



The Monarch

December 2011

**BRAIN INJURY
ASSOCIATION
OF LONDON
AND REGION**

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Brain Injury Association of London and Region

Serving London, Middlesex, Huron, Perth, Oxford and Elgin

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Email: info@braininjurylondon.on.ca **Website:** www.braininjurylondon.on.ca

Registered Charitable: 139093736RR0001

Reminder:

Membership Renewals are now due!

Dual Memberships now available
with Ontario Brain Injury Association
and the Brain Injury Association
of London and Region.

See OBIA.BIALR Dual Membership
Application Inside

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The **Monarch** is published by the *Brain Injury Association of London and Region*. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Board of Directors. Submissions to the Monarch are welcome at any time, but should consist of no more than 325 words. When you send in an article from a paper/magazine, please include the date and name of publication. Please include a cover letter with your name and telephone number. Published letters can be anonymous, but the editors must verify the information and obtain permission to reprint the letters, as well as have a contact for questions and responses. Advertising rates are available on request. The publication of an advertisement does not imply support of the advertiser by the Association. All submissions must be received by the first Wednesday of the month prior to publication, at the office located at: 560 Wellington Street, Lower Level, London, ON, N6A 3R4

Phone: (519) 642-4539

Fax: (519) 642-4124

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



The past few months have been very prosperous for the Association. The Golf Classic raised over \$30,000 to support the programs and services provided by both our Association and H.A.B.I.T.

I was honoured to co-emcee the recent Provincial ABI Conference held in Niagara Falls which drew close to 600

participants. Thanks to the exceptional planning by OBIA and the local community associations across Ontario, this was our most successful conference yet!

On behalf of the Association, a very special thank you to Vanessa Breakwell, owner of MDM Reporting Services for organizing the 4th Annual Casino Night that drew ex professional hockey players, Kerry Goulet, Darryl Shannon, and Dave Hutchison to show their support in putting an end to concussions in professional sports. Keith Primeau also made an appearance via Skype to lend his support. Proceeds of close to \$20,000 will help us in continuing to provide our services to the 5 counties we serve.

Support Groups are now well under way with many guest speakers discussing various topics. Recent topics have included meditation, physiotherapy, Disability Tax credits, and Registered Disability Savings Plans.

The newest group in Woodstock began in October and plans are underway for a new group to start in January for Elgin County.

We are beginning planning to have our 12th Annual Dinner & Dance, an evening with Alan Few, ex-lead singer of the band Glass Tiger to be the best one yet! The gala will be held March 3, 2012, and tickets are on sale now! We are still seeking sponsorships

and silent auction items to be donated.

The Community Awareness Committee in partnership with Harrison Pensa is planning to publish a simplified legal guide to assist survivors and their families with day to day legal issues. This will hopefully be ready to be unveiled at our annual Brain Injury Conference in June.

The Helmets on Kids Partnership along with two students from UWO are putting the final touches on a new helmet training video that will be used in schools and in presentations for helmet fitting training. Thanks to TD Canada Trust for providing the funding.

The New Attitude Committee is a joint effort between Parkwood Hospital, Dale Brain Injury Services, PABICOP, Thames Valley Addiction Services and our Association. The group is planning on offering a Substance Use & ABI Group beginning on April 19, 2012 here at our office.

Jamie Fairles and I are now giving presentations about the Peer Mentor Program and the services this Association provides to the staff and patients at Parkwood Hospital on the third Thursday of each month.

December is often a time for celebration, but it can also be a tremendously lonely time for many people, especially those living with the affects of an acquired brain injury. So with that, I hope you enjoy our special section on Getting through the Holidays with a Brain Injury. Have a happy, healthy, prosperous Holiday season and all the best in 2012!!

Donna Thomson

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Fax: (519) 685-4066

Toll Free: 1-866-484-0445





**BRAIN INJURY
ASSOCIATION
OF LONDON
AND REGION**

is pleased to present:

**An Evening with
ALAN
FREW**

**12th Annual
Dinner Dance
and
Silent Auction**

**March 3, 2012
Cocktails - 6:00pm
Dinner - 7:00pm
London Convention Centre
300 York St, London, ON**

**Tickets:
\$125.00 per person
\$1200.00 per table of 10**

**Tickets can be purchased online
at www.braininjurylondon.on.ca
or by phone at 519.642.4539**





Brain Injury Can Happen to Anyone

ONTARIO BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION



Ontario Brain Injury Survey

Dear Friend:

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new Ontario Brain Injury Survey. This survey replaces our former Caregiver Information and Support Link (CISL) Questionnaire which OBIA has been using since 1989. This new survey will be used to provide valuable information annually to researchers, service providers and government policy makers.

Your local brain injury associations is assisting OBIA with this project. By completing the attached Survey Release of Information Form you are agreeing to have a representative from OBIA contact you to provide you with more information about the Ontario Brain Injury Survey. Then, with your consent we will mail a copy of the survey to you with a postage paid return envelope. In appreciation of your time to complete the survey we are offering you a free dual membership to OBIA and a local association of your choice. For every survey completed the local association will receive \$15 to assist them in providing programs and services.

Benefits of Membership

- ✓ Survivor ID and Dual Membership Card
- ✓ Quarterly issues of the OBIA Review Newsletter
- ✓ Access to our Resource and Lending Library
- ✓ Discounts on training courses

As always information provided to OBIA will be kept strictly confidential.

If you have any questions about our Ontario Brain Injury Survey or the membership programs, please do not hesitate to call OBIA at 1-800-263-5404.

The attached consent form can be completed and sent back to OBIA via fax, email or by regular mail. Thank you for your support!

