

*Reducing incidence and impact of acquired brain disorders in our community.*

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> Sharon Strugnell, CEO

## CEO Update

### Same aim with a different name!

The last 12 months has seen a major name change – we're now BrainLink Services Limited - but all you need to know is that it's the same support team which has been offering community care for more than 20 years.

In the blink of an eye, an acquired brain injury or disorder will change a family's life forever. A brain disorder doesn't discriminate – it can happen to anyone - young or old.

BrainLink is an organisation that supports individuals and families who have been affected by brain injuries and neurological disorders. Our work is very much focussed on supporting families so that the person with the injury or disorder has some measure of return to independence and the entire family retains a reasonable quality of life.

It has become very apparent in the current environment that BrainLink needs to help drive greater public, private and business cooperation in all aspects of acquired brain injury or disorders: awareness, education, treatments and research.

Each day I am becoming more aware of the complexity of acquired brain injuries and disorders and the impact on families and the wider community; the urgent need and demonstrable value of specialised services like BrainLink; and ongoing rehabilitation for people affected.

More important is access for ALL (including people not compensated by the TAC or WorkCover) to a full continuum of services that includes:

- > Acute & post acute service & rehabilitation,
- > Specialised services,
- > Community-based information, resources & support, and
- > Long term care.

Acquired brain injuries and disorders are conditions that profoundly affect a person for life, and a failure to address gaps and waiting lists will result in harmful delays in rehabilitation and service provision; prompt, empathetic and effective service for a family can often be the difference between coping and falling apart. Needless to say, all this places a burden on our already over-extended health sector and community organisations.

Any of you could suddenly find yourselves caring for a relative or friend, or coping with the effects of a brain disorder, and your life will change forever. BrainLink aims to ease that change, and the number of families contacting us increases every day!

I thank the board, staff and our many sponsors and donors for your continued support; and I urge you to work with us to meet a mounting need.

## Who You Gonna Call?



- > Farewell to Rachael Wilken, our Information & Administration Project Officer of four years!

In the coming months you will encounter two new staff when you make a call to BrainLink.

Sadly we farewell Rachael Wilken who many of you have come to know as the voice of the organisation, providing callers with a wealth of knowledge about the sector. After four amazing years of service, Rachael leaves us to embark on an extended overseas adventure. Rachael's dedication to BrainLink has been outstanding & she will be missed but we wish her safe & happy travels.

## Introducing Vanessa Marrama & Carolyn Gilpin



- > Vanessa Marrama, Information & Administration Co-Ordinator.

"Hello!

My name is Vanessa and I am the new Information and Administration Co-Ordinator at BrainLink. I am very excited about my new position and I look forward to making a real difference throughout Victoria in the area of Acquired Brain Injuries.

Before joining BrainLink I worked as a Learning for Life Worker within the Hume area for 18 months. Before then, I completed my degree in

Social Sciences, majoring in Health Promotion and Behavioural Sciences.

As the new Co-Ordinator, I want to learn as much as possible about the area of acquired brain injury and disorders, so if you have any information, feedback or suggestions, then please email me at [info@brainlink.org.au](mailto:info@brainlink.org.au)."



- > Carolyn Gilpin, Information & Administration Assistant Officer.

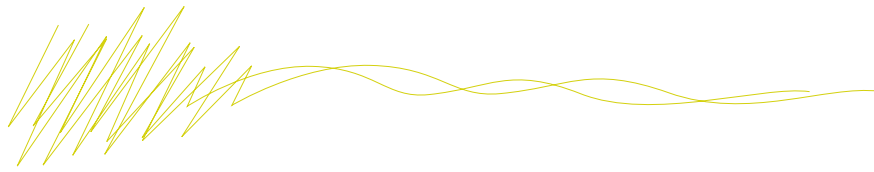
"Hi, I'm Carolyn and I'm BrainLink's new Information and Administration Assistant Officer. I'm here to answer the many and varied requests that we receive on a daily basis for information about Acquired Brain Disorders and what support and services are available.

