

Brain Injury Awareness Month

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month. Each year, AHIF tries to expand its efforts to bring awareness to the prevalence of traumatic brain injury and encourage support for the programs and services AHIF provides to TBI survivors and their families.

This March, AHIF staff and volunteers worked across our state to provide an array of programs and activities as part of Brain Injury Awareness Month. Additionally, we asked our clients, their families, our staff and volunteers to share, in their own words, why they feel Brain Injury Awareness Month is important.

There are too many testimonies, programs and activities to share in one newsletter, but some testimonies and highlights are included in this newsletter. A more comprehensive list can be found on our website at www.ahif.org.

Art Fundraisers

P'zazz Art Studio in Prattville and the Tipsey Easel in Dothan both held March events to raise money for local AHIF programs supporting brain injury survivors. Our sincere thanks go to both these businesses for their tremendous support of AHIF.



Gadsden Library Children's Program

AHIF Resource Coordinator Pat Motley provided an educational program to children about the importance of helmet safety and other safe habits for children.



Fish Fry Appreciation Lunch

During Brain Injury Awareness Month, an appreciation event was held for the attendees and volunteers for the AHIF Dothan support group. AHIF Wiregrass Regional Board members Zach Rogers and McDavid Flowers helped fry fish for more than 40 attendees.

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A Note from our Executive Director

When we talk about Brain Injury Awareness Month, one primary purpose is to make people aware of what it is like to live with traumatic brain injury. For those who have experienced traumatic brain injury, they will understand perfectly what I am about to say.

We live in a society where we focus heavily on one topic until another topic bumps it from the spotlight. In a situation like a cancer diagnosis this tends to work pretty well. Family and friends surround someone following the initial event, and once the cancer treatment is complete everyone seems to move on.

We want to treat traumatic brain injury much the same way. We surround the family following the initial accident, but the focus wanes over time and the family is left to fend for themselves for the long-term. This usually involves family members becoming permanent caregivers for their loved ones. For anyone who has served as a caregiver, you know how difficult this process is, but you do it with love and dedication.

AHIF is tremendously blessed to have Janice Waters among its staff, who coordinates the AHIF Respite Care Program, providing these caregivers with a much needed break from their 24/7 responsibilities. Each year, AHIF provides more than 60 Alabama families with over 4,000 hours of respite care. This requires significant planning and oversight, and would be impossible without Janice. In many ways, Janice herself is a respite care provider because of the time she takes to communicate so patiently and compassionately with each client, making sure their needs are being met. AHIF is fortunate that Janice has spent more than 17 years with AHIF, and we hope for many more.

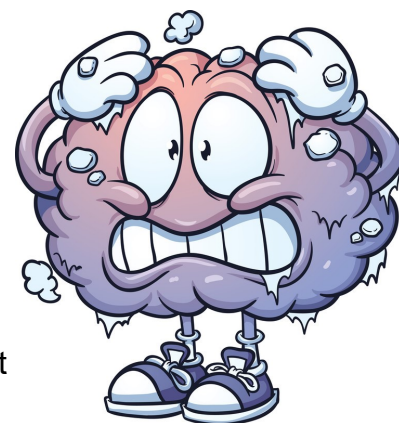
Auburn Regional Board and Student Board take part in CityFest on April 30th

On April 30th, AHIF was proud to have a booth at Auburn's annual CityFest event. At the event, attendees dropped by the AHIF tent for coloring books and brain-shaped erasers for children, and could also try on DUI simulation goggles to demonstrate the dangers of driving while intoxicated. More than 200 people visited our booth, and the AHIF booth was staffed by members of the AHIF Auburn Regional Board and Auburn Student Board.



Coming August 2016– the AHIF Brain Freeze Challenge!

This August, AHIF will begin a statewide awareness campaign for traumatic brain injuries, called the Brain Freeze Challenge. Keep visiting our website, www.ahif.org, for more information and how you can get involved.



Your Contributions Make It All Possible...Thank you!

Home Depot - We can do it...and they do help.



The Home Depot at the Riverchase Galleria recently invited the AHIF Birmingham Support Group to hold their meeting at their store. Attendees were then given a hammer, nails and pre-cut wood to make their own planters. Home Depot staff were everywhere helping our clients make their planters, and then stock them with fresh plants as well. AHIF is so thankful to Home Depot for their generosity and their hands-on participation.



Shoals Ambulance holds charity night for AHIF

Each month, Shoals Ambulance brings together between 50-100 local social workers and case managers from the Birmingham area for a time of fellowship, food and community service. AHIF was humbled to be the recipient of this group's generosity at their May meeting. Attendees brought adult diapers, playing cards, support group supplies and some made cash contributions in support of AHIF.



