

communities to increase their services and programs to fill the gaps. Educating and motivating change will be a top priority, by partnering with existing groups such as the Fire Department, the RCMP, Health promoters, the media, and schools.

## Northeast

Laura, a family member/caregiver, submitted the next survivor success story. She shares the story of her husband, Darcy, and his recovery from a brain injury accident:

As Darcy climbed to the top of a hill near Barrhead on his snowmobile the night of March 16, 2002, he had no idea another snowmobile was coming toward him. The second snowmobile flew off the top of the hill and struck Darcy in the head, throwing him to the ground. Friends quickly recognized that Darcy had suffered a severe head injury, and emergency response crews were called to the scene of the accident. STARS flew Darcy to Edmonton for medical treatment. He remained in a coma for a month, and he was diagnosed with a severe brain injury.

At the time of Darcy's accident, his wife Laura was at home with their two children, and she was expecting two more. Laura gave birth to twins while Darcy was still in a coma. One month later, Darcy was transferred to the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, where he had to relearn how to speak, eat, and walk. Darcy rose to the challenge, and six weeks later he was discharged.

Now, two years later, with the help of prayer and the never-ending support from family, friends, church, and the community, Darcy has made a miraculous recovery. He still has obstacles to overcome such as extreme fatigue, sleeping difficulties, and short-term memory problems, which leave him unable to return to work at this time, but Darcy and his wife Laura, feel as though he has much to be thankful for.

In March 2004, STARS featured Darcy's story as part of their fundraising gala. A-Channel made a video of Darcy's story, aired it on the evening news, and also presented it on the night of the gala event. What an exciting experience! Today Darcy feels as though a lot of good came out of his accident, and sharing his story with the hope of inspiring others, is one of them.

## South

Ann Pudwell, a Service Coordinator from the Southern region, submitted the following story. It is about her experience working with George\*, a gentleman who sustained a brain injury resulting from a car accident. It talks about his dream of becoming a photographer:

I was working for a Community Outreach program that believed in connecting persons with disabilities with existing social and recreational networks within the community. George, one of the first survivors I met through this program, was very interested in photography, and I thought that this would be a great hobby for him to get involved in. Thus began the quest to make his passion for photography a reality, but we had some obstacles to overcome.

George was using an electric wheelchair. He was able to use his left hand; however, cameras are not designed for left-handed people. So, the trick was to have a camera with a remote so that George could operate it with his left hand. However, the cost of adapting equipment became another obstacle, as this specialized camera was quite

expensive. Luckily, George had a supportive family who had set some money aside to assist him.

The next hurdle came when we were trying to figure out how he would use his power wheel chair and his camera at the same time. Fortunately, George was able to purchase a clamp that would attach to the camera; therefore, this would enable him to aim, line up the image, and use the remote to snap the picture. Soon we realized that we would need to customize the camera and clamp. I had heard of a welder who was willing to work on inventive new projects. The welder had some insight into our dilemma because he was born with a partial left hand.

A few prototypes later we reached a very exciting moment — we were out in the community taking photographs! Over the past few years we have been able to watch George learn to develop his photographic talents. We were all very excited this year when he decided to enter a photograph in the local community exhibition. Nothing compared to seeing the look of pride on George's face when he found out that he had won a second place prize.



Westlock CNP

# ALBERTA BRAIN INJURY INITIATIVE

# bulletin

AUTUMN 2004 EDITION

The fall 2004 edition of the Bulletin is another opportunity to highlight the successes of each provincial region, as the Alberta Brain Injury Initiative (ABII) continues to grow. This edition also marks the transference of activity for ABII, from the Ministry of Community Development, to the Ministry of Seniors & Community Supports. The Minister responsible for this newly expanded Ministry is The Honorable Yvonne Fritz, MLA from Calgary – Capital Cross. Ken J. Wilson remains the Deputy Minister and David Steeves remains the Assistant Deputy Minister for our Community Support Services Division. In this issue, we will update, inform, and educate the general public about regional activities related to acquired brain injury. Also, as promised, we highlight the survivor, family, and caregiver success stories contributed by Alberta Brain Injury Network (ABIN) service coordinators, families, and caregivers from across the province.