I also provide office support for our very busy CEO, Sharon, and the other members of our wonderful team. It's been a rollercoaster ride of learning in the past month, but everyone has made me so welcome, and the support that I've received from them has made it so much easier.

I come from a customer service role with the City of Yarra, and I'm looking forward to providing great service to all our members and everyone who needs any information on ABI and beyond!"

## New Resources Printed

We have new versions of our books "For Those Who Care: A Practical Guide for families of people with Neurological Conditions or Acquired Brain Injury" and "Understanding Stroke", which are available online at [www.brainlink.org.au/resources.htm](http://www.brainlink.org.au/resources.htm). Please don't hesitate in contacting Vanessa or Carolyn with your queries via email or via the FREE infoline on 1800 677 579.



# Newsletter

Winter '07

## Changes to State-Wide ABI Information Services

Headway Victoria provided ABI-affected people with advocacy services and access to available information, support and resources. Due to organisational changes, a decision was made to transfer these services to BrainLink and Action for Community Living (ACL).

BrainLink will be receiving Headway's wealth of information and support services, including their library, which will open in June at The Nerve Centre, where our offices are based. We look forward to providing Victoria with a fully state-wide Information Service.

## Donations and Bequests

BrainLink would like to thank the following sponsors and donors who have significantly contributed to the organisation and in the running of events.

### CORE SERVICE FUNDING

> Department of Human Services (Central Office, Eastern Metro Region, Southern Metro Region, North West Metro Region); Southern Health

### WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT

> Scientific Management Associates; Grand Hyatt Melbourne; Kozminsky Jewellers; Lloyd Morgan; Map Creative

### CHARITY GOLF DAYS

- > Heritage Finance
- > Lifeworx

### BEQUESTS & TRUSTS

> Helen McPherson Trust; Joe White Bequest; Bell Charitable Fund; The Gaunt Family Foundation; The Lord Mayor's Fund

### MAJOR DONORS OF 2006

> Judith Brand; CFMEU Q Apartments Site; Finance Sector Union; Guilfoyle Wreckers; Lyn Nossal; Dr John O'Sullivan; Russell Peters; Katrina Tull & retRo Cafe

### DONATIONS HAVE RECENTLY BEEN OFFERED IN MEMORY OF

- > Mr John Cummins, CFMEU
- > Mr Brian O'Brien
- > Mr Max Alvin
- > Mr William Middlemass
- > Mr Barry Pattison
- > Ms Donna Stephens

### LUCKY CLOVER DAY

- > Map Creative
- > Brighton Lions Club
- > Whirlwind Print.

We would especially like to thank our Champions:

- > Louise McLaughlin & Lana Larkins.

And our venues:

> Eastland Shopping Centre; Dan O'Connell Hotel; Elephant & Wheelbarrow St Kilda; Tom Thumb, Chadstone; Bridie O'Reilly's, South Yarra; Pantry Brighton; Brighton on Bay; Marine Hotel; Half Moon; Phoenix Neighbourhood House Chadstone.



Make a donation to  
BrainLink Services Ltd  
[www.ourcommunity.com.au](http://www.ourcommunity.com.au)



> Greta Parker, co-ordinator of all our family services and events.

## Christmas Party @ Jells Park



> BrainLink Ambassador, Michael Cormick, sings at our Christmas Party.

The annual 2006 Christmas Party morning tea was held on December 4th, a beautiful day at Jells Park, Glen Waverley with around eighty people turning out for the fabulous cream tea and delicious cakes. Even more popular than the cakes was BrainLink's Ambassador, Michael Cormick, fresh from London's West End to sing a few numbers including *Bring Him Home* from *Les Miserables* and *Amazing Grace*.

He accompanied his mother Shirley, one of the long-term friends of BrainLink who mingled with the many people who have become involved over the past year.