PO Box 2338, St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7R9, Tel: (905)-641-8877, 1-800-263-5404, Fax: (905) 641-0323
E-mail: obia@obia.on.ca Website: <http://www.obia.on.ca>
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Ontario Brain Injury Survey Release of Information

Name: _____

Please specify: Survivor Caregiver

Age of survivor: Adult (16 yrs+) Child/Youth (under 16 yrs)

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____

Area Code & Telephone: (_____) _____

Association/Service Provider: _____

I give the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) permission to contact me regarding the *Ontario Brain Injury Survey*. All information provided to OBIA will be kept strictly confidential.

Signature of Survivor/Caregiver

Witness Signature

Date

Date

*Completed forms can be sent back to OBIA, via email, fax or regular mail.

PO Box 2338, St. Catharines, ON, L2R 7R9, Tel: (905)-641-8877, 1-800-263-5404, Fax: (905) 641-0323

E-mail: obla@obla.on.ca Website: <http://www.obla.on.ca>

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Peer Support Mentoring Program for People Living with ABI

*By Jamie Fairles
Peer Support Coordinator*

This month's theme is "Getting Through the Holidays with a brain injury and as a brain injury survivor myself, I can say without a doubt that the holidays can be either an extremely joyous time, or quite a woeful time. Where one's enjoyment of the holidays is placed on the spectrum between these two extremes largely depends on many things: the activities they have planned, with whom they have to spend the holidays with among other things. For some brain injury survivors, they don't have anybody to share in the festivities whereas other survivors have many family members and friends surrounding

them. Although the symptoms of all brain injuries are similar, the results and ramifications are unique. By participating in the Peer Support Mentor Program that loneliness can be abated by having another person who truly understands what you are feeling and going through to talk and share with. Remember, nobody understands brain injury as much as somebody who has experienced it firsthand. If you are interested in inquiring about having a mentor or being a mentor yourself, please call the office and inquire more about this program!

**If you think you would make a good mentor,
or would like to have a mentor,**

Phone call: 519 642-4539 Toll Free: 1-888-642-4539

Bartimaeus Rehabilitation Services Because Experience Matters

Bartimaeus provides rehabilitation services for people with an acquired brain injury and people who have suffered from serious trauma.

For more information, please call or email Tish Byrne at 519-575-2002 , tbyrne@bartimaeus.com or visit our website www.bartimaeus.com



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Acquired Brain Injury 2012 Survivor and Family Education Series

This seven-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: Goderich, Windsor, Woodstock, Grand Bend, and Sarnia. 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.

This year the education series will run Tuesday evenings from 6:30 – 8:00 pm, March 27 – May 8, 2012.

Topics for this year's series will include:

- **Brain Injury 101**
- **Practical Strategies for Managing Your Life**
- **ABI and Mental Health**
- **ABI and Behaviour**
- **Survivors' Stories**



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

You Can Now Belong to Both Associations for One Low Fee!!

Program Highlights

Membership in both the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) and the Brain Injury Association of London and Region (BIALR). Individual members shall be entitled to one vote at both BIALR and OBIA's Annual General Meeting. Family members shall be entitled to no more than two at both BIALR and OBIA's Annual General Meeting.

Membership in Community Support Network/Reseau De Soutien Communautaire (CSN/RSC) is available to individuals and families who support the aims and objectives of participating community associations and OBIA. Corporations, associations, partnerships, or other types of organizations are welcome to support participating community associations and OBIA by listing or advertising in the online ABI Directory of Services, but may not hold CSN/RSC membership.

Members will receive a one-year subscription to OBIA Review and The Monarch newsletter.

Members may participate in the Peer Support Mentoring Program for People Living with ABI.

Members will have free access to OBIA's resource library and be eligible for a \$25.00 discount on most of OBIA's training programs.

All membership fees are equally divided between OBIA and BIALR

OBIA & BIALR Dual Membership Application Form

Name: _____

Address 1 _____

Address 2 _____

City: _____ Postal Code _____

Home Phone: _____

Work Phone: _____

Email: _____

Yes! I wish to purchase a Dual Membership and I understand that I will hold membership to both Ontario Brain Injury Association and the Brain Injury Association of London & Region.

Annual Membership Fees:

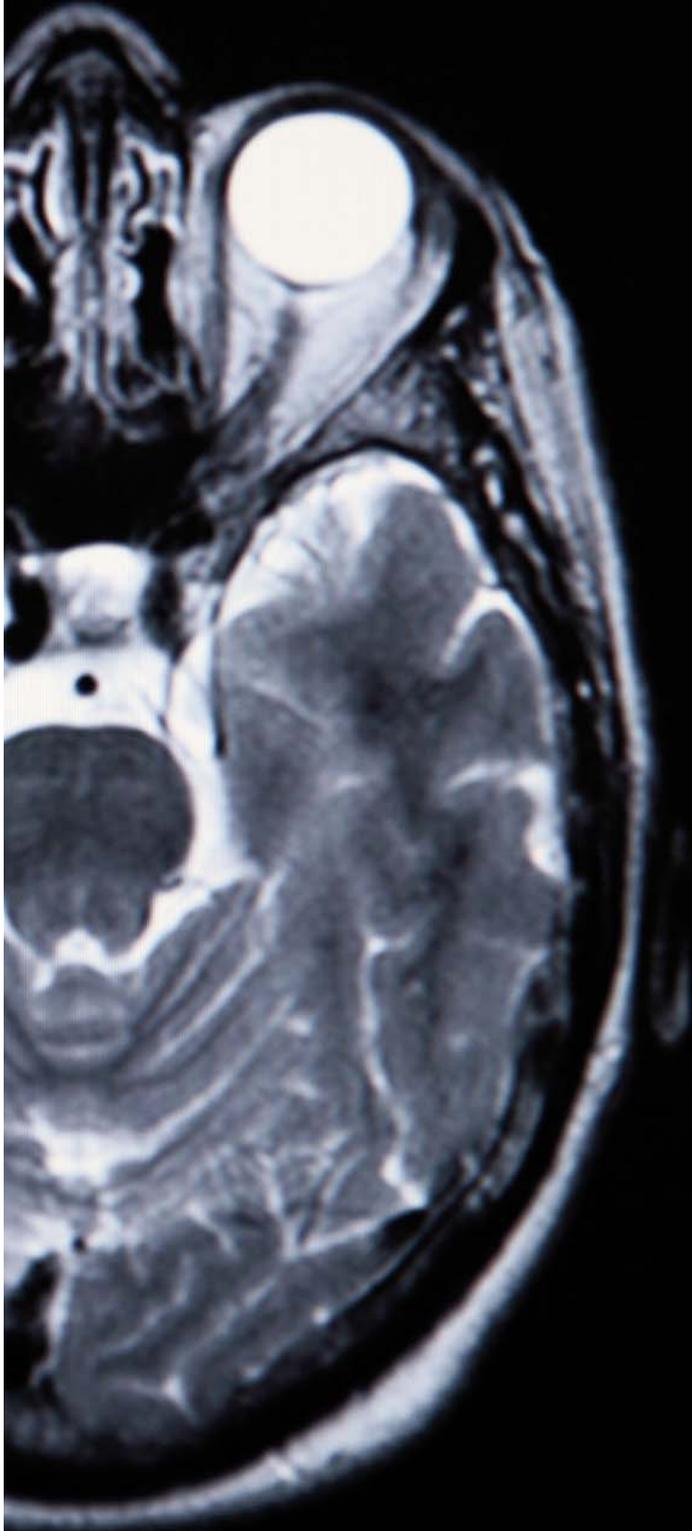
- Individual \$30 Family \$50 Subsidized \$5

Please make cheque payable to Ontario Brain Injury Association or pay using:

- Visa MasterCard American Express

Card Number: _____ Expiry _____ / _____

Ontario Brain Injury Association
PO Box 2338
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R9
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Registered as a Canadian Charitable Organization, Registration #10779
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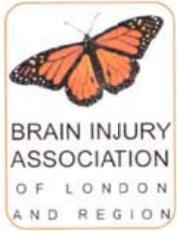
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Monthly Acquired Brain Injury Support Groups

London/Middlesex
First Baptist Church
568 Richmond Street
London, Ontario
Last Thursday of each month
London Ontario
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Perth County
Zehrs Markets
2nd Floor Community Room
865 Ontario Street, Stratford, ON
Last Tuesday of Each Month
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Woodstock Public Library
445 Hunter Street
Woodstock, Ontario
Third Thursday of each month
6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

CMHA Oxford Branch
522 Peel Street
Woodstock, Ontario
Third Thursday of each month
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.

18-30 Social Support Group
Cornerstone Clubhouse
781 Richmond Street
London Ontario
First Thursday of each month
6:00 to 8:00 p.m.

Perth Social Leisure Group
Central United Church
194 Avondale Ave
Stratford, Ontario
Every Wednesday
1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

