‘Tis the Season of Gifts, Giving and Gratitude

By Laura Fenstermaker and Melissa Albert

One doesn’t have to look very far for signs of the season of giving: the Salvation Army’s bell ringers are out with their red kettles; giving trees are up at schools, churches and businesses so that individuals can help a child’s dream of dolls, DVDs, toys and clothes come true; and donation requests from various organizations have hit mail boxes. This year, please include the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota on your list of charitable organizations to receive your support.

The beauty and wonder of philanthropic generosity during the holidays lends hope and optimism to those who might otherwise be feeling a bit more pessimistic. Even with a perilous economy, the grim news of 533,000 jobs lost in October and November of the fourth quarter of this year, homelessness and record numbers of Americans losing their homes to foreclosure, hope is always around the corner. Contributions and good deeds by individuals do happen, especially during challenging times and, it is people like you who bring this hope to so many individuals in need.

The November 26 issue of The Chronicle of Philanthropy shared the results of a recent study and found that “73 percent of Americans intend to make charitable contributions this holiday season, compared with 60 percent last year.” Results from a second survey in the publication found that individuals “were more likely to give a ‘charitable gift’ as a holiday present.”

Recently on Minnesota Public Radio’s Market Place Report, 

Gifts, Giving and Gratitude continues on page 1

The Person I Always Was

By Phil Gonzales

Rebecca Glassing was never one to sit still. “I’d get up in the morning, pack my bag for ball after work, spend the day at work, go out and play ball, get home at night, throw my bag to the side, get up the next morning, pack a new bag — I was constantly on the go. I was never home. People would say to my parents, ‘Becky’s still living at home,’ and they’d say, ‘She sleeps here, this is her address, she doesn’t live here.’ Now, I’m home all the time.”

In February 2007, after being rear ended by a car, a golf ball-sized tumor was found above Rebecca’s left eye. It was an unexpected discovery, but one that made certain elements of her life make sense.

“My mood swings used to be so bad. I always knew that there was something not right,” she says, “I had been having headaches and I’d always had backaches.”

Doctor’s were amazed, due to the size and location of the tumor, that she had been able to walk into the hospital. After an eight-hour surgery more trouble was discovered. Her brain was so swollen her ventricles were blocked. More operations were required.

As a result, Rebecca ended up having a double stroke and losing her eyesight. She was put into a medical induced coma for two weeks and when she woke up, “I had no clue what had gone on. I had no short term memory. No one told me right away I’d lost my sight. They wouldn’t give me my glasses. Finally, a neurologist came in and told me, ‘You just have to accept the fact that you’re blind.’ And then, I told her where she could stick it.”

Rebecca’s tumor was a meningioma, a type of tumor that
JOIN us today to CHANGE tomorrow!

Every 23 seconds, one person in the United States sustains a traumatic brain injury. The Brain Injury Association of Minnesota is the only statewide nonprofit dedicated to helping people navigate life after brain injury.

Please join us to raise awareness and provide help, hope and a voice to the thousands of Minnesotans affected by brain injury.

Any commitment you can make – from volunteering to becoming a Citizen Advocate to sharing your story through the media – can help enhance the quality of life and bring the promise of a better tomorrow for all people affected by brain injury.

Simply fill out the section below and mail it to the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota at 34 13th Ave. NE, Suite B001, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413 to get started today.

Name: ______________________________________________

Address: ____________________________________________

City: ______________________ State: ______ Zip: _________

E-mail: ______________________________________________

Phone: ______________________________________________

Please send me information about:

☐ Membership
☐ Resource Facilitation program
☐ Case Management program
☐ Educational opportunities
☐ Public Policy opportunities
☐ Multicultural Support program
☐ Volunteering opportunities
☐ Peer/Mentor Support Connection program
☐ Public Awareness opportunities
☐ Donating, Planned Giving or Contributing
☐ Internships

Please send me information about:

☐ Development and Communications
☐ Public Policy
☐ Public Awareness
☐ Case Management
☐ Peer/Support
☐ Support Services
☐ Educational
☐ Multicultural Support
☐ Public Policy
☐ Volunteer Opportunities
☐ Internships

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☐ Public Awareness
☐ Case Management
☐ Peer/Support
☐ Support Services
☐ Educational
☐ Multicultural Support
☐ Public Policy
☐ Volunteer Opportunities
☐ Internships

