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**FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING...
AN INSIDE LOOK AT TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY**
Florida Organization & Supporters Rally to Educate, Inform & Inspire

TALLAHASSEE, FL – What do a 9/11 Pentagon Survivor, a retired Mom of two grown children, a college medical professor and a best-selling author all have in common?

They have all seen, experienced and lived up-close-and-personal in the world of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

On February 16, the Florida TBI community will gather in Tallahassee where it will share, support and inspire. Caregivers, survivors (including a 9/11 Pentagon survivor), medical researchers and those who have chronicled the inside world of TBI will attend an awareness event at the State Capitol sponsored by the [Brain Injury Association of Florida](#) and the [Florida Department of Health](#).

“Brain injuries affect people of all ages and all walks of life,” said Valerie Breen, Executive Director of Brain Injury Association of Florida. “There are 210,000 people in Florida living with a brain injury. The consequence for those who survive and their journey to thrive is our story today. Access to health care, rehabilitation and life long support is key to survivors and their families.”

Among the event’s panelists and featured guests will be [Buzz Bissinger](#), the award-winning journalist and author who wrote “Friday Night Lights,” an honest, real and heartwarming account of big-time high school football in a small-time town. Bissinger was one of the first to shine a light on high-school sports injuries and head trauma, and concussion in particular.

(more)

“Concussion can end more than just a game -- it can end a career and even a life,” Bissinger explained. “Parents and coaches must help athletes recognize signs and symptoms and make it okay to sit out a game or two so they don’t have to sit it out forever.”

The event will focus equally on those living with TBI as well as ways it can be prevented from occurring in the first place. **Triston Sanders**, Executive Producer/Anchor at WCTV-Channel 6 (CBS affiliate) will moderate the event. Other distinguished guests will include **Ana M. Viamonte Ros**, Surgeon General of the State of Florida; **Frank Toral**, President, Brain Injury Association of Florida; **Valerie Breen**, Executive Director, Brain Injury Association of Florida; **Chee-Chee Parker**, 9/11 Survivor, TBI survivor, activist; **Lester Rice**, TBI mother/caregiver, activist; and **Jacob W. VanLandingham Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor in Biomedical Sciences, FSU College of Medicine.

For additional information about the event, please visit ByYourSide.org.

About Brain Injury Association of Florida

Brain Injury Association of Florida (BIAF) is Florida’s only statewide non-profit organization dedicated to informing, educating, supporting and advocating for all Floridians who have survived a brain injury and their families. Founded in 1985 by the mother of a young man who sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI) from a motor vehicle crash, BIAF’s mission is to “improve the quality of life for all persons with brain injury and their families by creating a better future through brain injury awareness, prevention, research, education, support services and advocacy.” BIAF is an official state affiliate of Brain Injury Association of America and part of a nationwide network of brain injury associations located throughout the United States. All resources are provided free of charge to persons with brain injury and their families. Family Support Coordinators work in offices throughout the state, providing individualized information, education, support and advocacy for survivors and their families to help them remain in their homes and communities.

Services:

- Information and resource center
- Toll-free help line
- Education and training programs
- Family support coordination
- Public education and prevention
- Advocacy (individual and statewide)

www.biaf.org

www.ByYourSide.org

Toll-Free Helpline: 1-800-992-3442

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210,000
Living with TBI

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS PRESS CONFERENCE: SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

H.G. "BUZZ" BISSINGER



H.G. "Buzz" Bissinger, author of *Friday Night Lights*, is among the nation's most honored and distinguished writers. A native of New York City, Buzz is the winner of the Pulitzer Prize. He is the author of four highly acclaimed nonfiction books. In addition, Buzz has written for some of the nation's most prestigious magazines: *Vanity Fair* where he has been a contributing editor for a decade, the *New York Times Magazine*, *The New Republic*, *Sports Illustrated* and *Time*. Buzz, 55, graduated from Phillips Academy in Andover in 1972 and the University of Pennsylvania in 1976. It was at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in 1987 that he and two colleagues won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting a six-part investigative series on the Philadelphia Court System. In 1988, Buzz left the *Inquirer* and moved to Odessa, Texas to write the American classic *Friday Night Lights*, a book about the impact of high school football on small-town life. The *New York Times* number one bestseller, published in 1990, has sold roughly two million copies and is still in print. He has written two other books that have been *New York Times* bestsellers, *Three Nights in August* about major league baseball and most recently *Shooting Stars* co-written with basketball great LeBron James. He is considered to be the most preeminent writer on sports today. His recent essay in *Time* dealt with catastrophic spinal cord injuries to high school football players in Texas.