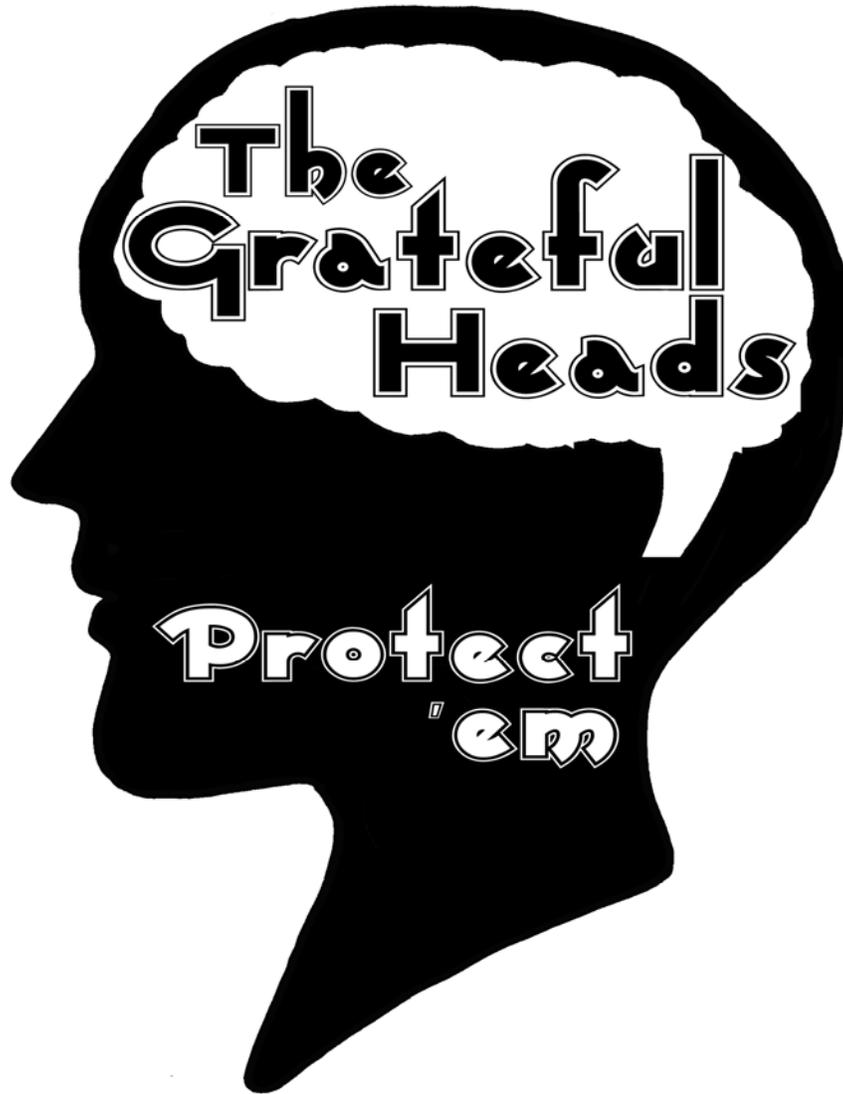
Elgin County
NEW IN JANUARY 2012

Check www.braininjurylondon.on.ca for details

Unless noted otherwise all groups meet from 7-9 PM and all locations are wheelchair accessible. Information available at www.braininjurylondon.on.ca or e-mail support@braininjurylondon.on.ca

Becky LeCouteur (519) 642-4539





The Stratford ABI Social Leisure Group
Meets Weekly in Stratford
For more information call: 519 642-4539
Or email: support@braininjurylondon.on.ca

A free program offered by:



H.A.B.I.T & the Brain Injury Association of London & Region would like to thank the following sponsors for their role in making our 10th Annual Brain Injury Golf Classic a huge success!

Which was dedicated to the memory of Dr. Jane Marie Gillett

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EZaccess Inc..
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Rocky's Harley-Davidson

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John Barry Pursuit Health Management
Grand Theatre
Guarantee Company of North America
Clublink Corporation
Oasis Counselling & Consulting Services
Kane Rehabilitation Services
Bing's China House
Braywick Bistro
Thames Office System
Nigel G. Gilby
Children's Museum
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Throsel Family
John Rousseau, McKellers
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Thames Office Supplies
Sandy's Flower Shop

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and All the Best in 2012.*

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depression or anxiety?



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Photos on this page, clockwise beginning above:

- Guest speakers Kerry Goulet and brain injury survivor, Jamie Fairles
- Ex-NHLer and director of stopconcussions.com Kerry Goulet also speaking about the need to putting an end to concussions in professional sports
- Ex-NHLer Dave Hutchison speaking about concussions and brain injuries in general
- The evening's guests gambling for a worthy cause

A very special thank you to **Vanessa Breakwell** of MDM Reporting for organizing this night to remember. Her efforts raised close to \$20,000 for the Association!



Many Thanks to the Sponsors & Silent Auction Donors
Your Support helped MDM Reporting Services raise over
\$ 20,000

for the Brain Injury Association of London & Region!

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Crabby Joes
East Park Golf Gardens
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Family Karate
Fire Rock
Fleetway Bowling Centre
Hennessey Gibson Hogan
Keyz Thankz
Kiwi Kraze
Michael King
Chartered Accountant
My Massage
Stop Concussions.com
Sunningdale Golf & Country
Club
The Grand Theatre
The Wharf Restaurant

Delta London Armouries
Source for Sports
Royal Bank Business Centre
Tina's Treasury
WAL-MART
Active Health Massage
Therapy
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MacGregor & MacGregor
West Haven Golf
Helen Drenth
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YPA Rehabilitation Services
Orchestra London
Tina's Nails
Rehabilitation Management
Inc
Forest Motel and Woodland
Retreat
Widder Station

Giant Tiger
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John Labatt Centre
Channers
Eileen Roberston
Four Points Sheridan
Artist Mike Everett
Classic Courier
Amy K. White
Chartered Accountant
Patio Palace
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Kelloggs
Blazkowski Rehabilitation &
Consulting
Port Stanley Festival Theatre
Oihje Salon and Spa
Abruzzi Italian Restaurant
Vicki Edgar & Lucy Lee @
Cohen Highley

Photo to the right:
Evelyn & Nick Paparella,
Tracey Kilbourn of Keyz
Thankz, Donna Thomson,
and ex-NHLplayers, Kerry
Goulet and Darryl Shannon,
Toni Miil, Director of
Operations for www.
stopconconcussions.com



Across The Province



Another new and exciting initiative for OBIA is the webcasting and archiving of the OBIA Advisory Council (OAC) meetings. We are grateful to PACE Law Firm, the Educational Sponsor of the OBIA Advisory Council Meetings.

Having our meetings webcast provides an opportunity for local associations to participate, where until now, distance may have prevented them from doing so.

Each webcast video is then uploaded to OBIA's website, where OAC members can log in to view the recorded meeting.

Also, at OBIA we are very aware of the many great activities and programs happening at the local Brain Injury Associations. However, we want to be sure that all Ontarians reading our magazine know about them too.

So, beginning with our holiday issue, we are delighted to showcase the wonderful programs and events happening around Ontario in the re-vamped "Across the Province" portion of our magazine.

Seasons Greetings Everyone!



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Cornerstone Clubhouse
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"Supporting Success"



Getting Through the Holidays after a Brain Injury

By Natalie Molinaro

Getting through the holidays after/with a brain injury can be difficult at times. There are many different hurdles to jump over when it becomes the holidays, no matter what you believe. Since I am a lapsed Catholic that will be the angle I am writing this article with.