CEO Sharon Strugnell launched BrainLink's new name to the carers and clients.

Madeline's@Jells cafe got a big wrap for their wheelchair-friendly facilities, great service and generous spread of morning tea. And thanks to Greta Parker for organising it all!

## Working Futures

BrainLink, together with the MS Society, is currently conducting the Working Futures Research Project which will investigate the needs and opinions of people who combine paid employment with unpaid caring roles. The profile of carers has grown in recent years, and the value of their work in supporting frail, aged and disabled relatives has become more recognized.

For carers who are also working, balancing their jobs and caring responsibilities can be both complex and difficult.

The Australian Government has made workforce participation a priority to prepare for the ageing population. It's important that we find out more about the needs of carers who are working in order to assist in the development of effective Government policies, adequate funding and appropriate services that support employed carers.

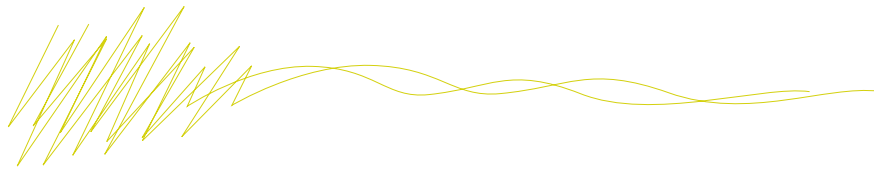
## Frank & Maria

After 43 years of marriage, Frank & Maria Hallewas are very close. They always have been, but as Frank puts it, *'We have been brought closer together'*. Sadly, it was Frank's heart problems and now Maria's increasing dementia which have done this.

As Frank says, *"It makes me sad that Maria raised six beautiful daughters, did all the housekeeping, family finances and dress-making, but now she finds things hard because she can't concentrate or remember things like she used to. Seven years ago, she looked after me – now I care for her."*

Frank first came to BrainLink when he did a Family Information & Support Course four years ago. *"It was a great, great help. I didn't feel so alone, and I learnt a lot. This was the start of our friendship with BrainLink."*

Frank often feels a little lonely because when



# Newsletter

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they make plans together like they used to, within a few hours, Maria will have forgotten them. BrainLink has helped somewhat by taking Frank and Maria on respite weekends together, where the planning is all done for them. Other organisations don't have weekends for both carers and the person with the disorder – Maria gets distressed when separated from Frank, and he worries too much about her.

*"It's fantastic to be away with Maria, and to be with the BrainLink staff and other carers. The staff are great, especially Greta - they're relaxed and helpful. And it's a chance to share stories with carers in similar situations to ours."*



> Frank & Maria at our April Couples Getaway this year.

## BrainLink Events

### Women of Achievement: Congratulations Claire Vickery!

On Tuesday October 3, in the presence of the Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, AC, the winner of the 2006 Women of Achievement Award was announced.

Four finalists competed for the Award, out of sixty outstanding, interesting, intelligent, committed leaders who have all created an

impact on their community.

The Women of Achievement Award was presented to Claire Vickery, a tireless campaigner, public speaker, lobbyist and the Founder of the Butterfly Foundation.

She is integral in raising awareness of eating disorders amongst teenagers, such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa; putting these mental illnesses on the



map nationally as legitimate and serious issues. Familiar with triumphs and hardship, Claire also cares for her paraplegic mother, and is a parent of two teenage daughters who battled anorexia.

### Heritage Finance Charity Golf Day, August, 2006

Over the past three years BrainLink has had the privilege of being one of the recipients of the proceeds of the Heritage Finance Charity Golf Day. In 2006, after a brisk August morning playing golf at The National on Cape Schanck, 150 business people sat down to a three-course gourmet meal, ready to buy some fabulous prizes in the name of charity! Some items on offer in the 23 item catalogue were a Vespa, weekends at the Grand Hyatt Melbourne, Gold Class Tickets, and Footy Jumpers signed by the '06 teams. Everyone really dug deep and the day overall raised more than \$100,000!