ANA M. VIAMONTE ROS



M.D., M.P.H.

Ana M. Viamonte Ros, M.D., M.P.H. is Florida's first State Surgeon General and the first woman and Cuban American to serve as head of the Department. Governor Crist has charged the Surgeon General to act as the state's leading advocate for wellness and disease prevention. Dr. Viamonte Ros' primary responsibility is to oversee the Department of Health - Florida's largest single clinical enterprise and one of the nation's most comprehensive and complex public health care delivery systems. In addition, Dr. Viamonte Ros is a member of several health advisory groups focused on the health of our state's children, including the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, the Governor's Task Force on Autism Spectrum Disorders, and the Children and Youth Cabinet. Throughout her entire career, she also has been a strong advocate for disadvantaged individuals and minority communities.

TRISTON SANDERS

Triston Sanders is Executive Producer and an anchor at WCTV, the CBS affiliate in Tallahassee. Her segment, "Health Matters," airs weekday mornings and informs viewers about the importance of good health and sheds light on the latest medical advancements. Triston is the medical writer for "Tallahassee Magazine" and "850-The Business Magazine of Northwest Florida." Triston's television background is extensive, having worked as a producer at WPBF in West Palm Beach, WSVN in Miami and WFLA in Tampa. She worked as a reporter at WWSB in Sarasota before making the move to WINK-TV where she anchored for several years. The Florida Associated Press Broadcasters awarded Triston the best in her category in the state for "Individual Achievement" in 2000. She was named "Broadcaster of the Year" in 2002 by NAMI. You'll see Triston in the community donating her time to many causes near and dear to her heart: the American Lung Association, the American Cancer Society, the Humane Society and many other organizations. She teaches as an adjunct instructor at Florida State University in the College of Communication. Triston devotes much of her energy to helping future generations of journalists. She believes in using her many experiences to help pave the way for aspiring anchors, reporters and producers.



ABOUT THE PRESS CONFERENCE

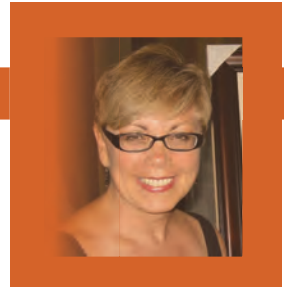
please join us on Tuesday, February 16th at 11 am on the Senate side of the Rotunda in the Florida Capitol Building.

FRANK L. TORAL



Frank L. Toral, Esq. is founder and senior partner of Law Offices of Toral Garcia & Franz and the President of Brain Injury Association of Florida (BIAF). He has been a member of its Board of Directors for more than five years and through most of that time, Mr. Toral served as the Chairman for BIAF's Annual Fundraiser Planning Committee. Additionally, Mr. Toral served as an Advisory Board Member of the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital Pediatric Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program. Mr. Toral authored *My Child Has a Brain Injury: What Do I Do Now?* as part of his commitment to serving survivors of a brain injury and their families. Mr. Toral and his wife, Olivia, recently established the Toral Family Foundation dedicated to support organizations that provide services for brain injury survivors and their families, qualifying medical research organizations, particularly involving brain injuries and charities involved in faith-based initiatives.

VALERIE BREEN



Valerie Breen is the Executive Director of Brain Injury Association of Florida, Inc., the only statewide not for profit membership organization in Florida representing survivors of brain injury and their families. BIAF's mission is to "improve the quality of life for persons with brain injury and their families by creating a better future through brain injury awareness, prevention, research, education, support services and advocacy." Ms. Breen received her Master of Science in Social Administration from Case Western Reserve University School of Applied Social Sciences, Cleveland, Ohio in 1980 with a specialty in medical social work and disability. For the past 22 years Ms. Breen has worked in the field of brain injury as a clinical social worker, medical case manager, administrator and advocate. Throughout her career, Ms. Breen has worked tirelessly and consistently to bring awareness, comfort and resources to survivors and loved ones affected by brain injury. Her unwavering focus on meeting the needs of survivors and their families has improved lives in countless – and many times unseen – ways.

