



The Monthly Motivator

October 2011 Newsletter + Life After Brain Injury

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Top Story Tonight: Our New Website!

Once upon a time there was a tiny start-up nonprofit consisting of a full-time volunteer director and a part-time volunteer peer counselor.

They said to themselves, "We need a website." So Cherie threw a mediocre collection of wordy mini-essays up onto the web and pretended that it was sufficient. (See below, left.) But at the same time, she knew it was not.

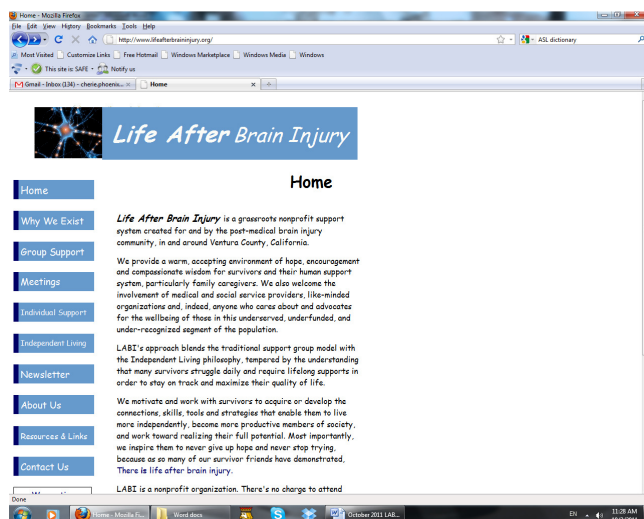
Eventually Cherie's old laptop died and, along with it, her website software files. She said, "I hated that old

website anyway. We will rebuild a better website from the ground up!"

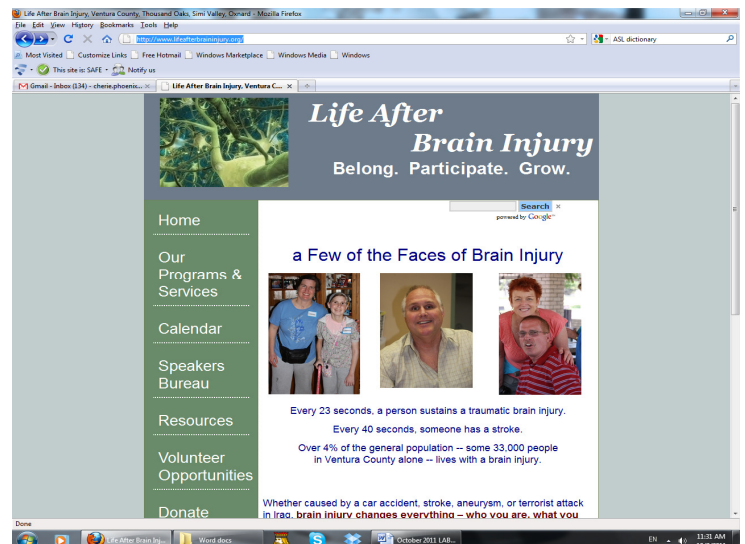
The result is what you see now when you visit www.LifeAfterBrainInjury.org (below, right). Yes, there are sections where we're still working out the kinks and/or are under construction. And our logo isn't finished yet. But at least the calendar is online and always up-to-date!

Check out our "new look" and let us know if you have any constructive criticism or ideas to make it more user-friendly.

Cherie



LABI's "early days" website



LABI's new website

Meetings & Activities

Saturday Social Potluck Lunch

October 22
11:00 – 2:00

Kilpatricks' home

(call for address and directions)

Theme of the Month:
Autumn Casseroles

Bring your family, your appetite, and a dish to share — enough for 8 to 10 small portions — either appetizer, salad, side dish or dessert.

Important: RSVP and let us know what you're bringing by Thursday, October 20.

Game Day

(includes lunch)

Monday, October 10
10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.



*RSVP to Cherie at 805-493-5555
(so she has enough food!).*

Call it brain exercises, call it cognitive rehab, come to practice your social skills — all we know is, it's fun!

Join us for good times and skill-building games like Scrabble, Sequences and Scruples, as we work the ol' neurons and hang with our posse. (And YES — there is such a thing as a free lunch!)

LABI Lunch

October 3, 17 & 31, 12 noon - 1:30

Oct. 3: Topper's Pizza in Simi Valley

Oct. 17: Yolanda's Mexican Cafe in Simi Valley

Oct. 31: California Pizza Kitchen in Simi Valley

Our lunches are a great opportunity to...

- ♦ Meet people who understand your life and “get you”;
- ♦ expand your circle of friends;
- ♦ enhance your social life; and
- ♦ get out into the community!

On a budget? We understand, and we don't judge. You don't have to order or eat anything at the restaurant. You can just show up for a glass of water and enjoy our (ahem) most excellent company. 😊



LABI Says Thank You

LABI is grateful to these community members for their financial support:

Thanks to the Ventura County Professional Women's Network (VCPWN) for their donation of \$100. We are also grateful to VCPWN member (and brain injury survivor) Carol Leish, keynote speaker at the August VCPWN meeting, for selecting LABI as the nonprofit recipient of the month.

According to their website, "The Ventura County Professional Women's Network is a lively, diverse group of women (and a few brave men) dedicated to supporting and encouraging others to reach their fullest potential. Membership offers business and professional women (and those few pioneering men) the chance to network at our monthly meetings; listings in the membership directory to promote business referrals; a quarterly newsletter; special interest groups; and more."

Our thanks also go out to the Simi Valley Elephant Bar for their donation of \$159 as the result of our "5th Wednesday" fundraiser on August 31, and to those of you who came out to dinner that evening knowing that 20% of your tab would directly fund LABI programs and services.