## Survival Guide: Second Edition Still Available!

The Alberta Brain Injury Network's *Survival Guide* continues to be a useful resource for survivors, caregivers/families, and helping professionals alike, and the response to the *Survival Guide* remains positive. In 2003, the second edition of the *Survivor Guide* was published and 10,000 copies were printed. The guide now contains additional sections that address stroke injuries, anger management, and children with acquired brain injury. Copies of the *Survival Guide* are available through Alberta Brain Injury Initiative service coordinators.

## Alberta Brain Injury Initiative

In 2001, the Alberta Brain Injury Initiative (ABII) was implemented to respond to the needs of adults with an acquired brain injury across the province. ABII aims to help individuals with acquired brain injury maintain an optimal quality of life, by providing province-wide, community-based service coordination. The activities of ABII focus on addressing the needs of adults with acquired brain injury, while developing relationships with all who are engaged in

their community. This collaboration gives brain injury survivors, caregivers/families, and professionals, access to coordinated services under a "network" of linked regional agencies known as the Alberta Brain Injury Network (ABIN). These contracted agencies are located in six regions (based on Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) boundaries) throughout Alberta.

Other services and activities that are supported by the ABII are:

- Supports for Community Living Services (SCLS)
- The Provincial Training Framework
- The Brain Injury Conference
- Community Inclusion Activities
- Community Networking Processes (CNP)
- The Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) Benefits Administration Program
- Alberta Brain Injury Awareness Week

## Supports for Community Living Services (SCLS)

A key activity of the ABII is the provision of Supports for Community Living Services (SCLS). SCLS workers assist survivors who require a minimal amount of support while they make the transition into the community. This survivor-directed support aims to improve daily living skills, while fostering independence in the community. The SCLS worker and the brain injury survivor, work collaboratively to meet objectives based on the survivors' strengths, needs, and capacities.

Currently, ABII contracts directly with four main agencies for SCLS: W.J Stelmaschuk and Associates Limited (WJS), Skills Society, Catholic Social Services (CSS), Supported Lifestyles, and Universal Rehabilitation Service Agency (URSA). ABIN service coordinators also subcontract with up to 14 other SCLS providers across the province.

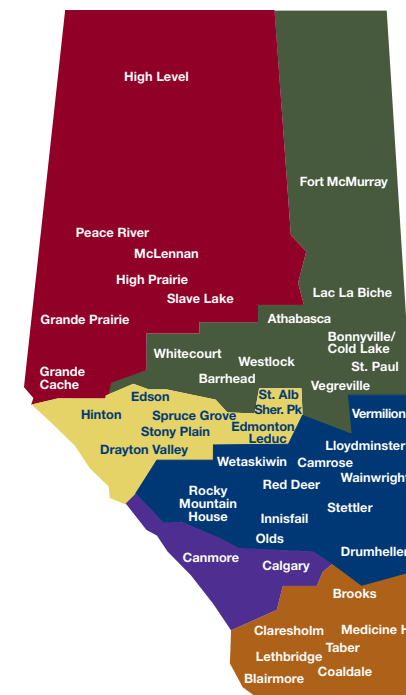
## The Provincial Training Framework

In 2003, a Provincial Training Framework was developed by ABII to recognize the

needs of stakeholders who wished to have access to introductory information and specialized training on brain injury. A "Caregiver College" was developed at Edmonton's Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, and through a partnership initiative led by the ABII, Caregiver College Telehealth was launched as a pilot project in seven different communities. In October 2004, Alberta Caregiver College was offered via Telehealth at 14 sites across the province: Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Stony Plain, Camrose, Drayton Valley, High Level, Le Crete, Rainbow Lake, Fort Vermillion, St. Paul, and Grande Prairie. Caregiver College Telehealth is the first component of the Provincial Training Framework.