Some problems that I will be touching on include:

1. Increased chaos
2. Noise
3. Drinking or not drinking alcohol
4. Faster pace
5. Shopping
6. Planning gifts
7. Limited budgets

All these ideas I personally find helpful, and if you don't find it helpful I am sorry, but hopefully it points you in the right direction.

The first problem on the list is one of the ones I'm still having trouble with. Dealing with increased chaos depends on the chaos that is happening. For loud music you can try two things: First, move to the other side of the room (that may help). Second, ask someone to turn the music down a little. Another cause of chaos is just too many people. My only suggestion is to go to one side of the room and you can ask the people to maybe speak a little louder.

The second problem on the list is "noise." Well this is a common problem with brain injury. There are a couple of solutions that I use. The first one is ask people to turn down the music or television. Another thing that I find that helps is to take who ever I am talking to, to a little quieter area or just farther away from the noise. Or a last choice remedy is just to use some Tylenol.

Some tips for not drinking is a different problem. The way I deal with it is to tell at least one person I'm with, that I'm not drinking or only drinking a little. Most of the time that alone helps me to not drink. Most places or people will have a non-alcoholic option to drink.

Shopping, limiting budgets and planning for gifts are all solutions that can help out. For example, planning gifts and limiting your budget helps, along with making a list of what to buy for which person. This also helps out the budget by knowing approximately how much each item costs. You can also start to do the shopping early. If you start making the list early, you can shop early and

buy for 2 people a month. If you start in July and only buy for 2 people a month, by Christmas you may have 12 people's gifts.

Also, if you do make a list, the actual shopping is much easier. This way you know what you are looking for and do not have to wander the store to think of something the person might like. If you do make a list you, make sure that you have more time to think about what the person will like or love. To avoid the crowds, my only advice is to get out early. Beat the crowds! Well, hopefully that will be helpful and make you or someone you know have an easier holiday.

Have fun and Happy Holidays!

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- In-Home Assessment & Treatment
- Attendant Care Needs Assessments
- Catastrophic Rehabilitation: ABI, spinal cord, complex orthopaedics
- Future Care Cost Analysis
- Jobsite/Ergonomic Assessment/ Physical Demands Analysis
- Return-to-Work Programmes
- Functional Abilities Assessment
- Hydrotherapy
- Yoga
- Individualized Exercise Programmes



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or visit our website at:
www.continuumrehab.com



SURVIVAL TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

By: Kim Pretty

The Christmas Season of 2011 is quickly approaching . I do not know anyone who does not find the holiday season at least somewhat stressful and at most mind numbing. Never the less, Christmas is a time of giving and we should all give ourselves as stress free holiday as possible.

The cost of purchasing gifts for family and friends is absolutely outrageous. We try to set limits on spending and also on whom to purchase for but often times we end up over spending. There is nothing wrong with setting a monetary limit, and surely our family and friends will appreciate the thought and not the cost of the gift.

There is nothing wrong with making purchases at the Dollar Store or inexpensive bulk or second hand stores or retail stores. I know when I used to buy gifts for my nieces and nephews, I could spend a large amount of money on a gift that in all likelihood would be

broken in a short period of time. The child loved the gift but had so many other gifts that when the gift broke, I felt bad. The child usually didn't. Here is my advice, regarding the purchases for family. Ask for gift ideas early, before stores get really busy, and then set yourself a budget that you will not regret after the holidays.

During the holiday season many of us travel to visit family and friends. This can be an overwhelming aspect of the season. I know personally how difficult this can be. I travel to Sudbury each Christmas to visit family. The trip home takes a full day. It is very tiring, almost exhausting.

Then I have to consider the medications that I take each day. Travelling by bus is painful for me. It is difficult to sit all day and carry heavy luggage across the bus terminal without dropping anything that may be breakable.

Here is my advice for people who travel. If you can, allow yourself one full day of rest and

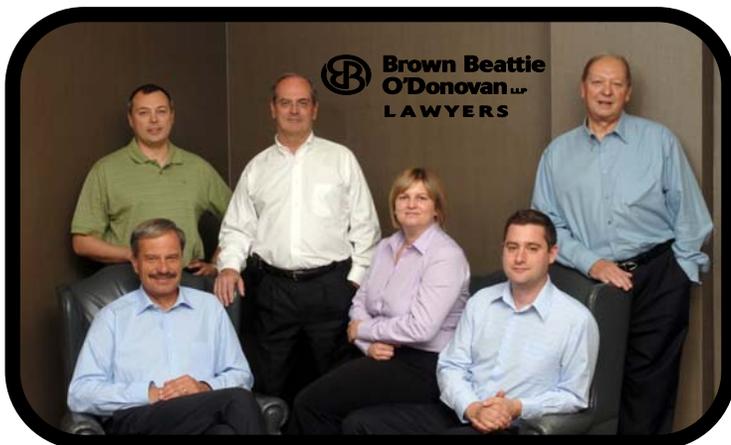


Brown Beattie O'Donovan LLP
BARRISTERS & SOLICITORS

WE CAN HELP

If you or a family member are suffering the effects of a brain injury or other serious injury, contact us for advice.

You or your loved ones may be entitled to benefits and compensation.



FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION

Telephone: (519) 679-0400

Fax: (519) 679-6350

Email: bboinfo@bbo.on.ca

Website: www.bbo.on.ca

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relaxation after your travel time. Remember this if you are not feeling well, both physically or mentally you cannot enjoy your holiday.

The holiday season is a stressful time, but for people with brain injuries it can seem almost insurmountable. We deal with excitement, stress, alcohol, food and visiting, family and friends and we react totally differently than people who do not have a brain injury. When we become overwhelmed or stressed, our brains process these emotions differently.

