

September 2021

BRAIN INJURY MATTERS

NEWSLETTER

Meet Thomas Smyth

1. How long ago did you acquire your injury?

I'm a newbie still. I acquired my brain injury months ago.

2. What is your greatest achievement since your injury?

Just showing up every day.

3. What do you want to achieve in the near future?

To be able to run 5km.

4. What do you find your biggest challenge?

Cognitive stuff is always hard.

5. What is your favourite food? Ravioli.

6. What is your favourite movie? Dr Sleep.

7. What is your favourite hobby? Watching cricket.

8. What do you want to achieve through Brain Injury Matters?

Just being a part of the group is already an achievement.

9. What advice would you give to a person with a new brain injury?

It is truly just the beginning.

10. What does Brain Injury Matters mean to you?

It means support and comfort for me.





Quiz Questions

See if you learn something from these Coffee Morning quiz questions!

1. Which 80s star is recognised by Guinness World Records as the best-selling female recording artist of all time?
2. Who encouraged the world to 'Get Down on It' in 1981?
3. Depeche mode had their first major U.S hit in 1981 with which song?
4. Who claimed that 'I'm Still Standing' in 1983?
5. David Bowie appeared in what cult film in 1986?
6. How old was Britney Spears when her hit song 'Baby One More Time' came out in 1998?
7. R Kelly "don't see nothing wrong with a little..." what?
8. What is the other language that Celine Dion regularly sang in throughout the 90s?
9. Which tool-themed MC won best rap video and best dance video at the 1990 MTV Video Music Awards?
10. Who disrupted Michael Jackson's performance of Earth Song at the 1996 Brit Awards by mooning on stage?
11. We Sing. We Dance. We Steal Things. was which artist's highest selling album because of the 2008 song
12. 'Man Eater' and 'Promiscuous' were 2006 hits for which artist?
13. After a decade of writing Spanish songs, which artist reached international fame from 2001 onwards with English ones?
14. Which artist released 3 prison-themed albums called Trouble, Konvicted and Freedom throughout the 00s?
15. In what year did Fergie, of Black Eyed Peas fame, make her first solo album The Dutchess?

Jokes/Riddles

- a) Do you want to hear a construction joke?
- b) Why do ducks have feathers?
- c) I failed math so many times at school

What grows when it eats, but dies when it drinks?

Quiz - Answers

1. Madonna
2. Kool and the Gang
3. Just Can't Get Enough
4. Elton John
5. Labyrinth
6. 17
7. Bump 'n' Grind
8. French
9. MC Hammer
10. Jarvis Crocker
11. Jason Mraz
12. Nelly Furtado
13. Shakira
14. Akon
15. 2006

Jokes/Riddles - Answers

- a) Sorry, I'm still working on it
- b) To cover their butt quacks!
- c) I can't even count

Riddle Answer

Fire



Updates

Update from the Office- Lauren

As you know staff are working from home. We have a weekly staff meeting on Zoom. Yannick keeps us amused at the meeting, with his changing digital backgrounds on Zoom. Guessing which tv set or location he is "in" is fun.

Great news from DHHS, they are increasing BIMs funding for this financial year.

This is a one-off increase because of the increased demand due to Covid. BIM President Brent and I met with Paul from DHHS on Zoom.

It was a very productive meeting; Paul gave feedback saying BIM is doing great work and the newsletter and website are communicating very well on how that work is done.

I have written a grant application to the Freemasons Foundation. We should know if it is successful in a few months.

The aim is to use the funds to add content to the ABI Wise App.

Preparation is underway for the BIM AGM (Annual General Meeting) on Tuesday 9th November. The plan is to have the meeting in person at Ross House and on Zoom. Last year we held the AGM on Zoom, fingers crossed we can do better this year.

