

BRAIN waves

Good Vibes for the Arkansas Brain Injury Community

VOL. 1, Issue 3, Summer 2019

PERSEVERE THROUGH ADVERSITY

In 2002, I narrowly survived a tragic traffic accident. After 6 weeks in a coma, I had to re-learn every basic function of living: how to chew, swallow, and breathe; how to write and identify the ABCs; how to utter a sound and pronounce a word; how to add, subtract, stand, walk, and talk; how to see out of my right eye...even how to take care of myself. My life had come to a sudden, screeching halt!

I would like to share one of my life's mottos and urge you to make it your own:

PERSEVERE THROUGH ADVERSITY.

Today, I am doing what doctors and medical teams said would never take place, which goes to show that miracles still happen! Formerly a radio personality, I now travel and speak to hundreds of survivors, caregivers, and professionals across the country, so you might call me (like many of you already are) a "survivor specialist".

Please dive in to these life strategies I've learned that can help brain injury survivors thrive on a long-term basis:

1. When a survivor pauses or forgets a word, please try not to step on the silence. Instead, remain quiet and allow them time to think.
2. Give survivors a HINT, not the answer.
3. Remember that most survivors have their best time in the morning. So, make sure to include this insight into plans and schedules.

Brain Waves Summer 2019



ASK the Specialist

Patti Foster
Inspirational Speaker & Author
www.PattiFoster.com



4. Find out what survivors' joys and strengths were before the injury, i.e. broadcasting, singing, playing sports, painting, etc. Then, try to think out-of-the-box and make adjustments that might give them purpose in developing their journey of recovery.
 5. Journal...journal...journal.
 6. Encourage survivors to write their story and tell their story in a magazine article, blog, chapter of a book, on social media, or in a full book that can help others along the brain injury journey.
 7. Join a local or online support group and treat it like a family.
 8. Keep sticky notes handy. They're a user-friendly, short-term memory supplement.
 9. Visit a fabulous site that serves you:
www.HopeAfterBrainInjury.org
 10. Email me anytime (but please give me extra time to reply): info@pattifoster.com
- The time is now, and the opportunity is at hand. Watch for those moments to **PERSEVERE THROUGH ADVERSITY** and help others thrive!



Suggest a topic! Email us at

atrp@uams.edu

MEET THE ATRP TEAM!



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STORIES FROM THE TBI COMMUNITY: MY JOURNEY WITH TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

BY KERRIE SNYDER, AS TOLD TO KIMBERLY LAMB



Kerrie with her parents at her college graduation

On June 25, 2011, my life changed forever. I went to a party near Wye Mountain in Perry County with my co-worker, Chelsie. On the way home, my car went off the road and over the side of the mountain.

Chelsie and her cousin, who were driving a few minutes behind me, spotted headlights shining up from the side of the mountain. Without realizing that it was me in the accident, they called 911.

I was unresponsive when the rescue team arrived. The paramedics intubated me and cut me out of the car. I was flown by helicopter to Baptist Health in Little Rock. Chelsie found my parent's home phone number, and they were waiting at the hospital. I arrived unconscious, with a Glasgow Coma Scale rating of 3, which is the lowest possible score.

Tests showed that I had no alcohol in my system. My parents thought that I looked fine, but the doctors told them that my brain had been severely damaged, and that I probably wouldn't live longer than 24 hours. While I have no memory of my time at Baptist Health in Little Rock, I survived.

I was in a coma at Baptist Health for almost two months. For the first week and a half, I remained mostly unresponsive, except for some movement on my left side. I began some therapies, but I was unable to do anything for myself. I was still connected to oxygen through my tracheotomy, and I was fed by a nasal tube and later by a stomach tube. Also, because of an upper neck fracture, I wore a neck brace.

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**Arkansas Trauma
Rehabilitation Program**



On July 19, my 20th birthday, I was taken by ambulance from Little Rock to Baylor Scott & White Institution for Rehabilitation, in Dallas, Texas, where I stayed for a couple of months.

At Baylor, I became more alert. I responded when someone spoke to me, but I didn't initiate any conversation. My family, doctors, and therapists thought that I would stay in this current state.

