chance of ice formation.

If you are inviting a guest with a brain injury to your home, keep in mind that he/she might have trouble following the "rules" and may be more likely to go off on his/her own. He/she may not recognize some of the warning signs that you take for granted. Should any of your guests get injured as a result of unsafe conditions on your property, you may be found at fault for the injury and be required to pay compensation to the guest for these injuries. In addition to the precautions you can take, you should also ensure you have purchased proper liability insurance coverage for your home. The winter holidays are meant to be shared with joy and cheer. Any steps taken to prevent a tragic incident are well worth the time and effort.



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See Troy Run

On August 11, 2003 at age 16, Troy Adams was involved in a car crash that forever changed his life. He suffered many injuries that day, none more significant than an acquired brain injury. Whether it's depression, anxiety, bouts of OCD, etc. - running seems to be the one thing that can ease his mind.

A brain injury can be a very complex injury, and for the person who suffers, it can be all the worse. For example, it took him nearly eight years to realize He was a 'survivor' and not a victim. Following years of ongoing therapy and unconditional love from his family and friends, He finally was able to look in the mirror and see a survivor staring back.

Troy's Run Foundation works hard to be one of Canada's most recognizable Brain Injury Organizations, as we continue to strive to create a better life for Brain Injury Survivor's and their loved ones.

In November 2012, Troy Adams, Founder and President of Troy's Run Foundation - wrapped up his final leg of his Cross Canada Run. Successfully averaging a marathon a day for close to 9 months. Moments after jumping head first into the Pacific Ocean, Troy stated the following,

“The run across Canada may be coming to an end, but the journey has just begun”

Troy says: 'This journey is no longer about me, but about everyone else. This is a movement for positive change. Let's create HOPE for tomorrow, by taking action today.'



Spinning through the air, performing a Cab Double Cork snowboarding trick Kevin Pearce had done a thousand times, something goes wrong. He catches his toe-edge, and before he can brace himself he smashes his head against the ice. With a face beat in like he was in a brawl, blood pouring from his nose, his friends beg him to stay conscious. “He was shaking like a fish out of water” his best friend Jack Mitrani recalls.

A TBI Does Not Define You

The Story Of Kevin Pearce

By: Amy Legate-Wolfe

It's a difficult scene to watch, but you're invited to this December when The Crash Reel comes to Canada. The movie has already received thrilling reviews and awards including the official selection of Sundance 2013 and top ten audience-favourite at Hotdocs 2013. It focuses on snowboarder Kevin Pearce's experience as a traumatic brain injury sufferer. In one moment, Pearce is rivaling Shaun White for a top spot at the Vancouver Olympics. The next, he's in a hospital bed. The documentary aims to spread the word about the importance of protecting your brain. His story shows that if you're motivated, having a TBI won't change you.



Photographed by Jack Mitrani

On December 31, 2009, Kevin Pearce had the world at his feet training for the Vancouver Olympics with his best friend, who had just celebrated his 21st birthday. He recently had a concussion when he fell during an Olympic qualifying event in Copper Mountain, CO. That didn't stop him from preparing for another event three weeks later in Mammoth Mountain, CA. Pushing himself for that gold medal, this time the trick goes wrong.

Pearce suffered a severe traumatic brain injury. He was in the University of Utah Hospital's intensive care unit in Salt Lake City for a month with worries of his brain swelling. By the time he was moved to Craig Hospital in Denver where they specialized in TBI rehabilitation, he was able to walk and perform daily activities with some help. His family were his biggest cheerleaders, and after five months of rehab he went home. But home to what?

His days as a professional snowboarder were over. Despite wanting to be back on the snow as an expert, his brain wouldn't let him. It's tragic to watch the professional attempt once basic moves. But in late 2011, at a retreat put together by Nike, Pearce met Lucy Walker, director of *The Crash Reel*. The retreat was to motivate athletes to do some good in the world. Walker saw a man with the charisma and drive to put his heart into something new.

As producer Julian Cautherley of Phase 4 Films tells me, Pearce decided to show this intimate part of his life "so others can see what it's like to go through a TBI." The film has gone beyond that. By showing his journey through rehab and his family, "[the film] applies to anybody who is recovering from...[an] injury or addiction... It transcends beyond TBIs." *The Crash Reel* brings to light this "invisible injury." As Cautherley explains, "It's not a broken arm in a cast...It's a very serious thing.



“Healing never ends. I will win, not immediately, but definitely.”



Pearce isn't back to 100%. He suffers from memory loss, vision and balance problems, and fatigue. But Pearce and *Crash Reel* destroy misconceptions of brain injury. Speaking in schools about the dangers of brain damage and advocating helmet use, he says that if he didn't wear one he "wouldn't be here." On stage, he gets the same rush as he did in front of a crowd snowboarding. He "thrives" being under pressure, scared, and nervous all at the same time. As Cautherley passionately tells me, "If you stick to it, if you really try, you can overcome and go beyond what someone thinks you can do. That's what makes this film universal." We wish Kevin Pearce all the best carrying the torch at the Sochi Winter Olympics for Nike next February.

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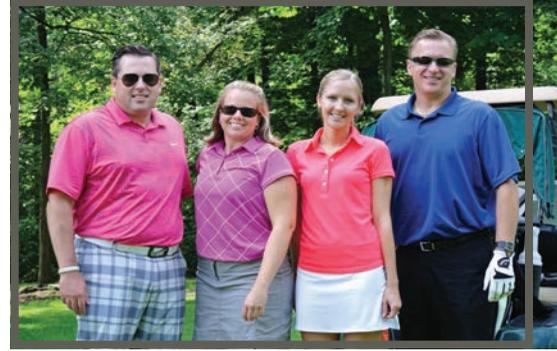
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Centennial Hall (Wellington Street, London)
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April 9th, 2014
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