● Subscribe me to the bi-weekly Headlines Online e-newsletter, which is filled with up-to-date information of interest to the brain injury community (e-mail address required above)

Rise, Inc.’s Brain Injury Programs serve the needs of adults with traumatic / acquired brain injuries through individualized, person-centered programming

Connections is conducted in Spring Lake Park Structured Day Services and Adult Day Services are both offered in Golden Valley

Services include:
* Community integration / volunteer opportunities
* Adult day supports
* Behavioral assessment and programming
* Activities leading to more independence
* Cognitive rehabilitation training
* Preventative services
* Supported employment
* Career planning

For more information about Rise's program services, call Peggy Krammer in Spring Lake Park: 763-785-2813 or Brigid Alsem in Golden Valley: 763-520-0420

Visit Rise’s web site at www.rise.org

**Mission**

The mission of the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota is to enhance the quality of life and bring the promise of a better tomorrow for all people affected by brain injury.

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**Letters to the Editor Policy**

Letters to the Editor should be limited to 300 words. Letters may be edited for spelling, grammar and length. In order for letters to be considered, please include your name, address and the daytime phone number of the author. The Brain Injury Association of Minnesota reserves the right to refuse letters for publication, and submission of material does not guarantee publication. Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are solely those of the author and do not represent the opinions or positions of the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota.

**Editorial Policy**

Headlines is published quarterly by the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted materials for style and space. The Brain Injury Association of Minnesota does not endorse, support, or recommend any specific method, facility, treatment, program, or support group for persons with brain injury and their families. Please call for advertising rates.
Greetings, Headlines readers.

It’s hard for me to believe that I have been at this job for nearly a half a year. During this period, I have delved into and examined all the areas of the Association. I continue to devour as much information as possible, as we move ahead to another year. We have had such a successful 2008 that thinking strategically about how to build on these successes is critically important. I continue to marvel at the devoted staff, volunteers and board members, who really make this Association the best.

After a productive 2007, this year, staff hit the ground running. We kicked off 2008 with March Brain Injury Awareness Month, with campaigns that involved Hennepin County Medical Center, Bethesda Hospital and the Minnesota Timberwolves. These campaigns helped bring our message of brain injury and prevention to thousands of individuals and families in our community. The Association was also featured on WCCO TV as part of these activities and our staff and partners were seen answering phones by over 200,000 people.

The 23rd Annual Conference for Professionals in Brain Injury was also a success, thanks in part to a celebrated appearance by Trisha Meili, author of the book, I Am The Central Park Jogger.

In May, the legislative session wrapped up and although we had a few disappointments – budget cuts to Health and Human Services and the failure to pass primary seatbelt language in a Conference Committee report – we also had some significant accomplishments. The most notable is that the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee of the Department of Human Services was extended to 2012.

None of this would have been possible without the tireless efforts of our public policy staff and the involvement of well-trained citizen advocates. These individuals dedicate their time, energy and passion to help champion the message of brain injury awareness and prevention to our legislators.

Our Walk for Thought featured former Minnesota Twins third baseman Corey Koskie, who was this year’s Ambassador and Honorary Chair. Koskie appeared on our behalf on numerous media interviews promoting the Walk and telling his own inspiring story of brain injury. Don Shelby, WCCO TV anchor and radio host not only emceed the pre-Walk event but also promoted the event and brain injury awareness through radio PSA’s and personal promotions on both TV and radio.

To complement all of these activities Dave St. Peter, president of the Minnesota Twins, and Mark Rosen, WCCO TV sports director and anchor, took to the stage to speak on their involvement with the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota. Our partnership with the Minnesota Twins helped raise awareness for the Association and brain injuries, in addition to promoting the Walk through Brain Injury Awareness Night at the Dome in September. The Walk, which broke a new fundraising record, had more participants and reached a greater audience than ever before.

Honestly, we have been fortunate. We have not only thrived this year, but grown in significant and measurable ways – in the number of individuals served through our resource facilitation and case management programs as well as outreach to underserved communities. These successes are the results of many dedicated staff, volunteers, board members, consumers and families. It is exciting to look back and reflect upon such great outcomes.

Supporting our work are the generous contributors who give a much-needed monetary gift to the Association. Asking for contributions to help us sustain the organization and its programs is never easy. However, with the holiday season upon us and messages of charitable giving talked about on TV, in print and on the airwaves, I would ask that you please think of the Association.