After an MRI on August 21, I "woke up" while being transferred on a gurney back to my room. My mom was with me, and I asked where I was.

I began to ask many other questions. My mom explained that I had been in a partial comatose state for the previous months. She told me that my family and friends had been praying for me. The walls of my room were covered in pictures and notes.

Once I was fully awake, I learned more about my injuries. I learned that I had a severe traumatic brain injury or TBI. My dad is a scientific

“I was 8 years post injury, and got to share my story with patients who were only one week out. I was able to give them hope and light”

-Kerrie

researcher, and he did a lot of research on brain injury while I was in the coma. He was able to explain a lot to me about brain injury and what was happening to me.

In addition to the TBI, I suffered a fracture in my upper neck. I was still in a wheelchair and could barely speak clearly. I still could not stand up, sit up,

feed myself, or do any of the basic necessities of life on my own.

On September 15, I was taken to a restorative care location in Irving, Texas. After a few months in Dallas/Irving, I came home on December 13. I continued with outpatient therapies through Baptist Health in Conway for another few months. I also attended speech therapy sessions at the University of Central Arkansas to work on attention, memory, and clarity of speech. I continue to do the exercises that I learned in my OT and PT therapies so that I do not regress.

In the fall semester of 2012, I decided to go back to school. I started with one class at the University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton (UACCM), then decided to attend a nine-month program to become a medical assistant (MA). After becoming a certified MA, I worked for a year and a half, then moved to Russellville in 2016 to begin classes at Arkansas Tech. While in Russellville, I lived on my own and worked a part-time front desk job at the apartment complex where I lived.

In the spring of 2019, I did a one-semester internship at Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute in Little Rock (BHRI). I had the privilege of interning under two Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS). This experience was great for me in many ways, and reminded me of just how far I have come.

Since I was in a coma and do not remember anything about my accident or those first months afterward, I only knew what I was retold about my recovery process. At BHRI, I was able to witness that process firsthand as other patients were going through it.

I feel like I'm supposed to help others who are struggling like I struggled. Because I have been through so much that they are going through, I could relate to the patients and had a better understanding of how they felt. I've been in a wheelchair, used a walker and a cane, worn a catheter, and still proudly wear my tracheotomy scars. I was eight years post injury, and got to share my story with patients who were only one week out. I was able to give them hope and light, and I believe this is one of the reasons I'm doing so well.

Continued on page 4



Kerrie practicing walking in rehab

Continued from page 3

I graduated from Arkansas Tech this past May with a Bachelor of Science in Recreation and Park Administration with an emphasis in Therapeutic Recreation. I am currently looking for work that uses my new skills and knowledge.

Today, I still have some struggles. I have a condition called intentional cerebral ataxia, which is caused by deep damage to my cerebellum. It causes me to shake constantly, especially when I intend to do something with my left arm. The doctors assumed that I was paralyzed on the right side, but thanks to the ataxia, I started using my right limbs once again. Despite these struggles, I am well enough to live on my own and perform my activities of daily living.

My Christian faith grew during my recovery. I realized that if I wanted to get better, I had to give it all to God. A Bible verse stuck out to me: "We live by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7).



Kerrie enjoying the overlook at Mirror Lake and Dam

The surgeons told my parents that I "might walk, might talk..." but that I would "never be Kerrie." But guess what? I'm still very much myself, and in many ways, I'm an even better me than I used to be, and I have God to thank.

My Recovery Tips:

- Read
- Exercise
- Play brain games, such as word searches, puzzles, Sudoku, and Words with Friends
- Don't limit yourself!

For the Blind and Low-Vision Community

APP HIGHLIGHT

If you need support for reading documents or seeing the world around you, there are smart phone apps to help! Some apps call on sighted volunteers, while others use artificial intelligence to assist you. Here is one of each:



Seeing AI

This is a free app that uses artificial intelligence to narrate and describe the world around you. It is made for the blind and low vision community and can describe people, text, and objects. It even has a feature that allows you to explore objects in a photo by touching the screen. Available for Apple and Android.