LABI could not provide its programs and services without community support from local businesses, organizations and individuals like you!

What Works for Me

This is a column written for and by survivors. If you'd like to be a featured writer, send your tips and strategies to LifeAfterBI@gmail.com.

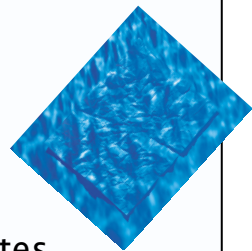
*This month's columnist is **Nicole de la Cruz**, a survivor and longtime contributor to our newsletter.*

I know first hand what it feels like to be overwhelmed most often. It's something TBI people deal with all the time.

A simple way to ease the problem or avoid it all together is to either leave the situation and do something else. Or do self talk like telling yourself that what your feeling is temporary and not forever.

I know for me colors have an affect on me to CALM DOWN or RELAX.

So I keep a piece of light blue colored construction paper in my purse and at the moment of me reaching my limit, I pull out my paper and take 5 minutes just slowing down my breathing and staring at the piece of paper.



Then when I'm done I tell myself the situation wasn't bad at all and it was all in my head.

Some people may think I'm strange but it works for me. My point I'm trying to get to my readers is that we all have our different ways to deal with situations that may bother us that may not be normal. But realize what works for you and that different things work for everyone.

With a helping hand, *Nicole*

Survivor Story of the Month: Mark Surgett

Six years ago I was a Santa Barbara Fire Department Hazardous Materials Specialist. One day at work, I was inspecting an oil field and walked into a toxic cloud. It left me with a mild traumatic brain injury. The injury changed my personality and damaged parts of my brain, including my pituitary gland, so I have to take medication and hormone replacement therapy for the rest of my life.

Within a year I lost my job, lost my wife and kids a house with the toys. Two years later I was told I would never work again. I spent the next three years losing every job I got.

I found the Life After Brain Injury group and started attending the meetings. Cherie helped my mother and I understand brain injury and that there was hope. The idea I could reinvent myself and be somebody I wanted to be got me excited about a new life. With the confidence from the group that I could be a functional part of society I found myself asking for a job.

I was at my favorite thrift store and bought a few things. On the way out the owner was handing out barbecued hot dogs to customers. While I was eating my dog we talked. I told him about my story that I worked for the fire department and lost my life and about my disabilities.

I later went back to buy something else. We started talking again and I asked if he

needed somebody who could fix things and test things. He told me to go up front and fix their TV, if I could do that he would use me. It was a big screen TV with seven inputs. I isolated the only input that worked and got it to work again. He said three other guys tried to fix it. Then he said, **what a brain you have!** Wow what an ego buster.

Needless to say I now work there. I'm becoming that person I want to be.

Keep the hope.

What's New at the State Level?



In August, I traveled to Sacramento for a meeting of the **California Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Board** (of which I am a member). The Board is advising the state Department of Rehabilitation (DoR) in its difficult task of determining who should be eligible for a TBI Medicaid waiver.

The waiver is an important result of ongoing work being done throughout the brain injury community – by all stakeholders, from DoR, to the TBI Advisory Board (TBIAB), to the Brain Injury Association of California, to Independent Living Centers, to county-based nonprofits

(more, next page)

State Level news, *continued*

like *Life After Brain Injury*, to teeny-tiny support groups – to improve the overall brain injury service system.

Currently, there are a number of services which Medicaid (called Medi-Cal in our state) will cover only if you are living in an institution such as a skilled nursing facility.

Now, we in the Independent Living (IL) community believe that most people (if not everybody) thrive under community living rather than institutionalization.

So the TBIAB and other stakeholders have, for years, been after the state legislature to pass a Medicaid waiver.



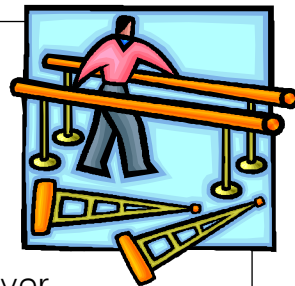
And finally in 2009, they did! Assembly Bill 398 established a Medicaid waiver that *waives* (or removes) the requirement that a TBI survivor live in the institution; instead, the “money follows the person” to wherever he or she lives. For now there’s only a pilot waiver, which will allow **100** adult TBI survivors to receive these services covered by Medi-Cal while living at home (back to our goal of community living for survivors).

It’s a huge deal that AB398 passed. But this brings up a new problem. Eventually (we



hope), the waiver will be made available to all California TBI survivors. But there will be limited government dollars — not nearly enough to go around.

So DoR is considering very carefully what eligibility guidelines it will recommend to Health & Human Services, which will implement the waiver.



In our role as advisors to the DoR, the TBIAB’s top priority is ensuring that everyone who needs services gets them, and that services are fairly apportioned. We’re asking, what are the key factors in determining eligibility? Should age be a factor, or severity of injury, or strength of the family support system at home?

In the end, it will be painful, because no single person will get all the services they need. At the same time, we realize the government can’t go promising everyone the moon when they can only deliver a moon pie. (I just made that up.) *Stay tuned.*

In September, I attended a State Independent Living Council (SILC) meeting (also a member). Every 2 years, the SILC develops its State Plan for Independent Living and allocates over 2 million federal dollars toward programs that promote and advance IL for people with disabilities.

For the past 15+ years straight, people with brain injury have been one of the populations identified in the State Plan as underserved. Recently, the SILC committed another \$10,000 to a TBI expansion project in order to maintain a website designed to increase TBI awareness. Check it out at

www.CATBI.org.

Cherie