As we all know, brain injury does not discriminate. Any one of us could sustain a life-altering brain injury at any time. So, please, give what you can this year. Your contributions will ensure that all Minnesotans will continue to have access to our education, services and supports.

I am not suggesting that we live our life in service to others; that places an uncomfortable burden on those others. We should make their burdens lighter by showing gratitude and humility for the things they do for us. When we labor at a thankless task, it is not the task that encumbers us, it is the thanklessness. We may not always be able to be of service to others anyway, but all of us have challenges that we can bear more easily with the help of others. This is where gratitude comes in. We “pay” for these services with gratitude, and true heartfelt gratitude is as good as gold. If I live my life this way, then I can rest in peace.
By Pat Marciniak

Getting the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota’s message out to the public is an important part of our mission. Here’s where you may have seen us in the past months.

Late summer and fall presented many great opportunities through two big events for the Association, the Walk for Thought and Brain Injury Awareness Night at the Metrodome with the Minnesota Twins. In conjunction with these events, the Association participated in media stories, radio public service announcements (PSA’s) and marketing activities. In addition to general media stories, Corey Koskie, our 2008 Walk for Thought Honorary Chair and Ambassador and Don Shelby of WCCO TV and radio helped us raise awareness and prevention messages about brain injury and promote name recognition through TV and radio media.

In the Media

PSA’s recorded by Don Shelby and Corey Koskie ran during the month of September through our Media Sponsor WCCO radio as well as live reads throughout the month to promote the Walk. The Association also had the opportunity through WCCO radio to honor volunteers from the Association and professionals who are instrumental to our success for two weeks of Good Neighbor awards.

Through telling his own inspirational story with brain injury Koskie was popular with the radio and TV circuit with his awareness message and promotion of the Walk and the Association. Interviews were heard by more than 10 million listeners and viewers, which included WCCO radio on the Don Shelby Show, Dave Lee Morning Show and Mike Max Sports Show; KFAN on the PA and Dubay Show as well as the Mike Morris Power Trip Show, which included Pat Marciniak; WCCO TV on Rosen Sports Sunday and Twins Live Pre-game show with Marney Gillner on FSN North.

Other media included interviews with Dr. Erwin Concepcion, David King and Pat Marciniak on the Northern Lights Community Affairs Program, which aired twice in September on WLTE 102.9 FM and KZJK-HD pure jazz. Media stories also circulated on their own merit and people were hearing the Walk and Corey Koskie talked about on just about every Twin Cities radio station as well as a write up on the Minnesota Wild online Bulletin Board. Media reach even included an interview with Koskie on WMEQ Sports Radio in Eau Claire, WI.

Our awareness reach also was seen on WCCO TV in September with an in-depth special report on brain injury told through health reporter and anchor, Dennis Douda on the 10 p.m. newscast. This feature included an interview with Dr. Gaylan Rockswold (Hennepin County Medical Center), Dr. Kenneth Britton (Bethesda), Pat Marciniak and the Leticia Harmung family. The video of this special feature and a link to our Web site will be archived for many years on WCCO’s Web site. The Walk for Thought was also promoted along with Don Shelby as our Walk emcee. Shelby and Mark Rosen also talked about their involvement in the Walk during the 10 p.m. newscast and we received day of coverage of the Walk and pre-Walk show.

Fox 9 News interviewed Brad Donaldson, of the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota, for a follow-up story on brain injury, which included mention of our Walk. The story featured Kaley Theis, a high school senior who experienced a brain injury and also joined our Walk with her own team. KARE 11 promoted the Walk and Koskie’s involvement on both Coffee with KARE and their Sunday Sports Final Show. Our stories reached over two million viewers in September.

In addition, Walk for Thought spots voiced by Koskie were heard on KFAN and KOOL 108 along with additional spots on KZJK.

Our year long prevention and awareness message on KFAN and KFYM Sports Radio also continued from late August through late November. These spots were recorded by Glenda Greenwood, mother of injured athlete and Association volunteer Justin Greenwood, with a personal approach aimed at an audience of parents, athletes and coaches for KFAN and KFYM Sports radio during the High School Football Scoreboard Show and Prep Bowl Championship games. Over sixty commercial messages throughout the season were heard along with 26 sponsorship billboards.

