



MIND MATTERS

July, August, September

2011



UPCOMING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

All meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month
from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
at Easter Seals Rehabilitation Center
2203 Babcock Road, San Antonio, TX 78229
Unless otherwise noted

JULY 24th

Family members: Dr. Jonhenry “Jon” Grizzle, Clinical Psychologist from Brooke Army Medical Center will be facilitating a discussion session for family members.

Survivors: *Social Games and Activities!*

AUGUST 27th

Family members: Dr. Jonhenry “Jon” Grizzle, Clinical Psychologist, from Brooke Army Medical Center will be facilitating a discussion session for family members.

Survivors: “What Comes After TBI?” *Facilitator: Dr. Cooper, Neuropsychologist at Brooks Army Medical Center and AHIA board member.* (Please submit your written questions to Marcine Garis at Easter Seals or email to: mgaris@easterseals-satx.org)

SEPTEMBER 28th

Family members: Dr. Jonhenry “Jon” Grizzle, Clinical Psychologist from Brooke Army Medical Center will be facilitating a discussion session for family members.

Survivors: *Community Awareness – Resources and Low Cost Activities*

“Improving the Quality of Life for Survivors of Brain Injury and Their Families

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In our monthly meetings, we strive to provide speakers and programs that are informative and will benefit our members and survivors in some way.

However, if you have come to our meeting seeking personal support or guidance and would prefer to speak with someone **one on one**, please let us know. There will **always** be someone available to talk with you.

Please note that the meetings and programs of the Alamo Head Injury Association (AHIA) are open to members, non members, guests, visitors and anyone desiring to provide or receive information and/or support.



Over the past five years, AHIA has donated over 90 helmets to children in need.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SHARE YOUR STORY?

If any survivor or family member would like to share their own personal story about the life changing experience of living with brain injury, please send it to the AHIA at :

2203 Babcock,
San Antonio, TX

or email it to:

etattini@alamoheadyinjury.com

We would love to print it in a future newsletter, if space allows!



To read the complete story or for more information, visit <http://www.brainline.org>

Bike Rodeo

On May 28th, the Alamo Head Injury Association once again participated in the San Antonio Police Department's Annual City Wide Bike Rodeo held at the Convention Center. The first place winners from all bike rodeos held at various elementary schools across San Antonio during the year were invited to compete for prizes and trophies.

AHIA donated six bicycle pumps as prizes to this event, and Rob Remig represented us by adjusting helmets and distributing new ones to those children who needed them. The influence of the police officers from the School Safety Department has really made an impact on the number of children wearing helmets at the Bike rodeo with a helmet.

Whether the participants simply left theirs at home, wore an ill-fitting helmet in need of replacing,

or lacked a helmet at all, everyone's safety needs were met. The 658 participants were cheered on by friends and family members armed both cameras and video cameras to capture the action.

With the AHIA display set up and brochures about our organization and bicycle safety available, we feel this event gives us great exposure in the community and look forward to participating again next year!

Special thanks to Rob Remig for his tireless efforts representing AHIA in this event each year. Rob may be contacted at (210) 521-6721 or by email at rremig@satx.rr.com.

TBI TEN YEARS LATER: A MOTHER'S STORY CONTINUES

Ten years after her son's traumatic brain injury, Dixie Coskie is often asked how her son - and her family - are doing. She usually answers "just fine" or "thanks for asking," but her thoughts take her elsewhere.

"Unless you have experienced the loss, the heartache, and the ripple effects that brain injury can inflict, then you cannot possibly understand the magnitude and the seriousness of the life-altering implications."

~ Dixie Coskie

This story was written exclusively for BrainLine, an online newsletter dedicated to preventing, treating and living with traumatic brain injury. "TBI Ten Years Later: A Mother's Story Continues" brings to life the often unsaid feelings of a family after a tragic brain injury.

Dreams Do Come True!

On June 6th, one of the dreams of the Alamo Head Injury Association finally came true – providing information about brain injury to school nurses and teachers!

Education Service Center - Region 20 and AHIA worked together on this project. ESC-Region 20 is composed of 50 school districts in the South Central Region of Texas, with a total of 20,000 teachers on staff.

The Workshop was held in the Conference Center at Region 20. What a beautiful facility with all of the latest technology available! Ms. Casity Gutierrez did an amazing job of making all of the arrangements for the facility, publicizing the event, and handling the registrations.

Bonnie Schraner from the University Health System “waved her magic wand” to provide continuing education credits for nurses. AHIA contacted the speakers and set up

the agenda. It was an excellent program, presented by a group of remarkable speakers.

Elizabeth Bilderback from Health-South RIOSA was the first presenter, followed by Dr. Richard Temple, the Vice President of Clinical Operations from CORE Health Care.

