



Brain Power

A publication of the Brain Injury
Association of Michigan

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 1

SUMMER 2016

President's Message

“ The Brain Injury Association of Michigan is in a transitional period. It was announced at the end of May that Tom Constand, our Vice President of Marketing and Development, will be succeeding me as the next BIAMI President. In addition to this, we have brought on new staff members to help us better carry out BIAMI's mission. While leadership transitions can often be disruptive to accomplishing an organization's mission, I am extremely pleased to report this has not been the case for BIAMI as evidenced by our accomplishments during the first half of 2016.

Our 2016 Legacy Society Tribute Dinner was the most successful fundraising event ever held by the Association with 1,100 attendees and raising over \$260,000 net income for the BIAMI. We honored Dr. Charles Seigerman and Margaret Kroese with our Legacy Society's Professional Service and Community Service Awards, respectively. These funds assisted BIAMI in providing the programs and services below.

Capitol Day 2016 was a resounding success. We brought together brain injury survivors, their family members, and health professionals together with their state legislators to discuss a broad agenda that included advocating for the removal of the sunset provision of the DUI/OWI law, a minor change to the Sports Concussion Law, urging passage of the Michigan Brain Injury Act, and affirming the detrimental impact of D-Insurance. Thanks in large part our Capitol Day meetings, legislators took the initial legislative steps required to pass the Sports Concussion Law amendment and to remove the sunset provision that would have increased the legal Blood Alcohol Concentration level from 0.08 to 0.1.

This year was also a big year for Lids For Kids. Together with the Sinas Dramis Law firm and various other local sponsors, we were able to hand out 1,373 fitted helmets to underprivileged children at Lids For Kids events in Traverse City, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. And our Legal Conference last month was the most attended to date, with 186 attendees and 28 exhibitors. During this "changing of the guard" period, BIAMI has remained steadfast in its mission to serve the brain injury community. It's important to note that monies raised from our conferences and events go towards the support of our survivor advocacy services, chapter support and program development on behalf of all persons with a brain injury across the state. And, while the year is only half over, I know we will finish it strong.”

Michael F. Dabbs
BIAMI President

Tom Constand to be Next BIAMI President

Current Vice President of Development and Marketing, Tom Constand, has been officially appointed by the Board of Directors as the incoming President of the Brain Injury Association of Michigan. Tom will succeed the current President, Michael Dabbs, who is retiring at the end of the year.



“We're confident in Tom's ability to continue along the same successful leadership path that Mike Dabbs has created for the Association,” said BIAMI Board Chair Kevin Arnold. “His proven leadership skills, in-depth industry knowledge and experience with nonprofit organizations as a whole make him a valuable asset in our ongoing effort to help bridge the accessibility gap between Michigan's extensive brain injury rehabilitative network and all brain injury survivors who need it.”

When asked for commentary, Dabbs stated that the unanimous decision to appoint Constand reflects their trust and confidence in him to effectively lead and continue to build BIAMI. “The qualities and abilities that I have seen in Tom over the past 12 years of him working as our PR consultant and in recent years as BIAMI's Vice President of Development and Marketing; I believe are exactly what BIAMI needs in order to effectively serve our members and the nearly 200,000 Michigan residents who live with the effects of having sustained a brain injury,” said Dabbs. “I was extremely pleased to see the Personnel Committee who conducted the search process and the Board sees these same qualities in Tom and offer him the role as BIAMI's President.”

“I am extremely humbled by the faith the board has in me and am honored to be appointed as the next president for the Brain Injury Association of Michigan,” said Constand. “I will work hard to keep BIAMI moving forward and continue the successful legacy of accomplishment that Mike Dabbs has forged on behalf of the brain injury community in Michigan.”

Kevin Arnold, who headed up the board's Executive Search Committee, said, “Tom was the clear choice. His knowledge of the organization, experience inside and outside of BIAMI, and his personal sense for the mission made him the only candidate for the job.”

BIAMI Welcomes New Staff Members



Nathaniel Smith

joined the BIAMI in May as its first ever full-time Communications Associate. He is primarily

responsible for the Association's communications activities, social media outlets, and maintaining the website. Prior to joining the BIAMI, Nathaniel served as a Business Relations Representative with the Better Business Bureau in Louisville, KY. While there, he created and maintained their blog and handled small graphic design projects, in addition to making contact with and extending BBB accreditation to local businesses. He also aided the Louisville Sustainability Council and Volunteers of America in Louisville with various communications projects, including the creation of fact sheets and guiding social media strategy. He holds a bachelor's degree in music and a master's degree in communications, both from Bellarmine University in Kentucky.

Jacey VarnHagen was brought on as BIAMI's new Administrative Assistant in April. She holds a master's degree in nonprofit management and a bachelor's degree in gerontology. Prior to joining the BIAMI, VarnHagen worked primarily with older adults, having worked as an Activity Director at Independence Village and as an Outreach Coordinator, Office Manager, and worked in the Older Adults Program for Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County. Jacey is from the Brighton area where she lives with her family. She enjoys volunteering at her son's school and local animal rescue organizations.

The Annual Fall Conference held by the Brain Injury Association of Michigan is the largest of its kind in this country. With 32 breakout sessions, 150 exhibitors and 1,500 attendees over the course of two days, it is not hard to see why. This year we are excited to announce that we have Dr. Bennet Omalu and Rye Barcott as our keynote speakers.

