

THE
University of Vermont
MEDICAL CENTER

trauma survivors
network
provided by **ATS**

SURVIVOR NEWS

Newsletter for Resilience and Rebuilding

IN THIS ISSUE

Survivor Spot Light [pg. 1]

EMDR Therapy [pg. 1]

Patient/Family Advisors [pg. 2]

Sports for EveryBODY [pg. 3]

Meet the Trauma Team [pg. 4]

Injury Prevention Research [pg. 4]

Upcoming Events [pg. 4]

SURVIVOR SPOTLIGHT



Survivor Spotlight: Susan Idol

Hello, my name is Susan Idol. On October 24, 2016 while staying at my best friend (and second mom) Muriel's house I was woken up in the middle of the night by Muriel telling me the house was on fire and I had to get out. I went to the front door of the house since it was farthest from the flames and I couldn't get it open, I tried smashing a window, which didn't work. I was strangled with fear and I couldn't breathe...I sat on the floor thinking "this is it, I'm never going to see my children again and did I tell them I loved them enough?" During those brief minutes Muriel walked past me calling her husband's name and went into her bedroom and then it just went silent. I was helpless, I couldn't get to her, I couldn't help her, I was fighting to breathe and scared senseless. We lost Muriel in the fire and it plagues me everyday. It's a miracle that her husband Harold opened the front door from outside then and I crawled out of the house. I was severely burned over 1/3 of my body. (continued on page 2)



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy

Lizzy Slatt, LICSW and Karl Speirs, MS, MA

Our brains and bodies have a natural way to recover from traumatic memories and events. This process involves communication between the amygdala (the alarm signal for stressful events), the hippocampus (which assists with learning, including memories about safety and danger), and the prefrontal cortex (which analyzes and controls behavior and emotion). While many times traumatic experiences can be managed and resolved spontaneously, there can be times when they are not. In these cases EMDR therapy can be used to reprocess the memories in a more adaptive way. (continued on page 3)

Patient Spotlight Continued

Continued from page 1

Waking up in the hospital over a month later was really strange. I wasn't aware of the extent and severity of my injuries or the multiple grafting surgeries I'd had and all the close calls on my life that I had endured. Thank you to all the medical staff at UVM Medical Center and Fanny Allen for the great care I received during my stay and especially to Dr. Tandoh who saved my life with her skill and expertise. I sincerely appreciate all of you. I was released from Fanny Allen 12/24/16 and began a rigorous schedule of physical therapy and healing. Home, health and hospice visits, physical therapy, burn clinic appointments, hyperbaric oxygen treatments, counseling and 24/7 compression gear. At the time it hadn't really registered what and how long recovery was going to be.

It has been a long, challenging, painful and difficult road and it's not done. When Dr. Tandoh released me from the burn clinic appointments I panicked, feeling very alone and wanted to scream out "Wait, I'm not done yet!" It was scary.

I've been trying to make the best of it but it's not easy. The physical healing is still very painful and the physical differences in my appearance are a continual struggle for me emotionally. The first time I accidentally got a glimpse of myself in a mirror at the hospital it was shocking. I didn't know who it was and just how awful it was. It was hard to comprehend and is still a shock everyday looking in the mirror. Venturing out into public is very hard for me, I feel very unapproachable now and that makes me really sad. I can't tell you how many times I've driven to the grocery store and panicked, couldn't get out of the car and went back home; those are the really tough days.

I am fortunate to have two incredible, beautiful children, a wonderful boyfriend and THE BEST family ever who are all so loving, caring and supportive, I hope all of you survivors have that too. I have a large extended family and group of close friends who have been so helpful and supportive as well. I have the BEST therapist ever; I've met with her every week these last 4 years. She's made such a positive impact on my healing and growth through all of this. Even with all the support and love recovery has been and continues to be like a roller coaster ride, big highs and big lows. Through all of this though I am GRATEFUL, THANKFUL, and BLESSED.

Thank you for the opportunity to share a bit of my experience. I hope all you trauma survivors all are as well as you can be. I'm rooting for you!

Patient/Family Advisors

Lisa LeBlanc, PFCC Coordinator

At the University of Vermont Medical Center, we recognize that patients and their families have valuable wisdom, advice, and experiences that can be used to improve the delivery, quality, and safety of health care.

A Patient/Family Advisor (PFA) is a patient or family member of a patient who volunteers to work in partnership with the health care staff at all levels to help make University of Vermont Medical Center services more responsive to the needs of patients and families.

The role of the Patient/Family Advisor is to bring the patient and family voice and perspective to policies, programs, facility design, operations, and education at The University of Vermont Medical Center in an effort to improve safety, delivery of care, and the patient and staff experience. Additionally, the advisor is central to promoting patient- and family-centered care (PFCC) concepts and practices among administration, staff, health care providers, patients, and families.

There are a variety of ways to get involved, including the opportunity to provide peer support through the Trauma Peer Visitor program. Peer visitation is where trauma survivors meet with trauma patients that are still hospitalized or early in their recovery process to offer encouragement and support.

If you are interested in learning more about the important work that advisors do, please reach out to Lisa LeBlanc, PFCC Coordinator, at Lisa.LeBlanc@uvmhealth.org or at 802. 847.2328.



Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy

Continued from page 1

Stress responses are part of our natural fight, flight, or freeze instincts. When distress from a disturbing event remains, the upsetting images, thoughts, and emotions may create feelings of overwhelm, of being back in that moment, or of being “frozen in time.” EMDR therapy helps the brain reprocess these memories, and allows normal healing to resume. With EMDR therapy the experience is still remembered, but the associated fight, flight, or freeze response from the original event gets resolved.

Reprocessing experiences does not necessarily mean talking about it. Reprocessing means setting up a learning state that will allow experiences that are causing problems to be “digested” and stored more appropriately in your brain. In this case what is useful to you from an experience will be learned, and stored with appropriate emotions in your brain, and be able to guide you in positive ways in the future. The goal of EMDR therapy is to leave you with the emotions, understanding, and perspectives that will lead to healthy and useful behaviors and interactions in the future.

EMDR therapy can be used within standard talk therapy, as an adjunctive therapy with a separate therapist, or as a treatment all by itself. One of the ways that EMDR is different from other forms of therapy is that it does not require talking in detail about the distressing issue or completing homework between sessions.

If you're interested in learning more here's a short video introduction to EMDR: youtu.be/Pkfln-ZtWeY

You can find an EMDR therapist with the EMDR International Association's directory: www.emdria.org/find-a-therapist/

VERMONT ADAPTIVE SKI AND SPORTS



Sports for EveryBODY

Jeff Alexander

Vermont Adaptive Ski & Sports is committed to empowering individuals with disabilities. We promote independence and further equality through access and instruction to sports and recreational activities. Vermont Adaptive Ski and Sports has quite a bit of exciting news to share this summer.

After many delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Vermont Adaptive community members put shovels in the ground on Thursday, May 20 at Sugarbush Resort's Mt. Ellen, to commemorate the beginning of construction of our new \$2.5 million, 4,000 sq. ft. adaptive sports facility and second permanent home in Vermont. The new facility is specifically designed with Vermont Adaptive participants, volunteers, staff, and community in mind in order to bring year-round accessible sports and recreation to the entire Mad River Valley area. Learn more at

www.vermontadaptive.org/sugarbushfacility/

Free Programs for Kids with Disabilities Ages K-12 This Summer! We are pleased to announce Vermont Adaptive was recently selected to receive \$75,000 in funding from the Summer Matters for All Grant program. As a result, Vermont Adaptive will offer its adaptive sports and recreation programs free of charge this summer to any athlete with a disability in grades K-12. Summer programs include cycling, mountain biking, canoeing and kayaking, hiking, rock climbing, environmental programs and Core Connections wellness education. Currently, Vermont Adaptive's programs are supported by more than 400 volunteers and a well-recognized Internship Program for students 18 and over, which will also be expanded under Summer Matters For All.

To learn more and make a reservation for programs, www.vermontadaptive.org/vermont-adaptive-ski-and-sports-selected-to-receive-a-2021-summer-matters-for-all-grant-allowing-for-free-programs-this-summer-for-kids-k-12-with-a-disability/



Meet the Trauma Team

Maureen Johnson, Car Seat Safety Specialist

Maureen is a certified Child Passenger Safety Technician (CSPT) and Instructor working at the University of Vermont Medical Center, where she has been the Child Passenger Safety Specialist for over 5 years. Her role is to provide parents and other caregivers with education and hands-on assistance so they understand how to properly install and use their children’s car seat or booster seat. A study published in 2015 estimated that almost half of child restraints have one or more misuses. But in that same study, most caregivers said they were confident or very confident that their child’s seat was

installed and used correctly. So having access to a CPST is important to help parents and caregivers understand correct usage for car seats and boosters. As an instructor, Maureen participates in classes that certify people as CPST’s.

Maureen is the Vice-President of the Safe Kids Vermont coalition and their Occupant Protection (a.k.a. Buckle Up) Coordinator. In 2020 she was selected by the Vermont Health Department’s "Be Seat Smart" program as the CPST of the Year. Learning more about child passenger safety at UVMHealth.org/carseats.

Injury Prevention Research

Is a Virtual Car Seat Tech as effective as an In-Person Tech? Help us find out!

We are studying the efficacy of virtual car seat fitting appointments, which would provide services to individuals who do not live near a fitting station or are unable to set up an appointment. If you have a car seat in your car and are willing to answer surveys during a car seat fitting appointment, scan the QR code to register for the study! Participants are compensated with a \$50 Amazon gift card.



SURVIVOR NEWS NEWSLETTER FOR RESILIENCE AND REBUILDING

Survivor News is produced quarterly

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
Abby Beerman, TSN Coordinator

**ACUTE CARE SURGERY
INJURY PREVENTION**
111 Colchester Ave
Smith 240
Burlington, VT 0501

PHONE
(802) 847-2291

E-MAIL
TraumaSurvivors@UVMHealth.org

Website
UVMHealth.org/TSN

Upcoming Event

Free Online Training Event hosted by Brain Injury Association of Vermont

“Cognitive-Communication Consequences of Acquired Brain Injury”

Wednesday, August 11th from 11:00 am until 2:00 pm EST

The course will focus on common mild, moderate, and severe cognitive-communication consequences of common types of acquired brain injury. Emphasis will be placed on evidence-supported strategies to facilitate individuals’ language, attention, memory, and executive functioning. Active attendee engagement is encouraged throughout the training event.

Register at https://give.classy.org/ABI_Communication