To saturate the entire news media market, a display ad promoting our Walk and highlighting Koskie and Shelby debuted in September to attract walkers, donors and raise awareness about brain injury. These ads ran in the Star Tribune, St. Paul Pioneer Press and City Pages.

The media generated during this period reached over 15,341,413 individuals with our message on brain injury awareness and the Walk for Thought through broadcast, print and the Minnesota Twins, our biggest reach ever!

**What’s new at the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota and in the brain injury community**

**Media Awards**

Mark Rosen

**Receives Media Honor from Minnesota State Council on Disability**

This fall the Association nominated Mark Rosen, WCCO TV sports director, anchor and reporter for the 2009 Minnesota State Council on Disability Media Award based on his effective portrayal of people with disabilities, focusing first on the person and secondly on their disability. Rosen’s nomination was based on a special feature he did on Association volunteer, Justin Greenwood, focusing on Greenwood’s strengths, positive attitude and independence. Rosen said “being around Justin just made me feel good about life.” When reporting on stories of athletes, Rosen always focuses on the positives of that individual and their abilities first and disability second. On November 6, 2008, Rosen was presented with the award at a special awards luncheon celebrating the 35th Anniversary of the Minnesota State Council on Disability. Attending the luncheon were Rosen’s proud mother, Doris and Pat Marciniak from the Association.

His story on Justin Greenwood also won Rosen a celebrated local Associated Press Award for Sports Excellence.

We congratulate Mark on these achievements and thank him for being a special partner and friend of the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota through his media stories and participation at the Walk for Thought.

**Dennis Douda Presented with Association Media Award**

Dennis Douda, WCCO TV health reporter and anchor helps the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota tell their story to viewers through individuals who live with a disability due to brain injury. His special reports bring awareness and prevention messages on brain injury to viewers and helps connect individuals to needed services provided by the Association. The Association honored Douda in September with a plaque for bringing awareness to brain injuries through his reporting.

**Vinland National Center**

helps adults with brain injuries lead full and rewarding lives.

Through training, counseling and physical activity, Vinland empowers people with brain injuries to live independently and achieve new levels of physical, mental and social health.

For more information, please call 763.479.3555 or visit our web site at www.vinlandcenter.org

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**Headlines**

**Stories also circulated on their own**

**Headlines**

**Stories also circulated on their own**
This fall, education team members have continued their outreach efforts by providing a variety of learning opportunities. For example, staff has reached out to coaches and sports trainers at Bethesda’s Sports Concussion Conference, public safety officers at the “Towards Zero Death” Conference, as well as to social workers, rehabilitation specialists, and county workers at the St. Louis County Health and Human Service Conference in Duluth.

Presentations to professionals have continued throughout the quarter on brain injury resulting from Shaken Baby Syndrome and Domestic Violence. In addition, customized educational workshops were presented to a vast array of constituencies, including special education teachers in Somerset, WI, Chemical Dependency Counselors in the Twin Cities, professionals and families in Willmar and to an audience at the Human Rights Day Conference and Forum on the ADA and returning veterans with TBI.

Brain Injury Basics (BIB) classes have continued to be offered at Bethesda Hospital in St. Paul, as well as Wednesday Workshops at the offices of the Brain Injury Association. Topics included: Disability Law and Legal Aid, Self-regulation after Traumatic Brain Injury, and Pediatric Brain Injury.

Education Services provides on-site training sessions for providers throughout Minnesota with content customized to fit the interests and needs of the providers. If your staff are new to servicing people living with brain injury or if you would like to learn more on a specific topic related to brain injury (i.e. shaken baby syndrome, domestic violence, supported employment) call Breanna Berthelsen to schedule a training session at 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.

Also, please visit the Association’s Web site at www.brainjurymn.org for information about classes and other information about the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota.
Association Volunteer Phone Bank

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, Minnesota is ranked third in volunteerism in the nation with 1.6 million volunteers last year. Minneapolis and Saint Paul are ranked number one of all major cities. This is due, in part, to the massive amount of volunteer opportunities throughout our state.

On November 3, a group of volunteers met at the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota offices in order to ensure that individuals affected by brain injury were able to vote on Election Day. Volunteers called hundreds of individuals to answer questions about polling place locations and accessibility, individual voter rights and offering a free ride to the polls if one was needed. Thank you to the group of volunteers who spent an evening helping individuals with disability exercise their rights!

