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Chair Update

BrainLink is involved in numerous areas in which we hope to influence and change the outlook of those individuals and their families affected by acquired brain disorders and struggling to cope.

One such activity is the support for the introduction of No-Fault compensation for catastrophic injury at a National level. This neglected area is emerging as a prominent issue through the injuries arising from accidents where there is no TAC or Work Cover compensation. Personal assaults and falls are key examples. BrainLink comes together in partnership with like-minded organizations to campaign on these issues.

It would also appear from the political arena that carer support mechanisms are under review; and that they need to be a government priority. BrainLink needs your support to ensure that we have the ability to be heard, and where appropriate to provide a support backup should funding be affected in this area.

We trust that through your help, we can provide a wider level of care and support to a growing community need.

Philip Thomas



CEO Update

The first 12 months of BrainLink has been a whirlwind since we separated from the national body in January 2007; and I'm glad to say there have been few of the expected difficulties from promoting a new name and organisational entity.

In fact, there's been an increase in families and the wider community accessing our services. Our name speaks for itself: a successful link for many in need, enabled by the hard-working, enthusiastic and committed BrainLink team and board.

BrainLink Services provides specialist Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) services to all Victoria. It delivers well above its size;

is well-known in the ABI sector; and demonstrates strong leadership. It is also making an impact in the wider corporate world via annual events.

We've created unique services that help families navigate the disability service system, while offering respite experiences that families might choose if they weren't in such difficult situations.

What do we do?

- We inform people about ABI services and produce written resources about brain disorders, caring and other issues
- We educate health professionals, the community, business, corporate entities and individuals
- Our support programs are for those with ABI AND their families
- We are an organisation designed to be flexible, responsive and supportive

The team is finding many more crisis situations as families struggle to cope with caring effectively for someone with a brain disorder. Such families bear the brunt of the emotional and behavioural changes which can follow a brain disorder, and many experience high levels of distress and depression. It is well-known that carers of someone with an ABI require a strong support network, and time to look after themselves.

BrainLink programs are developed to meet these needs flexibly because we know different individuals cope differently. Our carers say that "offering a broad range of support works well" - there is no 'one way' fits all; and we try to help people as individuals. We also know from our families' feedback that they learn from each other, and they request more options where they can share their experiences together.

But it's tough and never-ending - financially, emotionally and daily. However, our families don't complain, just carry on regardless, caring for their loved ones.

BrainLink thanks all of you for your dedication and perseverance.

Sharon Strugnell



Suzanne Shaw

Comings and goings

We welcomed a new staff member in December 2007. Suzanne Shaw joined us in the Slow To Recover (STR) case manager's position.

Suzanne has completed dual Diplomas in Alcohol & Other Drugs and Welfare, and has a keen interest in continuing her studies in Counselling. Suzanne has over 15 years' experience in the welfare and ABI sector, and has previously worked in a variety of case management roles.

Suzanne is firmly committed to assisting her clients to reach the best possible outcomes in their rehabilitation programs.

Sadly, however, this means that someone has left us – we farewelled Penni Leeman after three great years of service as our STR case manager. Penni also had much experience in the sector and was a valuable member of the BrainLink team – we'll miss her smile, practical advice, and ability to gift wrap prizes for our various functions!

We wish Penni all the best in her change of career and hope to catch up with her at some of our 2008 events.

For Those Who Care launch, with Rasheda Ali



Rasheda Ali joined us to launch our new guide, For Those Who Care, at the beautiful Park Hyatt Hotel on Saturday 11th August. Her father Muhammad Ali is sadly one of the world's most well-known Parkinson sufferers, and she is his primary carer.

Rasheda has a great understanding of the issues faced by carers, who are usually family members forced into a very demanding role.

For Those Who Care is a practical guide designed to help families and carers of people with neurological conditions or acquired brain injury. It has many useful fact sheets on subjects such as Understanding the Nervous System; Managing Fatigue; Respite & Residential Care; and Coping with Stress.

Over 100 people attended the launch, most of them carers and the people they care for. Representatives from the Department of Human Services and statewide neurological organisations also joined us.

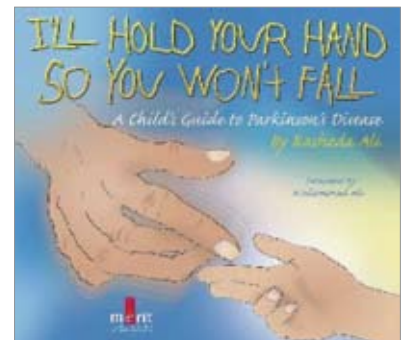
All were excited to hear Rasheda speak so eloquently about her father and the picture book that she wrote for her children to help them understand their grandfather's disease – I'll Hold Your Hand So You Won't Fall.

Rasheda took time to chat with as many carers as possible, and to sign the guides & her book. She was an inspiration to everyone, and we hope to see her in Australia again soon!