It is as if our brains have emotional incontinence. We find it extremely difficult to deal with even the simplest matters. Then there's alcohol thrown into the mix. We have no idea how mixing alcohol with medications will react in our systems. While I am home Christmas Day arrives. My Dad, who passed away many years ago, was born on Dec. 25. I always become sad because I miss him. Sometimes my family and friends cannot understand why I'm upset because my Dad and I

didn't always see eye to eye.

If you are alone during the holidays, try to keep yourself busy. Read a book, work on puzzles, watch happy, comedic television, but treat yourself with KINDNESS. Keep your mind occupied with positive thoughts. Also keep your body active. Do exercise, yoga, dance, go for a walk, but be HAPPY .

Finally, I would like to say something. Take care of yourself first, and enjoy the CHRISTMAS SEASON.

Spend HAPPY time with friends and family. Take time for rest and relaxation and your holiday season will not be so overwhelming.

Let us all look forward to a
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How To Budget Holiday Gift Spending

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Here's How:

1. List whom you want to shop for.

List everyone whom you plan to shop for (friends, relatives, teachers, pets, etc.).

2. Determine how much you can afford to spend.

Review your finances to determine how much you can afford to spend on gifts. Set this figure as your overall holiday gift budget.

3. Divide your gift budget among the people on your gift list.

Look over your gift list, and decide how much you would like to spend on each person. Then, total up the expected spending for all gifts, and make sure it does not exceed the gift budget that you established in step two. Rework your figures as necessary.

4. Brainstorm gift ideas.

Go through your list again, and jot down gift ideas that fall within the budget range that you've set for each person.

5. Track your spending throughout the season.

As you purchase gifts, note their cost in the "Actual Spending" column of the worksheet. Then, calculate how much over or under budget you are with each one.

6. Tweak your budget to cover any instances of over spending.

Don't panic if you overspend on a gift; just scale back your spending on another gift to make up for it.

Tips:

One

Don't be afraid to make changes to your budget – a good budget is always evolving.

Two

Hang on to a copy of your gift budget after the holidays are over; it'll be helpful in planning next year's budget.

Three

Use the Holiday Spending Worksheet to establish an overall holiday budget.



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How to Travel Comfortably

by Melanie Marier

1. Talk to your doctor to make sure that you are physically well enough to travel without any complications.
2. Compose a routine for your days, as well as plan your excursions prior so that you may incorporate breaks and eating routinely.
3. Get lots of rest the night before your ready to leave.
4. Based on time of flight, if very early in the morning- get a hotel room.
5. Stay hydrated prior to flight and during, as the dry air in the compartment can effect you.
6. Have a buddy system for helping with luggage.
7. Having appropriate sun protection to make sure not over heated to prevent headaches and dehydration.
8. Making sure you eat 3 full meals per day to keep your energy and nutrition up.
9. Taking a break the moment you feel the onset of fatigue so that you may build up your energy right away, versus crashing and burning.
10. Get daily wake up calls to ensure no oversleeping, also to waken you from napping too long.
11. Planning ahead to ensure access to activities are possible in the event of limited abilities.
12. Arranging transportation ahead of time to prevent stress and worry.



13. Bring ear plugs and sleeping mask to ensure no disruption in resting.
14. Make sure all medication is labelled properly and on your person when traveling to prevent theft or panic when not having it.



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The Gift - Christmas

By: Lila Holmen

A chill is in the air. The forecast is for early snow in the community of Stratford... here it comes... Christmas is on its way! With a pair of sweet toddlers in the family it surely promises to be wonderful. Eyes as big as saucers, squeals of delight and chubby, pink cheeks made for kissing. Ahhhh... is there anything better than snow and children to make the holidays bright?

I count my blessings at this time of year as it was a Christmas not so long ago that the future did not look so bright. Back then, I lived in Saskatchewan and worked in special needs foster care. On December 15, 2003, I was on a work related run to a nearby town about 41km from the village of Choiceland where I lived. Christmas there is much the same as it is here in Ontario. Carols piped over speakers along the main street of towns and cities causes one a lightness of step and a sense of good will. Greenery and holiday lights grace lampposts and store fronts, enchanting the eyes of jolly Christmas shoppers. Folks

bundled in their woolens bustle from store to store merrily. In these communities, smiles and warm greetings abound and there is a palpable animation among humankind

On that day the weather was chilly. My daughter, Leah and I were on the highway approaching the town of Nipawin while the wind picked up and blew the existing thin blanket of dry snow around in swirls and drifts. Drought on the prairie during the summer is well known but many don't realize that winter is also dry, with one of the lowest snow-fall rates in the country. The thermometer, though, often drops lower in the winter months than it does here in southern Ontario. On that afternoon we were experiencing an early cold snap with temperatures dipping to almost -20 and with the wind dancing in pirouettes, it was frigid.

Entering the outskirts of town, I had slowed to about 80km per hour when from a side road, a huge commercial truck entered the highway, t-boning my tiny hatchback. Emergency services wasted no time arriving at the scene but by the time that the Jaws of Life arrived and fire fighters could remove us from the wreckage, 40 minutes had passed. I was unconscious upon impact and remained comatose for 10 days at which time surgeons chose to medically induce coma for 6 more weeks.