Thank you to everyone who made this evening a great success and who also helped make this the most attended national election in recent history.

Volunteer Opportunities

While the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota always has many volunteer opportunities, they might not be quite what you are looking for. Fortunately, many volunteer organizations exist to help you find a position that suits your needs. This is the perfect opportunity to act as an ambassador for individuals affected by brain injury. Volunteer with an organization and share your experience on brain injury. Spreading awareness through personal experience is one way of advocating for yourself and individuals with brain injury.

Some places to look for great volunteer opportunities are the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota Web site, volunteermatch.org, handsontwincities.org, and idealist.org.

Ways to get involved at the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota:

- Become a Resource Facilitation volunteer and help ensure quality services and supports are getting to those who need them.
- Attend a Brain Injury Basics class and invite a friend or family member to come along.
- Help find a venue for one of our trained speakers to share their experience on brain injury.
- If you are a student, consider becoming an intern during the upcoming semester.

If you are interested in any of these opportunities or have questions about how to get involved, please contact Lee George at leeg@braininjurymn.org or call 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.


Volunteer Corner

By Lee George

Our approach:
- unique programs for adults & children
- interdisciplinary team with family involvement
- emergency treatment
- Mild to Moderate Traumatic Brain Injury Clinic
- accredited brain injury rehabilitation*
- community referrals & follow-up
- community education & prevention

For a brain injury referral or consultation, call (612) 873-3284. www.hemo.org/braininjury

Experts focused on brain injury care and rehabilitation

Every Life Matters.
Legislative Corner

Elections Are Over: Now What?

By Jeff Nachbar and Michelle Gray

Now that the 2008 elections are over and it is safe to watch TV again, you might be wondering what happens next. There is no doubt that the 2008 elections were a historic event; one you will be able to tell your children and their children that you were part of. But remember, politics and Democracy are about much more than election winners and losers; they are about how we make collective decisions as a society. Whether Democrat, Republican or Independent, we all have a lot at stake in the coming years and no single individual or party has all the answers. We need as many voices at the table as possible to ensure smart decisions are made, especially in these troubling economic times.

In state elections, the entire Minnesota House of Representatives and a couple of open Senate seats were up for re-election in 2008. Republicans won a few Democratic seats and Democrats won a few Republican seats. There will be 23 new faces, but the overall party balance remains close to what it was last session; so we do not expect too many changes in committee structure or leadership.

The critical issue going into 2009 is Minnesota’s state budget. By the time the State Legislature adjourns in May, assuming we don’t experience another government shutdown, Minnesota will have set its budget through June 30, 2011. This means the next few months will be critical, as legislators make decisions about state spending on programs that impact individuals with brain injury and their loved ones. It is up to each of you to help us protect the most vital services you or your family receive by making it “real” for policy makers. It can’t just be about abstract formulas, budget percentages or political rhetoric. Politics is personal, it’s about relationships. We are here to help you and will do everything we can, but we can’t do it without you. If you want to help tell your story and make it “real” for legislators, please get in touch with Jeff Nachbar at jeffn@braininjurymn.org or Michelle Gray at michelle@braininjurymn.org. You can also sign-up on line at capwiz.com/braininjurymn or call us at 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442.

Welcome Michelle Gray

Hello, my name is Michelle Gray and I am just one of the many new faces here at the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota! I joined the Association as a public policy aide this past September, and am absolutely thrilled to be working in an environment where public policy advocacy is considered such a vital and successful component of the organization. I have enjoyed getting to know the many compassionate and hardworking Association staff, board members, volunteers, and other supporters. As you can probably imagine, joining the Association just a few months prior to one of the most exciting and engaging election years of all times has been quite an adventure! I joined Jeff Nachbar just in time to help plan election activities including voter registration and Get-out-the-Vote phone banking. We also co-organized a number of state and federal candidate forums throughout the state, creating an opportunity for people with disabilities and their support network to engage with Minnesota candidates about disability issues important to them.

