

March 2024

Alabama Head Injury Task Force News



Jerry, Cherie (wife), and Mazie Mae (2-year-old service dog)

Survivor Spotlight – Jerry L. Peters, Jr., Troy, AL

Unless told, those around me would know nothing about my spinal injuries, multiple surgeries, seven TBI's, PTSD, and the constant pain that I endure. They only see the determination that allowed me to succeed in a career as a U.S. Marshal, and serve this nation throughout the United States, its territories, and on four continents. However, after being T-boned at 45 mph in a car accident, I sustained a severe neck injury and TBI. These injuries ended my career, limited my movement for 8 months, and placed me in physical rehabilitation for two years. I was told I would never do anything physical again and would end up in a wheelchair. But the same determination that carried me throughout my career, persuaded me to recondition my body and go on to complete three tours in Afghanistan.

My injuries and resulting surgeries sustained during my career eventually removed me from that world and left me to cope with the fallout. As I continue to deal with my inability to function in life, I have gained a set of tools to help me cope with my challenges. Psychotherapy, cognitive evaluation, PT, art therapy, and PEER Support, have taught me how to focus my thoughts, maintain an open-minded attitude, relax through mindful meditation, monitor my physical & mental energy, redirect & compose my anger, pursue self-care, share openly when I am facing a bad day, and share my internal condition with a caring friend. I have come to realize that it is okay to have occasional setbacks and that it is okay to not be okay.

I have faced depression, severe anxiety, fear, outbursts of anger, cognitive malfunctions, lapse in memory, and other mental & emotional frustrations, combined with physical pain, nerve damage, and occasional loss of motor functions. And as many people know, these conditions can be debilitating. But I have learned to push through the trials and continue by coaching others through my nonprofit and encouraging those who struggle with the downside of life. A few things to take away...1) NEVER quit, 2) Find freedom in helping others through your experience, and 3) Realize that no matter how bad things may seem "this too shall pass"! Let your story be a FUTURE focused event, not a memory of the painful past.

TBI Grant Updates



The Federal TBI Public Health Grant continues to consult with LPC Supervisor Eunice Mingo from Mobile, who provides mental health counseling statewide via Telehealth to active Pediatric and Adult TBI Care Coordination consumers and their caregivers.



This quarter, Eric Gerritson was hired as a consultant on the Federal TBI Public Health Grant to assist in the Trauma Registry Data review and surveillance report showing data gaps within the registry. Mr. Gerritson is retired from the US Airforce and works as a consultant in the public and private sector.



State Head Injury Coordinator, April Turner, TBI AL Grant Project Coordinator, David White, and AHIF Executive Director, Scott Powell, joined other brain injury organizations for Congressional Brain Injury Awareness Day on Capitol Hill on March 5-6. [Read more about the reauthorization of the TBI Act.](#)



The ACL Grant Team welcomes back Jill Ferrington, NASHIA consultant, to assist with the Alabama Head Injury Task Force and Advisory Council. Jill will help with guiding the priority chairs in reporting and updating goals as well as increasing advocacy efforts by exploring options with the Advisory Council.



Eric Gerritson



Jill Ferrington

TBI Awareness Month 2024



31 Days of Wisdom from Alabama Survivors

March is TBI Awareness Month!

Visit AlabamaTBI.org each day during the month of March for quotes from TBI survivors across Alabama.

2024 Task Force Meetings

Thursdays, 10am-12pm
June 13th, September 5th,
December 12th

New ADRS Adult TBI Care Coordinators

The TBI Program recently welcomed two new Adult TBI Care Coordinators: Attallah Cotton (Dothan area) and Cheryl Morgan (Decatur area). Attallah transferred from Children's Rehabilitation Services with many years of TBI experience. Cheryl transferred from the SAIL Waiver Program and has experience with TBI as well.



Adult TBI Care Coordinators (from left): Whitney Storey, Kayla Freeman, Tammy Lovell, April Turner (State Head Injury Coordinator), Cheryl Morgan, and Attallah Cotton

ADRS Adult TBI Care Coordinators Meeting

On January 25 & 26, the Adult TBI Care Coordinators and State Head Injury Coordinator met at the Easterseals Achievement Center in Opelika for intensive staff training and revisioning of the TBI Adult Care Coordinator's manual.



NeuroRestorative is a leading provider of rehabilitation services for people of all ages with brain, spinal cord and medically complex injuries, illnesses, and other challenges. In a variety of locations and community-based settings, they offer a continuum of care and rehabilitation options, including specialized services for community-based settings, for children, adolescents, military service members, and veterans.

[Learn more about NeuroRestorative.](#)



Alabama Head Injury Foundation (AHIF)

The AHIF Birmingham Regional Board is pleased to announce the 8th Annual Beer, Band & BBQ! We are excited to hold this event at Ghost Train Brewing Company featuring Robbie

Scott's BBQ and the WD Band. The event will be held on Saturday, March 30th starting at noon. [Learn more about AHIF and the Fundraiser.](#)



The **Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs (ADVA)** and the City of Fairhope will host a Veterans Well-Being Town Hall on Tuesday, March 26th. This is a special event to promote awareness of suicide among our service members, veterans, and their families, and to identify resources in the community that will meet their well-being needs. [Learn more about the Town Hall.](#)



Two of the **State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL)** Homebound nurses retired at the end of January. While we lost years of institutional knowledge, we gained two new experienced RNs. Miriam Lee is now overseeing Homebound services out of the Montgomery office, and Sonya Beech oversees Homebound services out of the Troy SAIL office. Welcome to our SAIL team! [Learn more about SAIL.](#)



The **Adult TBI Program (ICBM)** pre-vocational program for adults served **115** caseload consumers and their families through the 1st quarter of FY24. ICBM provides individual cognitive remediation, counseling, TBI education, and accommodations to transition to community and/or employment. [Learn more about the Adult TBI Program.](#)



The **Children's Rehabilitation Services (CRS)** PASSAGES Pediatric TBI Care Coordinators have served a total of **239** consumers through the 1st quarter of FY24 assisting children and youth with transition from hospital to home, community, school and providing information/education on TBI residuals to families and school systems. [Learn more about CRS.](#)



Visit AlabamaTBI.org

The **Toll-Free TBI Registry Helpline** had a total of **59** referrals and/or phone calls through the 1st quarter of FY24.



The **Alabama Head and Spinal Cord Injury Registry (AHSCIR)** requires hospital trauma TBI records be collected, reviewed, and eligible individuals contacted for needed linkage to crucial services and supports statewide. For the 1st quarter of FY24, **868** new records were received from Alabama Dept. of Public Health and **470** individuals were eligible to be contacted to provide information and referral assistance from ADRS, AHIF, and other community agencies.