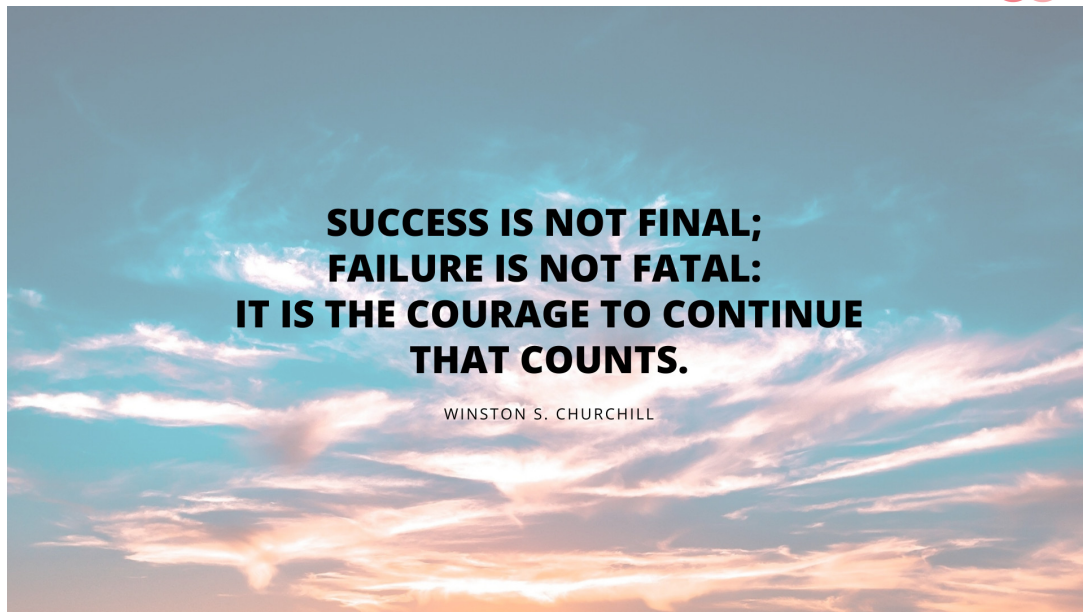
The Guest Speaker for the AGM is Deborah Stathis. Deborah has written a book about her brain injury journey; Nia's article is in this newsletter. I have begun work on the BIM Annual Report which will be given out at the AGM and be sent to anyone who would like a copy.

The new Frankston ABI Peer Support Group has invited me to attend next week. I hope I can drop into the other Peer Support Group groups over time too.

I have joined the DARU Managers advocacy network; it will provide good contacts and information. A senior manager from DHHS addressed the meeting last month.

It is great to see such a high level of participation by BIM members.

Additional people have stepped up to work on the ABI Wise App, the Newsletter and running the Peer Support Groups. The fabulous BIM Committee of Management continue to work hard to ensure BIM is run by people with an ABI for people with an ABI.



Updates continued...

From the BIM ILC Project

The strength of our peer support groups is very evident even through lockdown. The groups continue to attract new participants – we have had 10 people join our six groups this month. During August many of the groups considered self-care, thinking about things that might assist/deal with the challenges of the lockdown and not unsurprisingly the Coffee Morning support group has been well attended, people enjoying a fun start to the week.

Coffee morning free for all ABI participants, random fun topics and quiz

All the peer support groups provide a chance to share information, ideas and experiences and discuss practical ways to live with brain injury. We also started the planning for the next By Accident Workshop. This will be conducted from 10am to 12pm on Friday 1st, 8th, and 15th of October. It is free and will be held by Zoom. We have already had a lot of interest. Please get in contact if you want to come along!

Our work with several other self-advocacy groups on issues like cyber-scaming and contact with the criminal justice system continues. These are areas that involve a significant number of people with Acquired Brain Injury.

If you have any questions about our project or would just like a chat, please get in touch.

**Fiona, Yannick, Sonia, Fraser, Sally and Peter
Project Team**

Updates continued...

From the Committee of Management

The month of August saw many, if not all, of us in lockdown across Victoria. This 6th lockdown has perhaps been the most difficult. “Lockdown” fatigue is something we are having to deal with. Our coffee mornings held every Monday at 11am have proven to be a great contact point for many members during this time – we had 30 people attend one catchup and there has been an average of 20 or so people each week. But please remember to get in touch with us if things are tough for you now.