My direct practice experience in both day-training/habilitation and residential programs for individuals facing physical or developmental disabilities, acquired or traumatic brain injuries, or mental health issues has kept me alert to the political climate in Minnesota and to how state policies shape the quality and array of programs and services available to people with disabilities. The Community Practice Master of Social Work program at the University of Minnesota offered many opportunities to learn from both seasoned social workers and community organizers. This created a balance of compassion and civic engagement tools and ideas from which to draw upon. I am sincerely grateful for the opportunity to use my direct practice and graduate experience to enable individuals affected by brain injury to use their personal experience to become engaged in the political process. I have enjoyed every minute of my time at the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota thus far, and look forward to the challenges and successes that lie ahead!
I am a proud TBI veteran and want the world to know what we can do.

— Walk for Thought participant

This year’s Walk for Thought was the most successful to date. Thanks to the over 2,000 enthusiastic participants, which included, people with brain injury, their families and friends, providers, supporters and staff, we were able to significantly surpass our fundraising goals, as well as heighten awareness like never before about brain injury throughout Minnesota. Together in St. Paul, Duluth and Rochester, people attended the Walk for Thought to meet, share stories, and enjoy a beautiful day together.

This year’s phenomenal success of 2,029 participants and $153,918.49 raised is a 65 percent increase in attendance and a 48 percent increase in dollars raised from last year. Incredible! We believe a number of factors contributed to this success, including a hardworking and passionate committee, many, tireless volunteers, dedicated staff and you! Without you, this event would not be possible. Thank you for helping to spread awareness about brain injury across Minnesota.

The money raised at the Walk for Thought helps to sustain the Association and secures the delivery of its many services to individuals in communities across Minnesota. It helps finance new programs and expands existing ones. The visibility helps to educate and inform people about brain injury; an otherwise silent epidemic. The many stories that were heard on the radio and television by the community at large create an understanding among those never exposed to the information that brain injury affects us all. Brain Injury does not discriminate. It can happen to any one of us at any time.

So, thank you and congratulations, Walk for Thought participants, supporters and volunteers. You are the Walk. Your passion for brain injury awareness and education unites all 2,029 of you into a force for change in Minnesota and the nation.

Walk for Thought team shout-outs

Each team at this year’s Walk helped make this an amazingly successful event. We would like to take this time to single out a few teams and individuals who stood out among the greatness:

Leticia’s Angels team was the highest team fundraiser with $7,525 raised. Team captain Leticia Harnung also stands out as the highest individual fundraiser. Congratulations and thank you, Leticia’s Angels.

Our top individual fundraisers overall were:
- Leticia Harnung ($6,550)
- Tina Hansen ($2,657)
- Terri Trautd ($2,590)
- Tim Rotz ($2,245)
- Luann Borresen ($2,215)
- Craig Martinson ($2,095)

Each top fundraiser received a fabulous prize for all of their hard work.

Tina Hansen was the highest team fundraiser in Duluth and Naomi Nienow was the highest team fundraiser in Rochester with $1,172.

TBI Titans had the largest team at any of the Walks with 90 participants! Way to go Titans. Thank you for spreading the word!

Teams raising over $3,500 were Dragonfly Clan and If I Only Had A Cast, while Amy’s Team, Team Nichole, Team Teddy and TBI Titans each brought in over $3,000.

Congratulations to the entire Walk for Thought participants. Each and every dollar raised brings the Association one step closer to making sure no one with a brain injury gets left behind. Thank you.
Minnesota Twins and Corey Koskie Team Up for Brain Injury Awareness Night at the Dome

By Pat Marciniak

A major impact for the Walk for Thought and the Association was our partnership with the Minnesota Twins. The Twins took an active role in partnering with the Association to provide public awareness about brain injury, which not only affects athletes but people from all walks of life. Together with Corey Koskie the Twins went to bat for people with brain injuries and featured the Association during a pre-game show at one of the biggest home games ever with the Minnesota Twins in a heated pennant race with the Chicago White Sox on September 24.

Koskie was on hand to greet staff and families, sign autographs and take photographs prior to the pre-game show which featured the Association and families helped by the Association. Everyone was led onto the field while a 60-second video presentation about the Association played along with live and screen billboard PSA’s about the Association. The pre-game show culminated with a check presentation for $2,500 from the Minnesota Twins presented by Community Relations Director, Bryan Donaldson to Association Executive Director David King. Corey Koskie, former Minnesota Twins third baseman also was featured as the Walk for Thought Honorary Chair. Through televised interviews on FSN North and a live interview with Dick and Bert in the announcer’s booth Koskie talked about his personal experience with brain injury, his mission to bring awareness and help others who live with a disability due to a brain injury and invited viewers to join his Walk team and make a donation.