BrainLink would like to thank all at Heritage Finance, particularly Mr Rupert Legh and Samantha DallaRosa for their dedication, hard work and overwhelming support for our organisation. All monies received from the Golf Day were put towards our direct work with families.



> The team at Matthew Flinders' Tom Thumb Hotel.

## Luck of the Irish

### Lucky Clover Day, St Patrick's Day, 2007!

#### WHAT IS LUCKY CLOVER DAY?

*"May the luck and love you wish for us today, also be yours each and every day!"*

St Patrick's Day is traditionally a day when the world celebrates the Irish, the work of St Patrick himself and the many missionaries around the world. It is a day when strangers down at the local become best friends, and communities band together to share a day of luck and love. Lucky Clover Day is a way in which we can pay tribute to this sense of community and togetherness, a way for us to celebrate and recognise the strength and the bravery of families and support those who work tirelessly in the background.

*"The best way to repay a kindness is by passing it on"*

On Lucky Clover Day, Lions Club Brighton and BrainLink sell badges, stickers, and decorations to raise awareness of the work these two agencies do in the community. In 2006, the team sold badges in selected shopping centres and pubs, and received generous support from patrons. We found, and you no doubt know, that the joy and laughter of St Patrick's day brings out the best in people.

This year, St Pat's fell on a Saturday, and we sought Champions to assist us in the lead-up and

on the day itself.

#### WHAT IS A LUCKY CLOVER DAY CHAMPION?

Lucky Clover Day Champions are enthusiastic volunteers committed to promoting the day within their workplace and other public venues and sell badges for us on St Pat's Day. They are someone who is really willing to champion our cause and immerse themselves in the fun of the day.

#### How DID WE Go?

BrainLink was based at Dan O'Connell in Carlton and Eastland Shopping Centre for the day, where we were approached by many generous enthusiastic people.

Amazingly, BrainLink was able to sell nearly 400 badges at our Irish Pubs and we raised nearly \$800 through Eastland and our Champions.

A very successful day, and it can only get bigger!



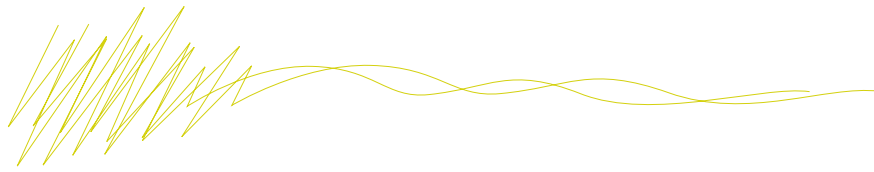
> One of our volunteer Champions, Lana Larkins at Dan O'Connell Hotel.

#### >>> NEXT EVENT:

#### WOMEN OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARD 2007

Luncheon 16th October, with Keynote Speaker Rachael Robertson, Antarctic Adventuress!

Call BLINK for info about nominations forms and tickets, 1800 677 579.



## Support BrainLink and Increase Community Awareness

Each year BrainLink raises funds through public purchase of our Christmas Cards. We have several designs to choose from, cards come in packs of 10. Please complete the coupon and buy your cards for 2007! Call (03) 9845 2950 for more information.

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4.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to pay by:  Cheque  Money Order

(Please make cheque or money order payable to BrainLink Services Limited) Or by

VISA  Mastercard  AMEX

Card Number:             Expiry:

Card Holder \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Design	Price per pack of 10	Quantity	Sub total
1. White Kookaburra (Corporate Card - Blank)	\$7.50		
2. Rudolph (Corporate Card - Blank)	\$7.50		
3. Bowtie Reindeer (Message)	\$7.00		
4. Madonna & Child (Message)	\$7.00		
Postage & Handling	Orders below \$50	\$4.00	
	Orders above \$51	\$8.00	
		<b>Total</b>	