Dr. Omalu, who will be the keynote speaker on Thursday, is best known for the discovery of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), which has been recognized as a medical condition and Dr. Omalu's findings have revolutionized neuroscience, sports medicine and safety, the study of all types of brain trauma, and the entire sports industry. CTE is responsible for the deaths of professional athletes and veterans. In 2015, Omalu's life and work was chronicled in a book and film, both titled *Concussion*.



Rye Barcott, the keynote speaker for Friday, is a veteran and social entrepreneur. During his time in the Marines, he co-founded Carolina For Kibera, which uses participatory development to break cycles of violence and extreme poverty. Additionally, Barcott is the author of the best-selling book *It Happened on the Way to War*, which shines as an example of how small groups of committed people from vastly different backgrounds can unite and defy the odds.



Both speakers will be at the BIAMI booth for meet and greets after their presentations. Attendees will be allowed to take pictures with the speakers and get books signed during the meet and greets.

This year's agenda is slated to include state-of-the-art treatments, therapies, and research on brain injuries including alternatives treatments to concussions, pain management, memory improvement, hoarding and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and trends in pediatric therapy. Additionally, there will be a free morning yoga session on Friday

at The Radisson, which will teach a series of positions that facilitate free and easy spinal movement. Space is limited and you must sign up to attend. Registration is now open for those who wish to attend.

For more details and to register, visit www.biami.org/brain-injury-conference-michigan.htm.

2016 ANNUAL

Fall Conference

HELP | HOPE | HEALING

“Just keep plugging away and get a good team behind you.”
 –Tim Edmonds

Tim Edmonds

It was an icy, cold night that changed Tim Edmonds' life 25 years ago. He was 27 at the time and driving his truck just after dark when he lost control on the iced over roads and hit a tree. He was not wearing a seatbelt driving that night; he noted that it was not really enforced back then. There were not many motorists out that night, but luckily people happened upon him. When he was found, he was not breathing. While one person resuscitated him, the other was able to get help. When Tim got to the hospital, he spent 20 days in a coma, but that was just the beginning of Tim's journey.

For Tim, life became more difficult. He found that his balance and memory were not what they were and he lost his sense of taste and smell. Moreover, the right side of his body was paralyzed. In time, Tim was able to gain control over his right side. He still walks with a cane, but he's able to use his right hand again and can even drive using his right foot. He attributes his recovery to not only his persistence, but to the help of his family, friends, employers, and healthcare professionals. He also noted the role Auto No-Fault had in his recovery, that he was lucky to be in Michigan.

Tim has found the things in life that gives him the greatest pleasure. He enjoys driving; going to Detroit Tigers' games with his sister, Kathie (who is a BIAMI staff member); and fishing in two annual fishing tournaments. He also has found joy in working for Cassell and Associates, where he has worked for



Tim Edmonds

the past five years, in addition to work at Brighton Honda.

When asked what advice he had for others recovering from brain injuries, he said, “Just keep plugging away and get a good team behind you.”

Kathie Sell

For Kathie Sell, what has meant the most in her 13 years working at BIAMI is knowing that she has made the quality of life for many brain injury survivors and their families a bit better. Kathie works as the Information and Resources Coordinator, where she helps survivors and their family members navigate the maze set before them and find the resources they need.

Kathie, whose brother Tim is a brain injury survivor, says that the most important function BIAMI performs is the “one on one” contact the Association has with survivors and their families, whether through the main office in Brighton or one of many support groups throughout the state. She emphasizes that it's important that survivors know they're not alone and that for many, sometimes just being able to connect with someone else who has been through it themselves makes a huge difference.

“It's been amazing to hear about people's lives before their brain injury; so many possibilities for a bright future being taken away in an instant,” says Kathie. “It's not easy building a new life without dwelling on that past, but the only way to move forward is to accept the new reality and build on what you have right now.” Moving forward does not necessarily mean starting completely over. Kathie explains that reconnecting with past hobbies and interests or discovering new ones may be the keys to finding stability and contentment in life after a brain injury. “You're more likely to succeed,” adds Kathie “if you can find something you are passionate about.”

When it comes to brain injuries, she wants friends and family members to know that the struggle for the survivor continues well after checking out of the hospital. Survivors can feel like everyone has left them, and many times caregivers still need help. “It's all about communication,” Kathie says. It is important to keep in contact with survivors and caregivers as they get back into a normal routine. Likewise, survivors need to know it is okay to reach out to their friends and family members. Communication is a two way street and helps ensure that survivors and their family members know they are not alone.



To read the complete stories of these and other courageous survivors, visit our website, www.biami.org/stories.



7305 Grand River, Suite 100
Brighton, MI 48114-7379

(810) 229-5880 or (800) 444-6443 toll-free
(800) 772-4323 Veterans toll-free
(810) 229-8947 Fax

www.biami.org

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BRIGHTON, MI
PERMIT NO. 333

2016 Lids for Kids

This year's Lids For Kids was a resounding success! The events at Traverse City, Lansing, and Grand Rapids gave out 1,373 fitted helmets by the Sinas Dramis Law Firm. Our thanks go out to Sinas Dramis, who have now distributed over 7,000 helmets over the past 14 years through the Lids For Kids events. We would also like to thank the other sponsors for making these events as amazing as they have been.

"This project is all about community — one done by the community for the community," said Sinas Dramis partner and event organizer, Tom Sinas. "If all of our efforts prevented only one child from suffering a brain injury, then it's worth it."



2016 EVENTS

Thursday-Friday September 22 & 23	Fall Conference	Lansing Center, Lansing
Thursday, November 3	Quality of Life Conference	Watermark Country Club, Grand Rapids
Friday, December 2	Rockin' for Rehab	University Club, Lansing