Our membership numbers continued to grow over August with a 5 % increase and the new website is really getting attention and attract visitors – we had 743 visitors in August, following 300 visitors in July.

The Department of Social Security (DSS) which manages the Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) grants, has initiated a review of the ILC. We receive an ILC grant which funds the Brain Injury Matters peer support groups. It is not clear what has triggered this review which is being conducted by Swinburne University on behalf of DSS. BIM has provided feedback to Swinburne, but we are also collaborating with other organisations that are funded through the ILC, to raise key issues. We are hoping that ILC funding will continue though we also hope the grants program will be improved. We continue to seek funds to expand the range of resources and activities that BIM provides, though we have not had any success yet. For now, take care and stay safe.

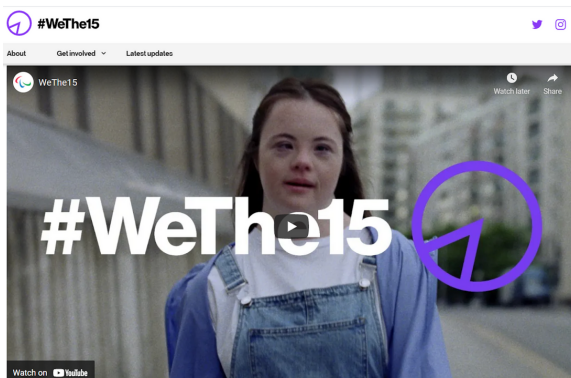
Brent Alford, Chairperson



Updates continued...

Peer Support Groups

In the last month, all peer support groups have continued to meet online via Zoom. Some groups have had sessions about creating self-care kits and learning more about the Paralympics. Brainstormers, Brain Injury Friends and Brainwave all watched a great video from the #WeThe15 campaign. Did you know that people with disabilities make up 15% of the world's population (i.e 1.2 billion people)? Check out the #WeThe15 website which includes a video on the homepage at www.wethe15.org



WeThe15 homepage

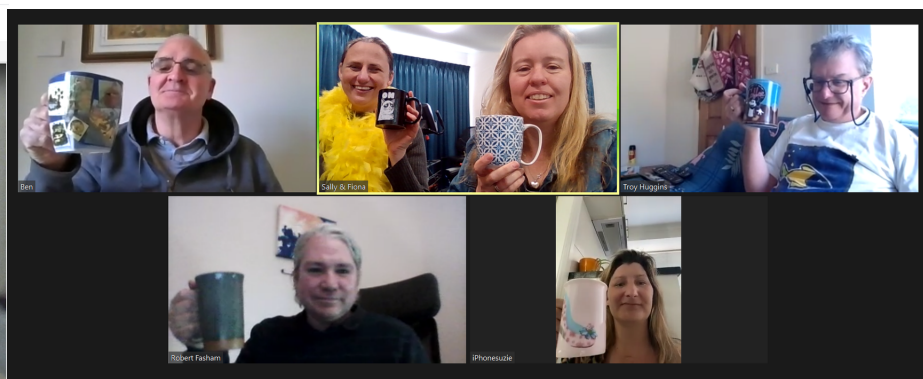


Photo from the Brain Injury Friends peer support group

Website Update

Last month the new website had 290 visitors, following 313 in July.



By Accident Report

There are still places available for the By Accident workshop. Conducted by Eva Sifis, the workshop is held over three Friday mornings from 10am till 12PM. The upcoming dates are Friday 1st, 8th and 15th of October. The workshop is free and held over Zoom, due to COVID19. Email us office@braininjurymatters.org or call 9639 7222.