The second component of the Provincial Training Framework focuses on education for professionals, under the Provincial Advisory Committee. The Provincial Advisory Committee convened in November 2004 in Red Deer. This meeting allowed the Provincial Advisory Committee to share its progress. The Provincial Advisory Committee currently consists of stakeholders from URSA, ABII, Red Deer

continued on next page



### ABIN Contracted Agencies:

#### SOUTH REGION REDI Enterprises Society HIP – Brain Injury Relearning Services

828 – 11 Street SE  
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 1T7  
Telephone: (403) 528-2661

#### REDI Enterprises Society HIP – Brain Injury Relearning Services Lethbridge Office

Mailing address:  
1827 1 Avenue N  
Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 0A6  
Telephone: (403) 320-7402

#### CALGARY REGION Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society (SABIS)

137, 2723 – 37 Avenue NE  
Calgary, Alberta T1Y 5R8  
Telephone: (403) 521-5212

#### CENTRAL REGION Canadian Mental Health Association, Alberta Central Region (CMHA) Catholic Social Services (CSS) and Central Alberta Brain Injury Society (CABIS) CMHA Office

#4, 5015 - 48 Street  
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 1S9  
Telephone: (403) 342-2266

#### Catholic Social Services (CSS) Office

5104 - 48 Avenue  
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 3T8  
Telephone: (403) 347-8844

#### EDMONTON REGION Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society (NABIS)

#301 Royal Alexandra Place  
10106 - 111 Avenue  
Edmonton, Alberta T5G 0B4  
Telephone: (780) 479-1757

#### Edson Office – NABIS

Box 20027  
Edson, Alberta T7E 1S8  
Telephone: (780) 712-7560

#### NORTHWEST REGION Northern Alberta Brain Injury Society (NABIS)

Grande Prairie Office  
#406 – 9728 Montrose Avenue  
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 5B6  
Telephone: (780) 532-0477

#### NORTHEAST REGION Blue Heron Support Services Association

4925 – 51 Avenue (P.O. Box 4238)  
Barrhead, Alberta T7N 1A2  
Telephone: (780) 674-4944

#### St. Paul Abilities Network

4915 – 51 Avenue (P.O. Box 457)  
St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A0  
Telephone: (780) 645-3441  
Toll Free: 1-866-645-3900

College, Grant MacEwan College, Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital, Alberta Hospital Ponoka, Grande Prairie Community College, Lethbridge Community College, Mount Royal College, Lakeland College, and Portage College.

## The Brain Injury Conference

This event brings all community stakeholders together to celebrate successes, and discuss topics related to acquired brain injury. Guest speakers and a survivors' forum highlight some of the activities that took place at the last conference, held in Calgary in 2003. This year's Brain Injury Conference will be held in Red Deer, April 07 and 08, 2005.

## Community Inclusion Activities

Alberta Seniors and Community Supports assists community inclusion activities in various regions across the province. Cosmos (Red Deer); Networks Activity Centre (Edmonton); Friends of the Head Injured (FOHII); the Edmonton Brain Injury Relearning Society (EBIRS); and EmployAbilities are some of the agencies supported by ABII in their efforts to provide community-based inclusion activities for brain injury survivors.

## Community Networking Process (CNP): an opportunity for networking

The Community Networking Process (CNP) — commonly referred to as the Community Action Coalition Process (CACP) — gives Albertans impacted by acquired brain injury an opportunity to provide input on the future direction of, and priorities for, the ABII. ABIN Service Coordinators throughout the province continue to facilitate these community meetings. A total of 22 meetings have occurred across Alberta, including two meetings in early 2004 in Westlock and High River. Plans are underway to schedule further Community Networking Processes (CNP) in Taber, Brooks, Calgary, Brocket (Piikani Nation), and Edmonton. A follow-up meeting in Grande Prairie is also being planned.

These community meetings help identify the priorities of all stakeholder groups: survivors,



High River CNP

family/caregivers, and professionals. Previous meetings resulted in the creation of community-based initiatives such as, Supports for Community Living Services (SCLS), the Brain Injury Conference, and the Provincial Training Framework. Most inspiring, however, is that survivors have expressed satisfaction in being involved in such a dynamic process.

## Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) Benefits Administration Program

The purpose of this voluntary program is to assist brain injury survivors who are on AISH and have challenges budgeting their money to meet monthly expenses. This unique program is currently available in the Edmonton, Central, Calgary, and Northwest regions, with plans to bring it to other areas of the province. For more information, contact your local Service Coordinator or Provincial Community Support Coordinator, Rick Guthrie, at (780) 427-9147.

## Alberta Brain Injury Awareness Week (ABIW)

Brain Injury Awareness Week is an opportunity for Albertans to think about brain injury awareness and prevention. By working together to educate Albertans and provide support to survivors and their families, we can prevent brain injuries and make a difference in the lives of those with brain injuries. In 2004, a provincial committee was established from regional representatives throughout Alberta, and a marketing plan was developed. This year's event will occur June 3-10, 2005.

Some of the following stories highlight the perseverance of brain injury survivors and caregivers in overcoming various barriers on the road to rehabilitation, recovery, and community inclusion. Some of the names (denoted by an asterisk (\*)) have been changed to protect the identity and confidentiality of the survivors and their families.

## Calgary

On March 26, 2004, a Community Networking Process (CNP) was held in High River. This process allows survivors, families, and professionals to meet and exchange information on brain injury and the special needs of the community. This was a very successful day and the Southern



Sabis Service Coordinators in High River

Alberta Brain Injury Society (SABIS) is preparing to go back to the community for further discussion. Thank you to everyone who participated and contributed to the process.

In April, the Calgary region joined the AISH Trusteeship program. This program will allow those on AISH to have supports around budgeting and bill payments. The program is voluntary and those who are interested should contact SABIS for more information. SABIS's toll-free number is: 1-866-527-2247; its E-mail address is: sabis@sabis.ab.ca.

Debra Vantriet, a service coordinator in the Calgary region, submitted this next survivor success story:

*Connie\*, a female client, having acquired her brain injury only a few months prior, came to the Southern Alberta Brain Injury Society (SABIS) in August 2002. She was struggling with alcohol abuse and living in an unstable environment. I assisted her with AISH benefits and helped her obtain accessible transportation. Her place of residence had changed a couple of times, and her family had expressed concerns.*

*When the Supports for Community Living (SCL) program began, Connie was living in a short-term placement and she needed assistance to find something more stable. In April 2003, she was referred to SCL for help with finding appropriate housing. At the time of referral Connie continued to struggle with alcohol abuse and transience issues. She often stayed in temporary, unstable placements, which were unsuitable for her rehabilitation.*

*Over time Connie was able to build rapport with the SCL worker. Connie relocated a couple of times during her time in the SCL program; however, she had managed to maintain stability since February 2004. This is the longest Connie has stayed in one place in her adult life — what an amazing demonstration of growth and success for her!*

*More important than the fact that she has found safe, appropriate housing, is the overall effect this achievement has had on other areas of Connie's life. Recently, she indicated that she would like to quit drinking, and she has been able to demonstrate control over her*

*consumption since January 2004. Connie also began to look at budgeting, a skill that she previously resisted. Connie has made observable improvements in the areas of enhanced self-esteem and self-worth. Connie is able to manage conflict more effectively and has learned how to address situations through increased dialogue. Even though she has achieved so much, she remains very humble about her accomplishments — successes that could not have been accomplished without the involvement of SCL. Connie hopes to be discharged from SCL in December 2004.*

## Central

With such a large and densely populated area, the Central Region's partners and coordinators were extremely pleased with the addition of funds to contract with community agencies to provide Supports for Community Living (SCL) workers. Survivors can receive up to ten hours of support each week to develop independent living skills. Currently, survivors are receiving assistance in Three Hills, Red Deer, Vermilion area, and Lacombe, with plans to expand the support to other communities in the future.

