



BRAIN waves

Information, Support, and Stories That Matter

2026 | Issue 3



FREE FALLING

Sheila Beck, MSPT, CBIST
UAMS Brain Injury Program
Clinic Operations Coordinator



Songs throughout the ages have included lyrics about falling. Tom Petty was “Free Fallin’”, Elvis Presley “Can’t Help Falling in Love”, and Alicia Keys was simply “Falling”. While songs about falling in and out of love make for catchy tunes, actually falling down is far less enjoyable, especially as we age. The UAMS Traumatic Brain Injury Registry for the year 2025 received 548 referrals. The following chart shows the breakdown by etiology (the study of the cause of a diagnosis or disease).

Etiology/Cause	Referrals	% of Total Referrals
Altercation/Assault	26	4.70%
ATV/Moped/Dirt Bike/Go-Kart	18	3.25%
Auto/Truck Accident	108	19.53%
Bicycle Collision (Auto & Non-Auto)	12	2.17%
Domestic Violence/Suspected Abuse	11	1.99%
Firearms	13	2.35%
Jump/Fall	225	40.69%
Motorcycle Accident	47	8.50%
Pedestrian (Auto & Non-Auto)	35	6.33%
Skating/Skateboard/Scooter	3	0.54%
Other/Unknown/Not Reported	50	9.95%
TOTAL	548	100%

Information compiled by Sheila Beck as of Aug. 10, 2026.

Jumps and falls accounted for 225 of the 548 referrals (40.7%), far exceeding any other cause of traumatic brain injury referral in the registry. Arkansas aligns with national statistics. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state that falls are the number one cause of traumatic brain injury related hospitalizations and deaths for adults 65 years and older. (1)

Factors that lead to increased falls as we age are changes in balance, decreased vision, decreased muscle strength and slower reflexes. Medications can also play a role. Many seniors take blood thinners, which can increase the chance of brain bleeding in the event of a concussion. Seniors living alone are at an increased risk from falling as they may not have anyone to check on them. They may fall and no one knows, leaving the brain injury to go unreported and untreated. (2)

My grandmother lived to be 97 years old. While our family generally agreed that she was an extremely stubborn woman who became even more determined with age, science may offer another explanation. A baby's brain development occurs from back to front, with the prefrontal cortex located at the very front of the brain maturing around a person's mid-to-late twenties. This means that executive functioning skills, including judgment, planning, and decision-making, are among the last abilities to fully mature. In seniors, the reverse is true, with the prefrontal cortex being the first to shrink as we age. As this occurs, older adults may struggle with multitasking, planning and focus. (3) In my grandmother's case, it showed up as her going out to her flower beds at age 90 with a large knife to trim her flowers back in the heat of the day. This did indeed lead to a fall, though fortunately, without her falling on the knife.



With age, some things just naturally change that are beyond our control. Here are some precautions that we can take to prevent falls from happening:

- Make your environment safe:
 - Remove throw rugs
 - Secure loose cords
 - Add grab bars in areas where a handhold will help, such as a bathroom
 - Improve lighting, especially around stairs
 - Use non-slip bathmats
 - Avoid step stools and get someone else to use one for you
- Keep household items within easy reach
- Wear appropriate shoes or socks with grips on the bottom. Avoid shoes without a heel strap, flip flops or house shoes that do not provide support and have a nonslip bottom.
- Get your vision checked regularly. Notice if your glasses affect your spatial awareness. Remove your glasses when going up and down stairs if they make it harder for you to have good depth perception.
- Be aware of any outdoor hazards such as an uneven walkway, or steps without rails. Pay particular attention if walkways are wet, have leaves on them, or if it is icy.
- Build your strength, endurance, and balance. Consider easy activities such as chair yoga or Tai Chi. Some seniors join programs such as Silver Sneakers or exercise programs provided by their local Area Agency on Aging.
- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about your medications and fall risks. They may recommend that you take certain medications only at certain times of the day to help minimize risks.

Fall risk increases as we age, but many falls can be prevented through awareness and simple safety measures. Talk with your doctor about your individual risk factors and do not be embarrassed to discuss any falls you have experienced. Family members and healthcare providers can help identify concerns before a serious injury occurs.