CHEE-CHEE PARKER



Chee-Chee Parker, a TBI survivor and activist, was working in the U.S. Pentagon in Washington DC on September 11, 2001 when American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the building. Chee-Chee, who was on the 2nd floor, was buried below floors of rubble. She suffered numerous injuries as well as a traumatic brain injury that left her unable to speak, eat or walk. After a few years of hard work, dedication and constant physical rehabilitation, Chee-Chee decided to seek out a healing environment free of tall buildings and the sounds of traffic, sirens and commotion. Her love of animals and search for peace brought her to Ocklawaha in Florida's Marion County in 2005. Chee-Chee uses her injuries and her experiences to inspire, guide and help others in countless ways. She has a daughter, Vaqua Luv, and two grandsons Kamani Amir, 15 and Jiar Dante 12.

Lester Rice, a TBI caregiver, has been personally involved, both as an advocate and as a family member, with traumatic brain injury since 1983 when her son Phil, then 19, was involved in a car crash that altered his and his loved ones' lives forever. Prior to her retirement in November, Lester was Government Relations Director for a community mental health and substance abuse agency in Sarasota. In this role, she lobbied extensively, mostly at the state level. Prior to that, Lester also worked as a legislative aide for two state senators. Lester, who lives in Holmes Beach, serves as chairman of a task force for the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program. She has been a member and a support group participant of the BIAF for over two decades. Lester is the mother of two grown children.



JACOB W VANLANDINGHAM



Jacob W VanLandingham, Ph.D. Assistant Professor in Biomedical Sciences Florida State University College of Medicine. Prior to joining the FSU College of Medicine Faculty, Dr. VanLandingham was the Assistant Director of the Brain Research Laboratory at Emory University. His training and work focuses on the molecular aspects of brain injury and the effects of neurosteroids on recovery following brain trauma and stroke. In addition to his work at FSU, Dr. VanLandingham serves as the Director of Research for the Memory Disorders Clinic-Tallahassee Memorial and the Director of Neurobiological Research for the Neuroscience Center-Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare. Dr. VanLandingham also personally suffered a traumatic brain injury in 1995 when he hit his head on a curb after being assaulted by a vagrant outside a restaurant he was exiting. He spent one year with short-term amnesia, severe headaches and a severely damaged sense of smell.



What Is Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)?

TBI is defined as a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. It can result in an altered state of consciousness, as well as physical, sensory, cognitive or behavioral problems. There are more cases of brain injury than HIV, breast cancer and spinal cord injuries combined. TBI can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. It does not discriminate.

The severity of TBI may range from “mild,” a brief change in mental status or consciousness, to “severe,” an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short- or long-term problems. There are three categories

of TBI that are thought to predict outcomes for the individual. However, new research has shown that even mild and moderate injuries to the brain can result in serious, long-term consequences.

Mild

- Loss of consciousness (from seconds up to 30 minutes)
- Post-traumatic amnesia (less than 24 hours)

Moderate

- Loss of consciousness (minutes to a few hours), followed by days or weeks of post-traumatic amnesia

Severe

- Comatose state for days, weeks or longer

Causes of TBI

Over 210,000 people are living with the long-term effects of TBI in the state of Florida. The leading causes of injury include: falls, motor vehicle accidents and assaults. Children 0-4 years of age, young adults 15-24 years of age, and the elderly (65+ years) are at greatest risk for sustaining a TBI. Males are nearly 1.5 times more likely to sustain a TBI than females.

Consequences of TBI

TBI can cause a wide range of changes in a person’s short-term and long-term function. Changes may occur in a person’s physical, cognitive, psychological and/or social functioning. TBI can affect one’s ability to walk, speak, pay attention, remember, manage stress, control one’s temper and organize thoughts. Often symptoms of TBI are misunderstood as behavioral or psychological problems. The long-term consequences of TBI can have life-long impact on those who survive, their families and communities.

Physical Consequences

- Paralysis
- Issues with muscle coordination
- Inability to perform purposeful movements
- Double vision or blindness
- Loss of taste or smell
- Slowness or difficulty with speech
- Headaches
- Seizures

Cognitive Issues

- Attention/concentration
- Memory
- Recognition of limitations
- Organizational or planning skills
- Judgment

Psychosocial Issues

- Loss of social networks and supports
- Loss of job or income
- Changes in living arrangements
- Anxiety
- Isolation
- Depression

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Living with TBI



Services and Support Needs

Individuals living with TBI and their families have identified key services and supports necessary to help them reach their fullest potential:

- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Case management
- Caregiver and community support
- Housing and residential treatment facilities
- Employment services
- Day treatment and day activities
- Adaptive/cognitive technology
- Transportation
- Alcohol and other drug treatment
- Education and transition planning
- Mental health

Supporting Florida's Individuals with TBI and Their Families

Brain Injury Association of Florida

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throughout the state, providing individualized information, education, support and advocacy for survivors and their families to help them remain in their homes and communities.