Be My Eyes

This free app gives users access to a network of sighted volunteers and community representatives. With the tap of a button, you can connect with a real person who can give you visual assistance with a task. You can request assistance anytime of day, from anywhere, and it will always be free. Available for Apple and Android.

Don't have a device and want one? You could be eligible for a free phone or tablet! Call the Arkansas Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) for free assistance! 1-800-981-4463 or 501-686-9693



Want to tell your story? Email us at

atrp@uams.edu

RESOURCE HIGHLIGHT

GetTherapy.com

Arkansas' network of independent counselors, psychologists, and psychiatrists

1-888-THERAPY (1-888-843-7279)



Finding the right behavioral health provider just got easier! This network includes almost 100 providers across the state. You can search the website to find the right fit for you OR call the toll-free number.

The interactive website allows you to search mental health providers and sort by area, specialty, insurances accepted, and even types of therapies offered! To use these features;

- Click "FIND YOUR CLINICIAN" at the top of the page.
- Click the plus signs on the left-hand column to expand a category and select options.
- You can select options from multiple categories. The more you select, the shorter your list will become, so try to select only the most important categories (click "reset filters" to start your search over).
- You can click on each provider to read more about them. There is an "about me" and a "details" tab for each provider.

If you would like someone else to search **for** you, just call the free hotline, and we'll find the right help and even schedule the appointment for you! This resource is specific to Arkansas, and it's FREE. Call Today!

SUPPORT GROUPS

Little Rock:

3rd Wednesday at 11:30 a.m.
Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute
Contact: Ashley (501) 202-7047
Lunch is provided

Hot Springs:

2nd Thursday of every month at 2:30 p.m.
Roland Room at CHI St. Vincent
Contact: Sara (501) 416-6325

Texarkana:

4th Friday at noon
St. Michael Rehab in the Dogwood Room
Contact: Sarah (903) 614-4271,
sarah.veazey@christushealth.org

Fayetteville:

2nd Tuesday from 1-2 p.m.
SOURCES Conference Room
Contact: Brooke at (888) 284-7521

Jonesboro:

2nd Thursday of every month at 1 p.m.
Encompass Health (formerly Health South)
lower lobby
Contact: Ashley Watson: (870) 351-5995

Memphis:

3rd Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. (no July meeting!)
Regional One Health Rehabilitation Hospital,
3rd floor, Turner Tower Dining Room
Contact: Carolyn (901) 545-8487

Learn more at: atrp.ar.gov/resources/support-groups/brain-injury-support-groups/



TBI SPP

Traumatic Brain Injury
State Partnership Program

The **TBI State Partnership Grant Program (SPP)** is a part of the **Administration for Community Living**, a federal agency created to help people with disabilities participate in their communities.

As part of Arkansas' participation in this program, our team is hosting regional brain injury workshops across the state to bring together people living with TBI and to share helpful resources with them. Here are some pictures from our events in Batesville and Springdale!



Watch your mail for an invitation to an event near you!

We value your input for the TBI State Plan. Your opinions will help identify gaps in resources and services for those impacted by brain injury in our state. Please complete our survey and learn more about the TBI State Partnership Program in Arkansas at our website:

<https://tinyurl.com/ARTBISPP>



We love to hear from our readers!

Have an idea, story, or suggestion?

OR

Want to receive this FREE, quarterly newsletter by mail or email?

Email us at atrp@uams.edu or call us at (501) 295-6576

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wake the World Arkansas

Who: ANYONE with a disability

What: FREE Adaptive Water Sports event, lunch included

Where: Mountain Harbor Resort and Spa in Mount Ida, Arkansas

When: July 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

RSVP to waketheworldar@gmail.com or message them on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/WakeTheWorldAR/>

Love Your Brain Open Enrollment

What: A FREE six-week yoga series for people with TBI and their caregivers

When: Four times a year! For specific times and dates visit:

www.loveyourbrain.com/yoga/practice

Where: Blue Yoga Nyla in North Little Rock

For questions, email: yoga@loveyourbrain.com

2019 Brain Injury Conference*

Save the Date: Friday, August 9th

Benton Events Center

Register online at 2019braininjuryconference.eventbrite.com

**This conference is designed for professionals working with TBI patients, but it may also benefit patients or caregivers.*

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BEWARE OF PEOPLE PRETENDING TO BE FROM SOCIAL SECURITY

By Phylis Dills, Social Security Public Affairs Specialist

Social Security is committed to protecting your personal information. We urge you to always be cautious and to avoid giving sensitive information —such as your Social Security number (SSN) or bank account information— to unknown people over the phone or internet.

