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A Message

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Steven  
Oliva



Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is getting some attention in Washington, thanks in part to a recent ABC News special about Bob Woodruff's recovery from a TBI sustained while reporting on the war in Iraq. As mentioned in our feature article, TBI has been tagged the "signature" wound of soldiers in Iraq. As numbers of soldiers needing care for TBI increase, and President Bush's proposed 2008 budget decreases funding for veteran's healthcare, a bipartisan group of senators were inspired to introduce the reauthorization of the 2000 Traumatic Brain Injury Act. The Act authorizes the study of TBI and funding for state and federal programs that assist Americans with TBI. WellFlorida is proud to be a part of the movement towards researching and addressing the needs of TBI-affected individuals throughout the state of Florida.

I hope you find this issue on TBI to be informative. Look for our next issue, which will focus on Florida legislation and its impact on healthcare in the state.

*Breaking the Silence about TBI*



Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc. (BIAF) is pleased to partner with WellFlorida Council to address a serious public health problem: traumatic brain injury or TBI. Sometimes referred to as the "silent" or "invisible" epidemic, millions in the United States are affected by TBI.

**What is TBI?**

TBI is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes—short or long-term—affecting thinking, language, learning, emotions, behavior and/or sensation. It can also

cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Some Startling Statistics**

TBI is a catastrophic, life-changing event—one that can occur anytime or anywhere. Every 23 seconds in the United States someone sustains a TBI. It occurs more often than breast cancer, HIV and spinal cord injuries combined. Over 5.3 million Americans live with long-term effects from TBI with a lifelong need for help and support.

## Calendar

March 2007

### National Brain Injury Awareness Month

#### 16th Annual HIV Conference of the Florida/Caribbean AIDS Education and Training Center

March 30-31

This conference is designed to increase the knowledge and skills of HIV healthcare providers. Lectures and interactive case presentations will be supplemented by take-home materials, including chart forms and treatment protocols. Rosen Centre, Orlando  
Register at [www.faetc.org](http://www.faetc.org)

#### UF Sports Performance Charity Tennis Classic: To Benefit UF College of Medicine Lung Transplant Research

March 31

Ring Tennis Complex, University of Florida, Gainesville  
For more information visit: [www.charitytennisclassic.org](http://www.charitytennisclassic.org)

May 2007

#### Keeping with the Pace XV: An HIV Update Conference

May 1

University of Florida J. Wayne Reitz Union, Gainesville  
Keynote speaker: Cathy Robinson  
Register at [www.faetc.org/KWP](http://www.faetc.org/KWP)

#### Brain Injuries Conference

May 2-5

Coronado Springs Resort, Orlando  
Register at [www.biaf.org](http://www.biaf.org)

#### 2007 Women's Health Conference: Putting the Pieces Together—Working Together to Improve Women's Health in Florida\*

May 15-16

Featured keynote speakers: Marci Shimoff, Marcia Gillespie and Bylye Avery

#### 2007 Minority Health Disparities Summit: Addressing Health Disparities—Moving Beyond Hope to Action\*

May 16-18

\*The Women's Health Conference and the Minority Health Disparities Summit are hosted by the Florida Department of Health and will be held at the Downtown Convention Center in Tampa. For more info. and to register visit: [www.doh.state.fl.us/family/wh/2007Conf/index.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/wh/2007Conf/index.html) or contact Rachel Chase at Suwannee River AHEC for more details: (386) 462-1551.

[www.wellflorida.org](http://www.wellflorida.org)

## Understanding Traumatic Brain Injury in Florida, *cont.*

Recently, TBI has been dubbed the “signature wound” of combat as over 62% of the wounded soldiers returning from the war in Iraq suffer from a TBI. It is estimated that over 320,000 Floridians are living with the long-term effects from TBI. Falls are the most frequent cause of TBI, followed by motor vehicle crashes and acts of violence.