By Accident

Book Review by Virginia (Nia) Giddings

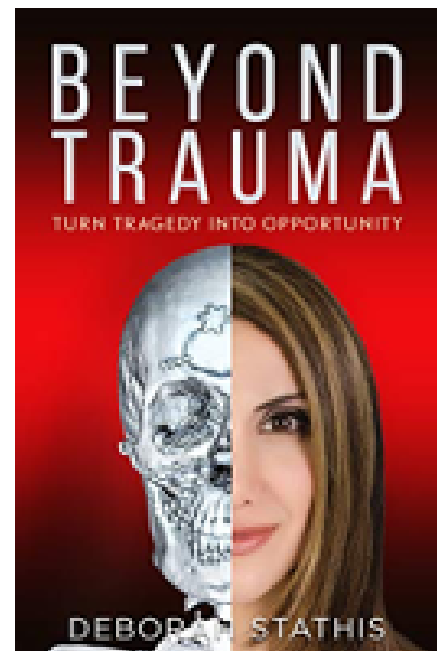
Beyond Trauma Turn Tragedy into Opportunity

Deborah Stathis

Beyond Trauma is a book by Author, Speaker and Coach Deborah Stathis.

After many operations and years of rehabilitation following a car accident, Deborah has developed her coaching practice Tragic Opportunities.

Tragic Opportunities is a phrase Deborah uses many times throughout her engaging book.



These words keep reminding the reader to regard the tragedy they may perceive in their lives as an opportunity to be embraced, as she herself has done, to create success.

After her accident, Deborah and her family refused to accept the ghastly prognosis for her future. They held onto and encouraged positivity, which Deborah believes helped her throughout her recovery. Deborah suffered a traumatic brain injury, so severe, death was not ruled out. Deborah believes because of the care and treatment she received in hospital she was able to make a remarkable physical recovery.

Deborah chose to focus on what she could do after her trauma and directed herself to build on her determination—the tragic opportunities of her life. She embraced three key points to overcome negativity and maintain a rich and full life. Deborah chose to focus on making the most of the new her to help and guide others in their path to move beyond trauma.

This book gives the reader ideas and ways of dealing with emotions and behaviour that occur after trauma. Moving past the concept of seeing oneself as a victim and moving on towards making a life Beyond Trauma. This involves dealing with the changes to your body and being confident with the new you. There is advice on putting support teams in place and relating to others to ensure you are as socially connected as possible.

Beyond Trauma discusses rehabilitation and personal healing which deals with the physical as well as the emotional health. The book considers both conventional and unconventional methods to move forward after trauma and it concludes with some ideas for designing your life after trauma.

If you would like to purchase Beyond Trauma, the link is below.

<https://www.tragicopportunities.com/BeyondTraumaBook/>

Brain Injury at the Paralympics

By Fiona

As we struggled through lockdowns our spirits were brightened by the long-awaited arrival of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

Australia had a team of 179 Paralympic athletes, competing in 18 of the 22 sports.

Australian athletes won 80 medals, 21 of which were gold and came sixth on the overall medal tally. This strong result reflects the hard work and dedication of this amazing group of athletes.

At Brain Injury Matters we were very excited to have former BIM member Maria Strong (pictured) competing in the women's shotput F33 category.

She won a bronze medal and set an Oceanian record with a throw of 6.63metres.

Congratulations Maria on this fantastic achievement!

Other Australian athletes with brain injury included Jasmine Greenwood (swimming) who won silver in the women's 100m butterfly S10 and Meg Lemon (cycling) who won bronze in the women's road time trial C4.



How to follow blogs

By Helen

There's a blog out there on just about anything! Once you find a blog that interests you, it's a handy idea to follow them so you keep up to date when new posts pop up. Blogs are a great and fascinating way to gain insight into to other people's opinions, ideas & stories. They can give you ideas or projects to research further on your own.

Check out my blog at <https://hellonwheelslifeonehanded.wordpress.com/> Once there, you can simply go to the link to follow, enter your email address & every time there is a new blog post you will receive an email notification. You can read the first line or 2 & if it interests or grabs your attention, click on the link to see the rest of the post.

You can also like or comment on posts or if you are really keen you can start a blog of your own.

If you feel like writing something for the BIM newsletter it could be a start if you don't want to commit to an actual blog.

Spotlight on Pets

Henri came to me about this time last year as his mum was going to Berlin to be a star. I offered to look after him as the very night before I learnt of her trip, I made a request to the universe that I was ready to accept a cat back into my life.