In addition The Minnesota Twins included our Walk PSA on their 72 station Twins Radio Network (heard throughout five states) which included KSTP 1500 locally during all 23 games in September. The Association’s phone lines never stopped ringing after that September night! Thank you Minnesota Twins organization, especially Dave St. Peter, President; Kevin Smith, Executive Director and Bryan Donaldson, Director of Community Relations for making a difference on behalf of the Association and the community.

Photos by Jay Bowden and Andi Billig
The holiday season can bring out the highs and lows of the human experience due to expectations met and unmet. During times of difficult adjustment, the holidays can remind people of changes and losses in their life since brain injury. No matter what holiday tradition you and your loved ones are observing, it can be important to let this holiday season be its own unique experience. Holding up today to yesterday’s expectations can trigger frustration, sadness and holiday depression.

Individuals with brain injury often experience a change in their ability to work full-time, which impacts how much of one’s budget can be dedicated to gift giving. A person who once was a social butterfly who organized elaborate family events may find they are now overwhelmed by large boisterous groups; and the task of organizing parties can be very mentally taxing. The addition of the rich diet that comes with the holidays and the lack of sunshine can trigger frustration, sadness and Seasonal Depression.

One small benefit of the current economic situation is that it allows people to cut back. These days it is a certainty that family members will need to cut back on holiday spending, as most people have been impacted by the sluggish economy. It can be helpful to let go of feelings of guilt and shame for not splurging like you once did. This does not mean you do not reach out to your loved ones with kind sentiments and warm gestures. It does mean that you prioritize how you will spend your money and time.

It is important to remember that depression, anxiety and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) are treatable conditions. Feeling blue during the holidays can be especially overwhelming because everywhere we turn we see people smiling and happy. It is good to know it is okay and normal to feel sad during the holidays. Many people do. It is important to know the signs and symptoms of depression so you can seek help. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), depression is diagnosed when five or more of the following symptoms of depression are present for most of the day, nearly every day for at least two weeks. At least one of the symptoms must be either persistent sad or “empty” feelings or loss of interest in activities.

- **Constant sadness**
- **Irritability**
- **Hopelessness**
- **Trouble sleeping**
- **Low energy or fatigue**
- **Feeling worthless or guilty for no reason**
- **Significant weight change**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Loss of interest in favorite activities**

To help you cope with the holidays:

- **Tame your expectations, keep your social calendar manageable.**
- **Plan for the holidays: reach out to friends or families to create an event you would enjoy.** If you are working with a counselor and know the holidays are challenging, make and keep your appointment.
- **Be realistic about your stamina level.** If you know you have to be in bed by 8 p.m., do not agree to attend a party at 9 p.m.
- **Enjoy holiday activities in your community that are free or discounted.**
- **Try a new holiday tradition.**
- **Spend time with positive, supportive people.**
- **Help others, volunteer during the holidays.** There are many people in your community who will appreciate your time. For metro opportunities contact Hands on Twin Cities at 612-379-4900 or visit their Web site at http://www.handsontwincities.org/. You can also reach Lee George, the Brain Injury Association’s volunteer manager for volunteer opportunities in the office.
- **Make a conscious effort to make “you time.” To recharge your batteries.**
- **Be aware that excessive drinking will only make depression worse.**

For help finding counseling services or support groups please call The Brain Injury Association of Minnesota and ask to speak with a Resource Facilitator at 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442. If you or someone you know is in crisis or thinking of hurting themselves, please call 911. If you need someone to talk to, you can call the Crisis Connection 24 hours a day at 612-379-6363 or 866-379-6363.
By Beth Skwira

Their mantra is simple... Remember: in everything you do, Focus on Living.

You may wonder how Focus on Living, a corporate adult foster care facility, got into making clothing. It started as an employee incentive program. Owners Rich Heine and Tom Kriech of Duluth, Minnesota, gave staff, residents and day program participants a challenge. They were to come up with a way to recognize employees and residents, reward hard work and sometimes just say, “Here’s for a good day.” The winning idea resulted in a clothing label, coined “Focus Gear.”