### BIAF's Services

BIAF reaches thousands of TBI survivors and their families and provides them with brain injury information, help and support from the moment their loved one is injured and in the weeks and months to come when they need help the most. BIAF is the only statewide not-for-profit organization in Florida that provides programs and services, free of charge, that support the TBI family. Any member of the TBI family can call our toll free helpline (800.992.3442) to speak to a professional who can research and provide information the caller needs or wants to know. If more help is needed, BIAF provides specialists from our Family Support program to visit the TBI family in their home and guide them on what to do and where to seek assistance for needed services. Trained volunteers through our newly implemented

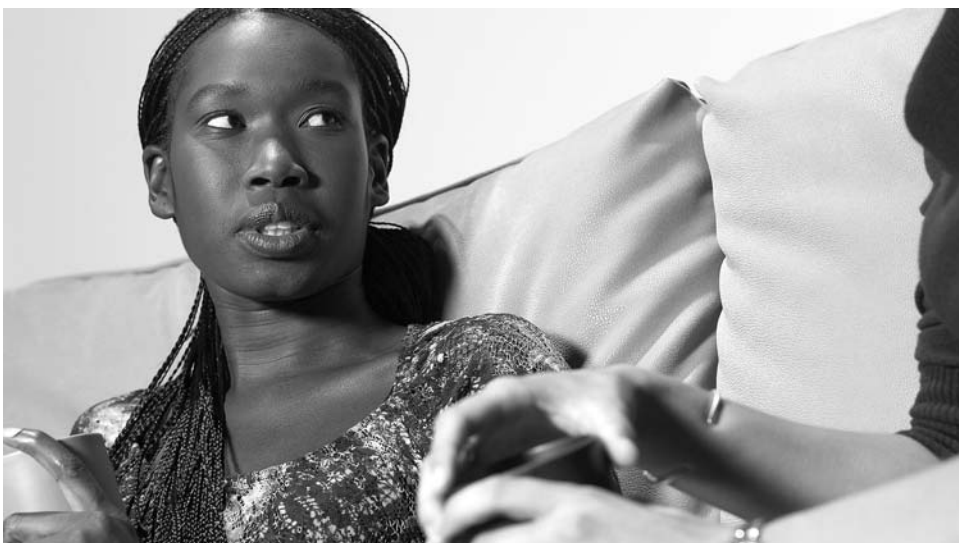
Individual Mentor program are also available to help. These volunteers have lived with the challenges of brain injury and can provide a listening ear and tips based on their own experiences.

BIAF also provides educational opportunities for professionals. This year we will hold our state-of-the-art clinical conference on brain injury at the Coronado Springs Resort in Orlando on May 2-5, 2007. The conference is affiliated with Contemporary Forums, a nationally based continuing education company. For early registration and more information about the conference visit our website at [www.biaf.org](http://www.biaf.org).

### TBI Prevention

One of BIAF's goals is to educate the general public about brain injury prevention. We partner with many injury prevention programs and organizations throughout the state to spread the brain injury safety message. BIAF provides several creative educational programs and public awareness activities targeted for children, their parents, teenagers and the elderly.

Throughout March, which is National Brain Injury Awareness Month, BIAF is



promoting the message: “The Brain. Respect It. Protect It.” Our message is being advertised on t-shirts and buttons that can be purchased through BIAF's online store at [www.biaf.org](http://www.biaf.org). On March 22, we will be hosting a brain injury awareness event in Tallahassee on the 22nd floor of the Capitol from 11:00 am-3:00 pm. Legislators, key public officials and partners from around the state are invited to participate in the event.

### Understanding TBI

Though TBI affects millions, much is not known about TBI and how best to meet the needs of individuals with TBI. According to one study, about 40% of those hospitalized with a TBI had at least one unmet need for services one year after their injury. The most frequent unmet needs were:

- Improving memory and problem solving
- Managing stress and emotional upsets
- Controlling one's temper
- Improving one's job skills<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to learn more about TBI and how to better serve individuals with TBI in Florida, BIAF has partnered



with WellFlorida and the Florida Department of Health, Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program to create a TBI strategic plan for Florida. This is the first time that Florida will put a “statistical and needs-based face” on TBI. WellFlorida is currently concluding the statewide needs assessment. The strategic planning process follows and will target key issues and create plans to help BIAF and its advocates make a difference in funding and services for our under-identified and often underserved population suffering from TBI.