Henri came to me pronounced Henry however as the spelling suggested I decided to call him by his French accent cause his mum might as well have a European cat when she came back. Suffice to say 2020 played out the way it did, and she wasn't able to return and now Henri is my permanent mate!

Now 19 months old, a sassier mouse murderer you never did meet.



Eva & Henri

Studying with ABI by Anat Bigos

I've always found that constantly learning something is important and I was eager for this to remain during my entire life, despite getting my ABI. Because there was quite a long time since I graduated from my university degrees, a recommendation was to enrol to NMIT for a bridging course called Learning to Learn. This course is designed for people who want to continue studying after a break.

Studying with an ABI was an extremely different experience, as opposed to studying beforehand.

When I enrolled in NMIT I thought it would be quite easy for me, as a person with 2 degrees from Monash University to "tackle" such an easy subject.

Quite a big part of the course was to read about human evolution, communism & feminism, to comprehend, summarise articles and to answer questions.

In the past I was interested in these subjects, and I was sure they would still interest me.

The reality was that I struggled a lot!

The reading was very difficult for me since I could not concentrate for more than a few minutes.

I had to get up early in the morning, to arrive in the campus which was quite far from where I lived. I was driven by a carer, the parking was not easy and many times we had to walk from the car to the classroom, and I was already exhausted by the time I arrived there! I was much slower than the rest of the students and didn't always understand what the teacher was talking about. This was despite the fact that the teacher singled me out as a proficient university graduate, thinking that I comprehended everything.

How wrong she was!

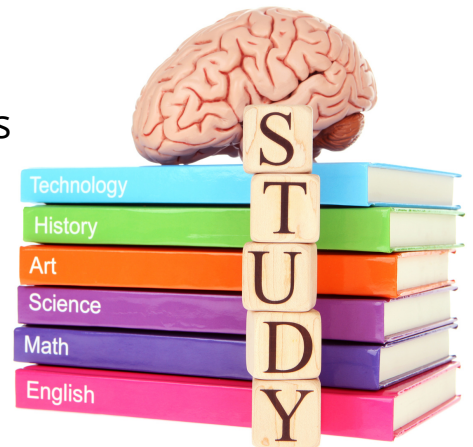
What I could understand was not all remembered due to my “perfect memory”! 😊

None of the other students had a brain injury, so it was hard to keep up with them.

Despite the fact that I didn’t achieve the academic target, I still have the feeling of success, since I proved to myself and to others that I could study a course designed for healthy brains.

At least I tried. Perhaps I was not ready at the time, and I hope I’ll return to studying.

It would be nice if there were a course designed for people with brain Injuries, so they could also have the joy of achieving self satisfaction in their studies.



CyberABility



It is with great pleasure that we announce that BIM and CyberABILITY will be joining together in a partnership to raise awareness of scams among people with an ABI. CyberABILITY, an organisation headed by Dr. Kate Gould, a clinical Neuropsychologist and Monash University research fellow, was developed to help people learn about and avoid online scams.

Anyone can be scammed, but people with brain injury may be more vulnerable. Colin Brokenshire, BIM Vice Chair, is also a key part of leading the project, providing the consumer perspective. BIM will be supporting CyberABILITY to launch the new free online training that was developed collaboratively with people with living experience of brain injury and scams, funded by the Transport Accident Commission. Please save the date for October 21st for this free session (1pm-2:30pm). The interactive training includes videos of people sharing their stories of scams, and a workbook where people can create their own cybersafety plan. We look forward to getting as many BIM members, their family, support network and their clinicians involved to join the launch and learn about the training. The project team and people with living experience will be on hand to support attendees to enrol and navigate through the training. To stay informed, please register your interest at cyberABILITY.org.au

Newsletter Contributions Welcome

Contributions by BIM members to our newsletter are always welcome. If you have any tips, stories or experiences that would be of interest to others, please contact office@braininjurymatters.org

**Ross House, Level 4/247 Flinders Lane
Melbourne, Vic. 3000
email: office@braininjurymatters.org
www.braininjurymatters.org (03) 9639 7222**