The speakers for the afternoon sessions were Rachel Nichols and Jeanie Emilienburg from Headway Consulting. Approximately 80 people attended this workshop, including teachers and a large group of school nurses. How wonderful to provide useful information to such an influential group of people in our community!

Thanks again to Evelyn for coordinating this event with Ms. Gutierrez and to all of our speakers!

Your Brain on Vacation

Put on those sunglasses and go explore the new sights and sounds of an unknown territory during vacation – because it’s going to help the learning process. The brain is interested in reconstructing environments and is always looking for the surprising, unusual or different, explained Michael M. Merzenich, chief scientific officer of Posit Science, a brain fitness programs company.

“You can say that taking a holiday is a little bit like going back to childhood, when the world was full of wonder and everything you saw was full things that you hadn’t expected or seen before, you had to calibrate it in your brain,” Merzenich said.

As people age, less and less attention is paid to details in the world. Therefore, keeping a childlike attitude is important — it’s one of the reasons children learn so much, he explained.

“It’s really important that we be challenged about that every so often, that we’re reminded to pay attention, that we’re really engaged again,” he said.

The brain is constructed to be alert and to go into a “special epoch” when what is seen is really interesting or surprising. (continued on next page)

New Members

Please Welcome:

**Diane and Marvin
Martinez.**

Donations

We have received a generous donation from **Michelle Reyes**.

Her son was injured in a motorcycle and is still in rehab.

Ms. Reyes has started a program she calls “*Wear a Helmet for your Mom.*”

She has currently donated 10% of the money from her fundraising events to AHIA.

Special thanks to **Laubach Tile** for a donation in memory of **Eddie Laubach**

MIND MATTERS

(Brain on Vacation, continued)

“One of the things that happens in your everyday life is that things can become so predictable, so controlled, and you can live a little bit of a dream-like life,” Merzenich said. “Our environments after all are constructed so that we are relatively rarely surprised by what’s happening in them.”

Routines that people develop can bring down their states of alertness, but every time a person takes a vacation to a place away from their immediate environment, it’s healthy.

“The more distant, the more different they are, the more full of surprises they are, the more wonderful that is, the more positive that is for our brain,” Merzenich said.

The brain controls learning while controlling how bright, alert and engaged a person feels. It tends to become activated the more it’s stimulated and exercised.

“Part of maintaining your basic vitality is contributing in a very fundamental way to sustaining learning rates,” Merzenich said. “In a sense, the more you engage your brain in ways that stimulate it, the more you’re doing to maintain your capacity to learn and to improve. It’s actually right at the heart of maintaining yourself in a fundamental sense.”

Though a vacation may feel like a break, it’s actually a time when the brain is most active. In terms of how often a person needs a break, it really depends on the nature of the tasks they perform. Repetitive and dull tasks typically prompt the need to take breaks, Merzenich explained.

“If you look at some elemental learning exercises, the strongest learning actually happens in the first minute – after five or six or seven minutes, you’re actually waning,” he said. Every seven minutes or so, the learning efficiency actually decreases.

Ideally, individuals shouldn’t have to deal with the same type of tasks over and over again.

“If you really had enough variation in the kind of problems you’re trying to deal with or solve throughout the day, then you’re energized all day long,” he said.

Take, for instance, a February 2011 study, which found judges were more lenient to prisoners who appeared before them earlier in the day. As the day proceeded and lunch time neared, the leniency of sentences dropped until the judge took a break. Once the judge took a break, leniency went back up. It doesn’t matter if the break involves eating lunch or jet-setting 1,200 miles away, the brain needs it.



“You could think also to encourage people to travel in their own environment by opening up their eyes and brains to the wonders that are actually out there all around them,” Merzenich said.

He recommends trying to reconstruct one’s neighborhood by memory and then venturing to see how much was detailed correctly.

“Most people are pretty surprised by what they didn’t remember or what they could not reconstruct mentally even literally in their own front yard,” Merzenich said.

Adults may not have enough moments to stimulate and engage themselves, but there’s a need to seek those opportunities out. It’s important for individuals not to sleepwalk through life, but instead to pay attention to the world around them – even if it’s not in a vacation setting.

“A lot of people can’t afford to travel as much as would be good for them to do, but they don’t really have to do that,” Merzenich said. “They can look around and live life again in the actual physical environment in which they live.”

Natalie Morera is an associate editor at Chief Learning Officer magazine. She can be reached at nmorera@CLOmedia.com.



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Survivor Representatives

All board meetings will be held

at:

RIOSA

9119 Cinnamon Hill,

San Antonio, TX 78229

BORED WITH THE SUMMER HEAT? HAVE FUN WITH A WORD SEARCH!

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- HOTDOG
- SURFING
- SUNBURN
- CAMPING
- HAMMOCK
- VACATION
- BIKINI
- BARBEQUE
- POPSICLE