Brady Slater, Case Director at Focus on Living, and Co-Creator of Focus Gear, explained that “employees wore their T-shirts and hoodies to work, and all of our clients wore their Focus Gear with pride. Everyone enjoyed the chance to pick through the supply to find the perfect item. We ordered one box after another to keep in good supply.” The shirts themselves come in a variety of colors, sizes and styles but all have the distinct “Focus Gear” logo on the front and title on the arm or back.

What started as an in-house canteen-like incentive was turning into an opportunity; and brainstorming ensued. The decision was made to make Focus on Living T-shirts available for other worthy causes and give back part of the proceeds to those causes. The added bonus is that people with brain injuries and mental illness can work for Focus Gear by packaging, labeling, etc., giving them an opportunity to gain employment experience.

“The owners had been moving in this direction their entire careers,” Slater says, “Together they’ve given 32 years to human services and another 16 to military service. They view the opportunity to outfit worthy causes as an exciting new way to advocate for society’s vulnerable adults. It’s an innovative model. It flips the sad and stuffy perception of group-home living upside down.”

In the end, Focus Gear benefits everyone involved. People with a brain injury can become competitively employed, there is new community awareness of brain injury, and customers who buy the shirts can feel good knowing their purchase is helping a worthy cause.

In March of 2008, Focus Gear unveiled addition shirt designs to benefit war veterans with brain injuries, and breast cancer survivors. The long term focus of the company is to become involved in raising funds for an endless array of causes, all the while giving the opportunity of competitive employment to people with brain injuries in Duluth.

The Brain Injury Association of Minnesota directly benefits from the sale of the shirts by receiving 25 percent of the profits of Focus Gear shirts! If you are interested in buying Focus Gear, you can contact Brady at Focus on Living at 218-722-1170 or on-line at www.focusgearllc.com. They can also be purchased at the Twice the Gift store throughout the holiday season.

Acknowledgement of Donations: September 1 - November 31, 2008
they asked Americans if they were going to continue to help others this year and whether or not they would give the same as last year. Those interviewed stated that, although they would continue to contribute, they would be more selective regarding who receives their donations. Many stated that they would give to organizations that they determined were in real need of their contribution.

As the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota approaches the end of another year, and looks ahead to next year’s challenges and goals, we find we need your help more than ever. There is much work to be done to ensure that all Minnesotans living with brain injury are able to access the supports and services they need from the Association. In 2008, we made tremendous strides in raising awareness about traumatic brain injury and the work of the Association. Successful highlights include:

• We kicked off the year with March Brain Injury Awareness month, and in doing so, seized an opportunity to outreach to a number of media outlets, which helped tell our story;
• We received a proclamation from Governor Pawlenty recognizing March as Brain Injury Awareness Month;
• In June, the tireless efforts of our public policy team and a number of well-trained passionate advocates, succeeded in securing the critical continuation of the Traumatic Brain Injury Fund;
• The Association experienced its most successful Walk for Thought to date.

It takes a powerful support team to help individuals with brain injury transition back to family life, work, school and the community. For this reason, please help us by making a contribution. By giving, your gift:
• Goes far. At the Association, 91 cents of every dollar you give goes directly to help individuals with brain injury.

A concussion can leave you feeling out of focus.

At Bethesda Hospital’s Concussion Clinic we can help.

A blow or jolt to the head can cause a type of mild brain injury called a concussion. Concussions can occur from a sports injury, car accident, fall, collision or any blow to the head.

If you are experiencing irritability, headaches, depression, insomnia, poor concentration, getting lost or becoming easily confused, or a loss of sense of taste or smell you could be suffering from effects of a concussion.

At the Bethesda Concussion Clinic you’ll be seen by our specialized physicians, neuropsychologists and therapists who will create an individual treatment plan for you. If you want help putting your life back in focus call us at 651-326-4323 or visit www.bethesdasoical.org/concussion.

Appointments and transition children back to public school. They also lend a caring ear when times are tough for families whose lives have been turned upside down by an unexpected brain injury and crisis seems to loom around every corner.

Every dollar you give helps. To make a credit card contribution to the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota, visit our Web site at www.braininjurymn.org. To mail a contribution, please send to 34 13th Avenue NE, Suite B001, Minneapolis, MN 55413. Our staff is available to answer your questions by phone Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 800-669-6442 or 612-378-2742.

No one should have to experience the aftermath of a brain injury alone. Your support will ensure that no one does.