<sup>1</sup>Corrigan JD, Whiteneck G, Mellick D. Perceived needs following traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation* 2004;19(3):205-16.

*By Valerie E. Breen, Executive Director, BIAF*

## Facts about Traumatic Brain Injury

### How many people have TBI?

Of the 1.4 million who sustain a TBI each year in the United States:

- 50,000 die
- 235,000 are hospitalized
- 1.1 million are treated and released from an emergency department

The number of people with TBI who are not seen in an emergency department or who receive no care is unknown.

### What causes TBI?

The leading causes of TBI are:

- Falls (28%)
- Motor vehicle traffic crashes (20%)
- Struck by/against events (19%)
- Assaults (11%)

Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.

### Who is at highest risk for TBI?

Males are about 1.5 times as likely as females to sustain a TBI.

The two age groups at highest risk for TBI are 0 to 4 year olds and 15 to 19 year olds.

African Americans have the highest death rate from TBI.

### What are the costs of TBI?

Direct medical costs and indirect costs such as lost productivity of TBI totaled an estimated \$60 billion in the United States in 2000.

—Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

## Working Together to Build Healthy Communities

Want to learn more about WellFlorida and/or our Community Partners?

Do you have a topic that you would like to see covered in the WellFlorida newsletter?

Would your organization like to submit an article for publication in the WellFlorida newsletter?

If so, please fill out the form below and send to WellFlorida OR contact Jill Dygert at [jdygert@wellflorida.org](mailto:jdygert@wellflorida.org).

Topics of interest: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I am interested in submitting an article to your newsletter.

If you'd like to volunteer at WellFlorida please contact Doug Monroe at [dmonroe@wellflorida.org](mailto:dmonroe@wellflorida.org) OR 352-313-6500 ext. 127.

Please send me additional information on:

- North Central Florida Ryan White CARE Program
- Healthy Start of North Central Florida
- Central Healthy Start
- Rural Health Partnership of North Central Florida
- Self Managing Awareness Rural Team (diabetes/hypertension)
- WellFlorida Council

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



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*Serve your community,  
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Directors. We currently  
have openings for  
representatives from:*

*Citrus County  
Levy County  
Marion County*

*Please contact  
Doug Monroe at  
dmonroe@wellflorida.org  
or 352-313-6500 ext. 127  
for more information.*



United Way of Suwannee Valley

## *WellFlorida Assesses TBI Needs in Florida*

WellFlorida Council is partnering with the Florida Department of Health Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program and Brain Injury Association of Florida to conduct a statewide needs and resources assessment of individuals with traumatic brain injuries (TBI). This project is made possible by a Health Resources and Services Administration grant.

Project ACTION "Assessing Communities To Identify Ongoing Needs" is a three-year project. WellFlorida's goal of year one is to identify the needs of individuals with TBI across injury severity, age groups and culturally distinct populations. Years two and three of the project will be dedicated to developing and implementing Florida's Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program strategic plan for serving persons with TBI.

"The biggest challenge in meeting the needs of individuals with TBI is understanding the variety of ways the injury manifests. It is unique for each person," said Lindsey Michaels of WellFlorida. "We're trying to understand what those unique needs are." Valuable information has been collected

from 17 focus groups with over 140 survivors and caregivers all over the state and interviews with 26 key TBI stakeholders.

Each year, approximately 1.4 million people in the U.S. suffer a TBI, a condition caused by a blow or a jolt to the head. It is estimated that 2 percent of the population are living with a TBI related disability.

"This needs assessment is important because what we're learning is that caregivers, doctors, legislators and the general public don't really know much about TBI and how to most appropriately meet the needs of people with TBI," Michaels said.

The information gained from this first phase of the project will be available on BIAF's website ([www.biaf.org](http://www.biaf.org)) by May 1.

"The research will really help to raise awareness about TBI and ultimately increase knowledge and training for providers," Michaels said.

—Inna Goykhman, Public Relations Intern