Creativity has become a large and necessary component of life for survivors and professionals in the Central region. Of the nearly 600 communities in this region, the most are in remote or rural areas, where services specific to brain injury are not readily available. Through community capacity building, we have been able to develop innovative ideas to help ensure survivors and their families receive supports.

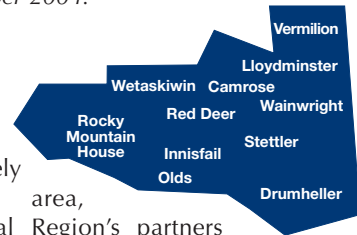
## Edmonton

The Edmonton office would like to welcome Jenna Rittinger from the Katimavik Program. Jenna has been working to meet the needs of survivors by addressing local housing issues.

The following story was submitted by Tannis Arsenault, a Service Coordinator in the Edmonton Region:

*Some people may believe that homeless individuals made the choice to live on the streets, but this is not the case. Fred\*, a young survivor, never chose to have a brain injury, nor has he ever chosen to be homeless.*

*Fred came to the Northern Alberta Brain*



*Injury Society (NABIS) office in torn clothing. He indicated that he had no family support and he had been living on Edmonton's streets. He had no substance abuse issues; however, his poor social skills had sometimes made people turn away from him. Fred produced a document stating that he had acquired a brain injury when he was three years old. The prescription glasses he currently wore were found in the trash, and he could not recall when his last optometrist appointment was. He had had the odd job, but he could not maintain steady employment. Without a fixed address, Fred was continually denied services for funding; however, the Service Coordinator knew that he would qualify for services and benefits, as it was clear that his brain injury rendered him unable to work.*

*The Service Coordinator started to help Fred by contacting local community agencies to get him food, clothing, and housing. Fred did not have any money for rent or damage deposit; however, the Service Coordinator managed to secure a temporary placement for him. She helped him complete application forms for funding subsidies, and she advocated on his behalf. She ensured that his dental, optical, and medical appointments were up to date. She called to remind him of his appointments because his brain injury has left his short-term memory severely impaired, and Fred cannot function without support.*

*Fred now wears glasses with the proper prescription, and he has since moved to more appropriate housing. He was thrilled about having a home and roommates his age with whom he could live. Fred currently utilizes the local drop-in center to connect socially with others in the community, and he also attends weekly brain injury workshops. Fred continues to connect with NABIS on a regular basis in order to coordinate his appointments.*

## Northwest

The ABIN office completed a Community Action Coalition Process (CACP) in High Prairie in June 2003. Work is now underway on the next CACP for High Prairie, and visits are being planned to meet with survivors and to explore opportunities to enhance community capacities. A follow-up is being planned for the last CACP that took place in Grande Prairie. Work has

been done to establish the Support for Community Living (SCL) workers, and this service is up and running in five communities in the region: Grande Prairie, High Prairie, Peace River, Falher, and Dicksonville. A survivors' social group, offering support and interaction with other survivors, has also been established.

Volunteers are being recruited for various projects. One program in particular involves connecting brain injury survivors, who have made a significant recovery, with survivors who aren't able to recover as quickly. The potential for such peer relationship building is exciting! In addition, the SCL workers have been integrating survivors into recreational programming offered through existing organizations.

Pheona Churn, Service Coordinator for NABIS (Northwest), shares her thoughts on the need for services and supports for survivors in remote communities:

*What makes a community strong? The people who live in it! I've been to communities in the outlying areas of Slave Lake, Wabasca, and the acclaimed frontier of Alberta: High Level, Rainbow Lake, Fort Vermilion and LaCrete, and visited with brain injury survivors, their families, the agencies, and the corporate developers in each. Everyone was welcoming, and looked forward to working together to make their community a more fulfilling place to live. I was encouraged by their hospitality, yet realized the impact of the barriers they face every day.*

*Here is our challenge: to focus on addressing the needs of adults with an acquired brain injury, while developing relationships within the community. As a service coordinator, I need to help strengthen this community by connecting the brain injury survivors and their caregivers to the services and programs, thus increasing their participation within their community. Sometimes, this will involve encouraging agencies within the existing*

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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