Services:

- Information and resource center
- Toll-free help line
- Education and training programs
- Family support coordination
- Public education and prevention
- Advocacy (individual and statewide)

Administrative Office:

1637 Metropolitan Boulevard, Suite B
Tallahassee, Florida 32308

Phone: (850) 410-0103

Fax: (850) 410-0105

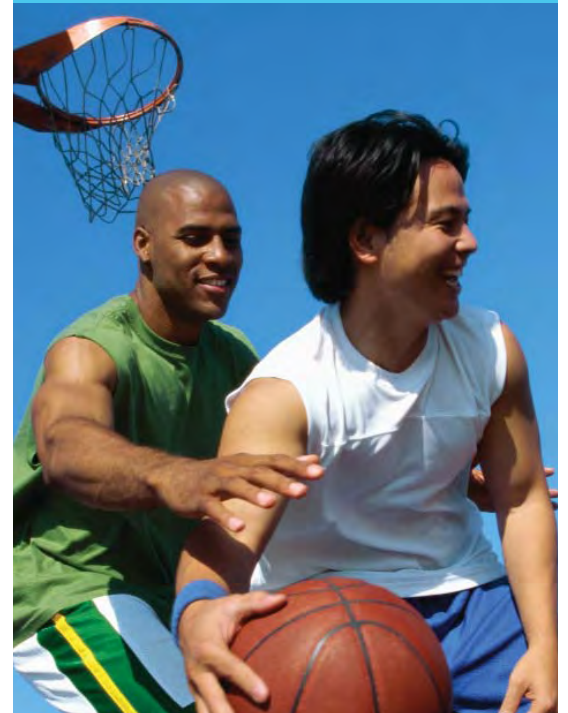
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Toll-Free Helpline: 1-800-992-3442

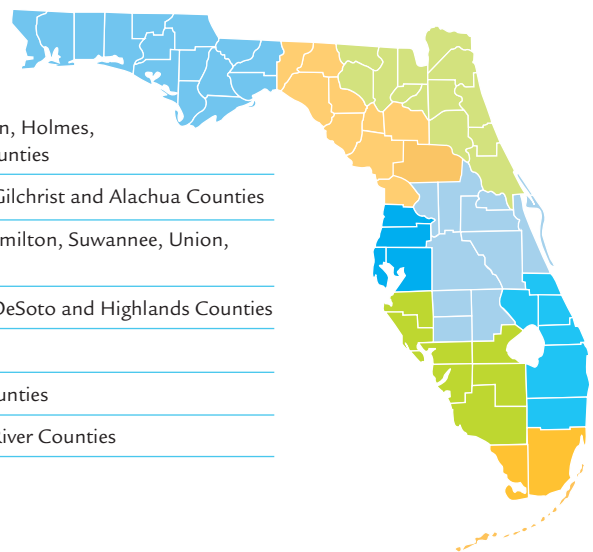
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BIAF Family Support Regions

Pensacola	Gadsden, Wakulla, Leon, Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton, Holmes, Washington, Bay, Jackson, Calhoun, Gulf, Liberty and Franklin Counties
Gainesville	Jefferson, Madison, Taylor, Marion, Levy, Lafayette, Dixie, Citrus, Gilchrist and Alachua Counties
Jacksonville	Nassau, Baker, Clay, Duval, St. Johns, Putnam, Flagler, Volusia, Hamilton, Suwannee, Union, Bradford and Columbia Counties
Orlando	Lake, Sumter, Seminole, Polk, Orange, Osceola, Brevard, Hardee, DeSoto and Highlands Counties
Tampa	Hillsborough, Hernando, Pinellas and Pasco Counties
Sarasota	Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, Lee, Manatee and Sarasota Counties
Broward	Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee and Indian River Counties
Miami	Monroe and Dade Counties



Sponsored by Brain Injury Association of Florida and the State of Florida Department of Health