Christmas of 2003 was a blank as I lay unconscious in ICU. For Leah who had just graduated from high school that year, it was a nightmare as she sank into her hospital bed casted, sedated and afraid of the unknown. What was going to happen to her mom, the woman whose head she cradled in her lap while the Jaws of Life ripped through the roof above her head to free them? My younger daughter Lynn stayed at a hotel close to our hospital over the holidays. She and Leah had been kept up to date on my status the whole time, including the first several days that a hospital cleric stayed with them, praying for us. When my health was stabilized Lynn moved back to Choiceland (2 ½ hours away). She commuted for weekend visits and with great difficulty she managed to finish up her final year of high school.

I remembered nothing when I regained awareness on February 1, 2004. My sister had stayed with me for over 3 months while other



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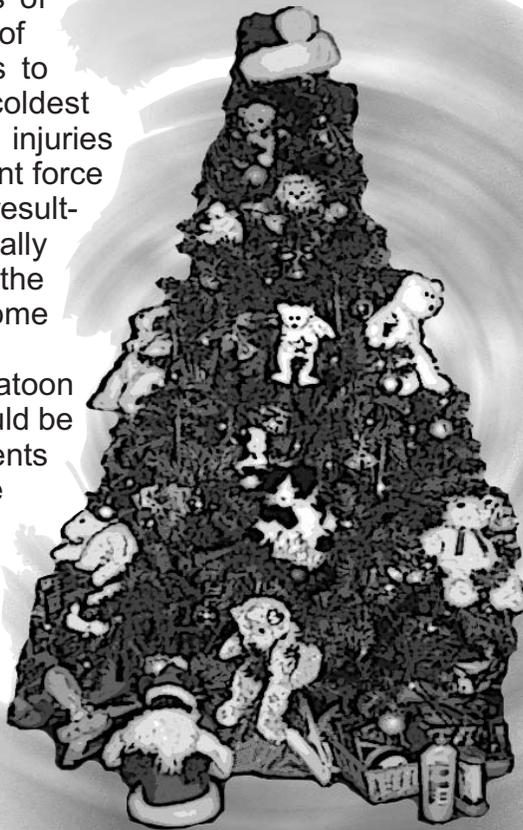
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siblings flew in from many parts of the country or drove hundreds of kilometers over frozen highways to be with me during the two coldest months of the year. The brain injuries that I sustained from both the blunt force trauma of the car accident and a resulting stroke left me catastrophically injured. The time spent in ICU, the rehab hospital and a nursing home combined were 6 ½ months.

I then moved into a Saskatoon apartment with Leah so that I would be close to the hospital for treatments that would take place over the next 2 years. She was my constant help and companion those years, carrying my wheelchair and eventually a walker up and down the stairway in the apartment building, then returning to assist me while I held on tightly to both her arm and the railing



for support as we slowly made our way up the steps. The building was a walk up with no elevator but I credit those laborious treks for much of the recovery I've made in walking. Remarkably though, her surgeon discovered in 2005 that her 'repaired' femur was still broken when

Leah had disregarded the constant pain in favour of caring for me.

The focus had been so much on my health that Leah had neglected her own and had to have the leg reset with a steel rod a year and a half after the accident!

I remember a day that I was sitting in my

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wheelchair, thinking about what was left of my future. I could accept life in that chair but I wanted to recover the use of my hands. My dominant side was partially paralyzed from the stroke. I had painted commissioned portraits outside of my full time work all my life and I desperately wanted to still paint.

My greatest gift that year was realizing what really matters. It was not being able to paint again. What truly matters is love – that of family, friends and the professionals who provide care. People are what matter.

Christmas of 2004 was bittersweet as Leah, my youngest daughter Lynn and I were able to gather around a turkey dinner to celebrate the spirit of Christmas while basking in each other's presence once again. The Christmas tree was covered with every stuffed animal given to me over the first months of my hospital stay. I love decorating Christmas trees but that year it was the best one ever as each one of those stuffies told a story of love from someone special.

I am forever changed with acquired brain injury and Leah and Lynn have survived years of post-



traumatic stress disorder but we've all found positives in life.

There have been years of rehabilitation and therapy and tragedy truly can make us emotionally stronger.

The cycle of life brings new family and new friends and it is our gift to ourselves to enjoy them fully.

Merry Christmas to you all in this year of 2011 and may God's love and strength be with you!



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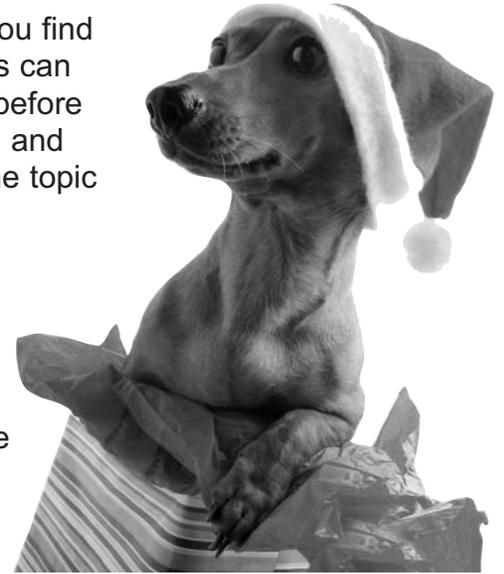


Strategies for Getting Through the Holidays

The Grateful Heads – Stratford ABI Group

Strategies that some of our group members use to get through Christmas parties and shopping:

- When at a party, ask to excuse yourself or sneak off to a quiet place and regroup. Don't feel bad for having to leave the party for awhile. Always tell someone you are leaving or taking a break.
- Often at parties people want to know about your rehab and you find yourself having the same conversation over and over and this can be exhausting and depressing. Send out a mass email right before the Christmas season letting people know how you are doing and politely let them know that you don't want your rehab to be the topic of conversation at Christmas functions.
- Remember that it is ok to ask people to speak slower during conversation. It's hard to focus on what people are saying with all of the background noise.
- The mall can be a person with ABI's worst nightmare. Before Christmas shopping make a list. Know exactly what you are going to shop for and have a back up gift in mind. Take someone shopping with you.