There is a scam going around right now. You might receive a call from someone claiming to be from Social Security or another agency. Calls can even display 1-800-772-1213 (Social Security’s national customer service number) as the incoming number on your caller ID. In some cases, the caller states that Social Security does not have all of your personal information, such as your SSN, on file. Other callers claim Social Security needs information so the agency can increase your benefit payment, or that Social Security will terminate your benefits if they do not confirm your information. These calls are not from Social Security.

Callers sometimes state that your SSN is at risk of being deactivated or deleted. The caller then asks you to call a phone number to resolve the issue. People should be aware that the scheme’s details may vary; however, you should avoid engaging with the caller or calling the number provided, as the caller might try to acquire personal information.

Social Security employees *occasionally* contact people by telephone for customer-service purposes. In only a very few special situations, such as **when you have a case pending** with our agency, will a Social Security employee request that the person confirm personal information over the phone.

If you receive a Social Security call and aren’t expecting one, you must be extra careful. You can always get the caller’s information, hang up, and contact the **official** phone number of the business or agency that the caller claims to represent. Never give personal data to a stranger who called you, even if the phone number looks real.

Social Security employees will never threaten you or promise a Social Security benefit approval or increase in exchange for information. In those cases, the call is fraudulent, and you should just hang up. If you receive these calls, please report the information to the Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-269-0271 or online at oig.ssa.gov/report.

You can also share our new “SSA Phone Scam Alert” video at <http://bit.ly/2VKJ8SG>

Protecting your information is an important part of Social Security’s mission. You work hard and make a conscious effort to save and plan for retirement. Scammers try to stay a step ahead of us, but with an informed public and your help, we can stop these criminals before they cause serious financial damage.

Suggest a topic! Email us at atrp@uams.edu



Non Profit
Organization
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 1973
Little Rock, AR

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program offers a Disability Resource Website to connect those with trauma-related disabilities to helpful resources and organizations in the community.

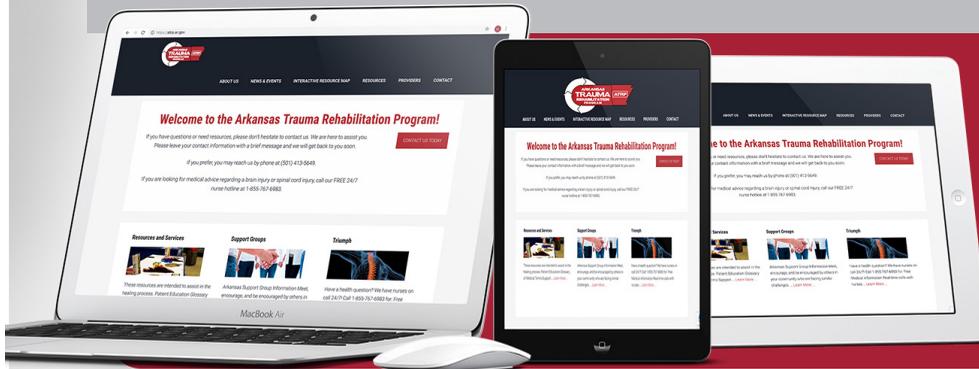
To access the Disability Resources Website, go to:

www.atrp.ar.gov

We also offer a 24-hour nurse call center for people with a brain or spinal cord injury, their caregivers, or medical providers. Call anytime with questions about your health, symptoms, or medical care.

To access the TRIUMPH Call Center, call:

1-855-767-6983



For more information about the Disability Resource Website or TRIUMPH call center, call **(501) 295-6576** or email **atrp@uams.edu**

TRIUMPH is a partnership of the UAMS Institute for Digital Health & Innovation and the UAMS Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and is funded by the Arkansas Trauma Rehabilitation Program.



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