For Those Who Care is available free for carers and families.

I'll Hold Your Hand So You Won't Fall is available for sale for \$35 (hardcover)

Please contact BrainLink on 1800 677 579 or email info@brainlink.org.au





Carers Christmas Party, Jells Park

Friday 14 December dawned seasonably warm as over 100 carers and their loved ones gathered at the Jells Park Teahouse in Wheelers Hill for the BrainLink Christmas Get-Together.

Yummy rolls, Asian finger food, muffins, scones with jam & cream, fresh fruit and cool drinks were offered by the helpful teahouse staff while people chatted and caught up with old friends.

The Box Hill Chorale kindly entertained us all with Christmas carols, joined by a few audience members in singing some old favourites such as Once in Royal David's City, and newer Australian carols like Christmas Day (North Wind).

Our CEO Sharon Strugnell spoke about the past year and our plans for the upcoming year, and asked all our carers to fill out a survey asking what service they would like

BrainLink to offer if they could ask for anything they wanted - a wish-list of sorts. We won't be able to fulfill every dream, but this will help guide us in providing better services.

Alison was the deserving winner of our door prize, taking home a beautiful hand-made mosaic tray, tea-set and lots of Christmas goodies to share with her brother, whom she cares for.

The day was enjoyed by families and staff alike, with every family receiving a Lions Club Christmas Cake; and we hope to see everyone again for our 2008 gathering – plus a few new faces if possible!



Women of Achievement 2007

BrainLink's annual award for women who achieve across a wide range of roles – business, family, the community, research – was yet again an inspiring event that celebrated both BrainLink and some wonderful quiet-achievers.

Held for the first time in the gracious Park Hyatt, we listened enthralled as keynote speaker Rachael Robertson described how she led a team of men to the icy far reaches of Antarctica's Davis Research Station. With her talk entitled "Extreme Leadership at the End of the World" (subtitle: Where No-one Hears You Scream...), her audience learned the value of communication, appearing to be calm in a crisis, and laughing often while looking after yourself.

A delicious lunch was served to guests, who included many of BrainLink's carers and their loved ones; past

award winners including Milly Parker and Claire Vickery; BrainLink board members; and many other members of the acquired brain injury service sector.

Our four nominees waited a little nervously while BrainLink's chairman, Philip Thomas, introduced them. All these amazing women somehow manage to juggle the multiple dimensions of career, family, friendship while contributing enormously to community life: Jan Willett, wife, mother, and dedicated disability provider who runs accommodation services for young disabled people; Jacqueline Soares, wife, mother, nurse, and partner in a dairy farm who also happens to run accommodation and care services in Colac; and Mary Jane Ieredonicou, a law firm partner by day, volunteer law advisor to refugee services by night, and mentor to other young lawyers.

Finally our 2007 winner was announced - Dr Orly Lacham-Kaplan is a devoted wife and mother who nursed her husband through cancer and who has dedicated her career to helping other women achieve motherhood through pioneering IVF technology. She is a lively woman who has been a passionate promoter of BrainLink since winning her award, and she wears her Women of Achievement necklace (designed and presented by Kozminsky) with great pride.

Brainlink Annual Report

The principal activities of the company during the financial year were to arrange for the raising of funds, determine the allocation of funds and conduct development, support and education activities designed to enhance awareness of and improve the lives of those affected with acquired brain disorders.

Gross revenue for the year ended 30th June 2007 was \$988,103. The revenue comprised mainly grants, fundraising activities, donations and interest income. After administration costs, development and programme expenditure and allocation of funds there was a surplus on operations of \$27,125.

On request, a copy of BrainLink's audited financial statements is available.



Bequests and Donations – a big thank you!

Brainlink wishes to thank all our wonderful sponsors and donors who make our work possible:

Core Service Funding:

Department of Human Services (Eastern Metro Region, Southern Metro Region); Southern Health.

Women of Achievement:

Park Hyatt Melbourne; Kozminsky Jewellery; Lloyd Morgan; The Age; Scientific Management Associates; Map Creative.

Charity Golf Days:

Heritage Finance; Lifeworx; Kelk.

Bequests and trusts:

Joe White Bequest; Gaunt Family Foundation; Bell Charitable Fund.

Donations were offered in memory of:

Robert Prosia; Joseph Slim; Peter Whelan; & Wendy Mitchell Harris (from the Herald & Weekly Times Electrical Department).

And given in honour of:

Raelee Lipson & Tony Kreger's wedding.

Major donors of 07/08:

Mr John Goodall; Dr JM Xipell; Mr BR Turnbull; Lions Club Wondang-Wallan; and Dr & Mrs J. O'Sullivan have all continued their valuable annual donations.

Brainlink Families

One of our groups of carers enjoying a couple of days' respite at Marysville.



Brainlink Supporters

Jackie Woodburne, Jan de Kretser, Lillian Frank, Sharon Strugnell & Tracy Bartram.