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The View From Inside: My First Christmas as a Brain Injury Survivor.

By: Crystal LeClair

August 28th, 2008 was a normal day as any. I worked and grocery shopped, came home to fix myself supper. I was sitting on the couch waiting for supper to be done and then next thing I knew I was waking up on the floor. I apparently had a grand mal seizure and was out for almost 45mins afterwards.

Making a long story short, I had an MRI in September to discover a tennis ball- sized tumour in the left frontal lobe of my brain that needed to have surgery as soon as possible. This brings me to the story I am going to share about my first Christmas after my surgery. I had surgery on the 4th of December and was released from the hospital on the 8th.

I was looking forward to be out of the hospital

and to be able to enjoy my holidays with my family and friends. I was elated that the surgery was over and that everything went well. I was in for a huge surprise for what recovering from brain surgery had in store. I never knew that so many things were going to be affected from having this surgery, nor was I ever told. Leaving the hospital, I was entering into unknown territory.

Dealing with lights from the moment I was out of surgery was a nuisance, I had to keep the blinds closed in the hospital room as well as the lights off in the room because they irritated my eyes and caused my head to hurt. I found that loud noises and if people spoke too loud bothered me as well. If someone was talking to me and giving me information, I found it very overwhelming and started to question what was wrong with me.

Christmas for me and my family has always been a very boisterous time of year. Kids running around everywhere excited as ever that Santa was due to arrive, lights from one end of the house inside and out (picture the Griswold home from the movie, National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation), adults enjoying drinks and food, late nights and early mornings. So as you can imagine Christmas was a very trying time for me that year.

I found that I had to make my visiting shorter and had to retreat to my room quite often to be able to get some rest and to be able to recharge my batteries for the next round of visitors. I did not travel that year as travelling was too difficult and I didn't have my room to retreat to. We plugged in fewer lights when I was in the room and we had asked everyone, even the kids to be aware of the fact that I was in the room and that it bothered me when things were too loud.

I took myself out of situations if I knew that it would be overwhelming. I stuck to going to bed at the same time and getting up at the same time. Christmas that year was altered to me and all my needs, which I encourage every family of a newly brain injury survivor to do to ensure that the holiday season is enjoyed by all.



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Strategies for Caregivers for Special Holidays

(taken from caregivers.com)

By David Lowell, MD

The holidays can be a time of renewal - renewal of friendships through visits and cards, renewal of family relationships through gatherings and shared meals, and renewal of one's faith. But the holidays also are a time that can be particularly challenging for a caregiver. It is a time during which the changes in one's life are highlighted and there are additional demands placed upon an already stressed life.

The holidays are always a whirlwind and this is especially true for caregivers. During the holidays it is important for caregivers to seek a balance - between caring for someone else and caring for oneself; between celebrating good memories of past holidays while not dwelling on what might have been lost. Here are ideas to keep in mind for both the caregiver and the care receiver as the holiday season arrives:

Ideas for the Caregiver:

1. Don't try to do it all. In the past you may have prepared Christmas dinner for 20 and created hand-made gifts for all of your relatives. Ask other members of the family to carry on specific family traditions. Dividing the responsibility will help you manage your stress level.

2. Don't attempt to travel long distances by car if your loved one is not used to it and tires easily. You will both be exhausted by the time you reach your destination, and you will have a difficult time enjoying yourself.

3. Ask family or friends to provide respite care. Make time to enjoy holiday decorations or window shopping. Just a few hours of time by yourself or with a friend can be renewing and help combat a sense of isolation.

4. Avoid comparisons with past holidays. It is often emotionally draining to look upon change as loss. "Life is change" can be a helpful concept to hold onto.

5. Create new traditions that can be carried on year to year, rather than dwelling on old traditions that your loved one can no longer participate in.

Ideas for Your Loved One:

1. Find a way to have your loved one participate in the holidays, whether its making decorations or counting the days on an Advent calendar

2. Decorate your loved one's room or living area for the holidays. Incorporate symbols and decorations that are meaningful.

3. Stimulate all of your loved one's senses with the sounds, sights, smells and tastes of the holidays. Ideas include holiday music and decorations, a favorite dessert and familiar scents.



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Upcoming Conferences and Events

What: Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Conference: Challenges and Controversies in Diagnosis

Where: Hyatt Regency Toronto, 370 King Street West

When: February 10, 2012

Contact: Phone:416-597-3422 ext. 3693 or email:conferences@torontorehab.on.ca

What: Baycrest Research Conference 2012: Mild Cognitive Impairment:
Finding a path through the maze

When: March 26-28, 2012

Where: The Four Seasons Hotel, 21 Avenue Road, Toronto, Ontario

Contact: Contact: Paula Ferreira

Phone: 416-785-2500 ext. 2363

Email: pferreira@baycrest.org

What: Brain Injury Association's 12th Annual Dinner Dance & Silent Auction:
An Evening with Alan Frew

Where: London Convention Centre 300 York Street

When: March 3, 2012 cocktails at 6:00 p.m followed by dinner at 7:00p.m.

Contact: www.braininjurylondon.on.ca or 519 642-4539

What: Brain Injury Association of London & Region's 14th Annual Brain Injury Conference

Where: Four Points Sheraton

When: June 15, 2012

Contact: www.braininjurylondon.on.ca or 519 642-4539

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