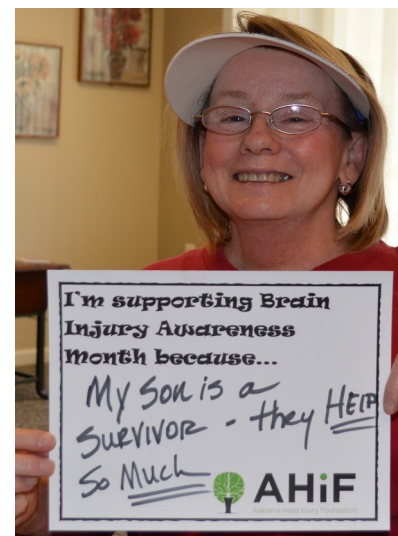
SHOALS
AMBULANCE

How your giving helps AHIF help others

Jason was a star athlete in his high school before being involved in a shooting in 2011. As a result, he sustained a spinal cord injury and lost the use of both legs from the waist down. While his peers were preparing to go off to college and were getting jobs, Jason was navigating the unfamiliar and unsteady terrain of how to use a wheelchair.

Jason embraced his "new normal," and began attending church, activities with family and searching for a job, which caused wear and tear on his wheelchair in a matter of months. In his desperation to maintain his mobility, he attempted to repair his wheelchair with random metal parts he found or took from his old car. In doing so, he was actually risking another injury.

Because of the support AHIF receives, AHIF's local Resource Coordinator for the Auburn area, Catherine Barlow, was able to provide Jason with a new, gently used wheelchair every six months or as needed. AHIF, and Jason, are grateful for the generosity that makes this possible.



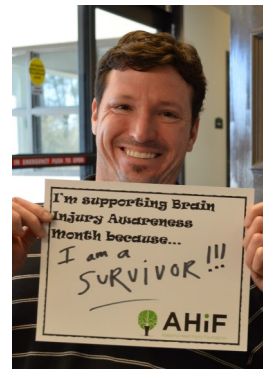
From Nearly Dead to Newly Wed

Eight years ago, Murray Dunlap's life changed forever when he was hit when someone ran a red light, leaving him in a coma for three months. His traumatic brain injury left him with an array of emotional challenges ranging from doubt to anger to depression. Through his recovery, it became evident that he had changed profoundly, and in many ways no longer resembled the man he was, which sadly led to the end of his marriage. Later on, in the middle of so much turmoil, Murray's sister-in-

-law attended Sawyerville Day Camp with a young woman, Mary Balfour, who heard Murray's story and she and Murray ended up meeting, communicating, and falling in love. An Episcopal Priest herself, both Murray and Mary Balfour relied on their faith to make it through a difficult time, and were married last September. As part of his journey, Murray sent a letter to the man who ran the red light and shared with him that he had forgiven him. In Murray's own words, "I could not know it at the time, but what I have



been through has led me to where I am now, and holding the hand of Jesus- I am finally happy."



AHIF introduces its new Northeast Alabama Resource Coordinator

Briana's Contact Information:

E-mail: bevans.ahif@outlook.com

Phone: 256-503-8643



Briana Evans

AHIF is proud to announce the arrival of Briana Evans as the new Resource Coordinator for the northeast Alabama area. Briana will provide support to brain injury survivors in Madison,

Marshall, Jackson and DeKalb counties.

Briana will complete her MSW from Alabama A&M in the next few months, and looks forward to improving the lives of brain injury survivors throughout northeast Alabama.

"Working at AHIF will allow me to comprehensively advocate for individuals with TBI and provide active service to a population that is more than deserving of resources and assistance."

Brain Injury Awareness Month (Continued)

Community Presentations

AHIF staff were able to provide presentations to the Azalea City Kiwanis Club, the Mobile Rotary Club, the Gadsden Rotary Club, the Ashville Chamber of Commerce, and the Hydro Systems Department of Alabama Power.

Art in the Alley

The AHIF Montgomery Regional Board held its 2nd Annual Art in the Alley fundraiser at Alley Station. Due to generous sponsors, donations of auction items and community support, the event raised more than \$6,200 for local AHIF programs and services.

In-Service Educational Programs

AHIF staff were able to provide education in-services about AHIF and its programs to DCH Hospital in Tuscaloosa, Southeast Medical Center and Flowers Hospital in Dothan, and Chilton-Shelby Mental Health Center.

Beer, Band and BBQ

The AHIF Birmingham Regional Board held its 2nd Annual Beer, Band and BBQ event at Avondale Brewery. On a beautiful late March day in Alabama, hundreds came out for the event, which raised more than \$10,000 in support of AHIF. Many thanks to the sponsors and supporters of this year's event.





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Our Mission: *To improve the quality of life for survivors of traumatic brain injury and for their families*

Our Vision: *We envision a state where traumatic brain injury is prevented where possible and fully understood and supported where not.*

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AHIF is a proud partner of:

United Ways of Central Alabama, Lee County, Etowah County, Marshall County, and West Alabama



AHIF partners with Pilot International to provide 2016 TBI Camp

On the heels of Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Month, AHIF held its annual TBI Camp April 8-10th at Camp ASCCA in Jackson’s Gap, AL. This year, 23 TBI survivors and 17 “buddies” attended this wonderful camp experience, made possible through the generosity of the Alabama Chapters of Pilot International, who also planned the weekend activities and had many of their members, including some of their youth “Anchors” there as well.



For individuals living with traumatic brain injury, one of the most common complaints they express surrounds the social isolation that so often accompanies their new reality of living with a brain injury. TBI Camp allows them to spend time with others who are dealing with some of the same challenges, and take part in activities that they would otherwise never be able to.



We are grateful to the Pilots, as well as the staff of Camp ASCCA, for making this year’s camp a wonderful success.