Many families also utilize fall-alert monitoring systems. My mother uses Lifeline, which can notify family members and emergency services if she falls. Other providers, including Medical Care Alert and LifeStation, offer similar services. Check with your insurance company, Medicare, or Medicaid to determine whether these services may be covered. Taking proactive steps today can help you stay safe, independent, and active for years to come.

REFERENCES

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2. Concussion Awareness Now. (n.d.). Concussions and aging: What older adults need to know. Concussion Awareness Now. June 6, 2025.
<https://concussionawarenessnow.org/new/concussions-aging-what-older-adults-need-to-know>
3. Liu, Y., Chan, J. S. Y., & Yan, J. H. (2014). Neuropsychological mechanisms of falls in older adults. *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, 6, Article 64.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnagi.2014.00064>

HELPFUL APPS



Smiling Mind is a free mindfulness and mental fitness app offering 700+ guided sessions and programs for managing stress, improving focus, sleeping better, building resilience, and supporting overall well-being.



Mindfulness Coach is a free app developed by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs that teaches mindfulness through guided exercises, educational information, progress tracking, and reminders.

MEET THE BIP TEAM



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Clinical Operations
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Jonelle Tindall, BS
Administrative
Coordinator

ARKANSAS BRAIN INJURY COUNCIL

The mission of the ABIC is to engage, integrate, inspire and advocate for brain injury stakeholders to help achieve the Statewide vision for brain injury policies and services throughout Arkansas. The ABIC consists of positions for people living with brain injury as well as positions for professionals that serve the community.

LEARN MORE



MORE THAN A SURVIVOR: EDWARD "RED" RINEHART IS BUILDING A STRONGER VOICE FOR ARKANSAS

BY: BRANDI DAWSON, M.S.

Edward "Red" Rinehart knows what it means to rebuild a life after brain injury. He also knows that no survivor should have to figure out that life alone. Today, Red uses his own experience not simply to tell a story of survival, but to stand beside others, speak up for what they need, and help create a stronger brain injury community across Arkansas.

Red is a military veteran, firefighter, fire chief, and traumatic brain injury survivor. Each of those roles has shaped him, but it is what he is doing for other survivors that makes his story especially powerful.

In 2011, Red suffered a catastrophic fall after reportedly passing out from heat exhaustion. He fell approximately 15 feet and landed headfirst on concrete. His injuries included two skull fractures, internal and external brain hemorrhaging, crushed ribs, a punctured lung, kidney and liver trauma, and lasting nerve damage in his knee.



Surviving was only the beginning. Red then faced the long and often frustrating work of recovery. He struggled with memory loss, short-term recall, and everyday tasks that had once come easily. He also experienced losses that many survivors understand all too well, including changes in employment, relationships, finances, and identity.

Still, Red refused to believe that his injury meant his life—or his ability to contribute—was over. His approach was direct: "Lace boots, kick sand, and keep moving forward."

That determination eventually carried him back into the fire service. Today, he serves as fire chief of one of the departments that once believed the liability of his injury would prevent him from returning. It is a remarkable accomplishment, but Red's impact reaches far beyond the fire station.



Red now serves as chair of the Arkansas Brain Injury Council (ABIC), where he brings the perspective of someone who has lived through the medical, emotional, financial, and practical realities of brain injury. He understands that policies and programs work best when survivors have a real voice in creating them. He is willing to ask difficult questions, share his own experiences, and challenge others to think more broadly about who may be living with an unidentified or unsupported brain injury.

As chair, Red has many ideas for expanding the reach of the ABIC and connecting with people who may not recognize themselves as part of the brain injury community. He is especially interested in reaching veterans and first responders—groups that may

experience repeated head impacts, trauma, or symptoms they have learned to push through. He also wants the council to reach more survivors, families, and communities throughout Arkansas so they know resources, support, and people who understand are available.

Red's advocacy is not limited to meetings. He mentors newer survivors through monthly support luncheons hosted by Baptist Health Rehabilitation Institute. He offers honesty without taking away hope. He does not pretend recovery is easy or that every loss can be quickly fixed. Instead, he reminds survivors that healing belongs to them and that an injury does not erase who they are.

“Just because you had an injury doesn't mean it ends you,” Red said. “You keep being you.”



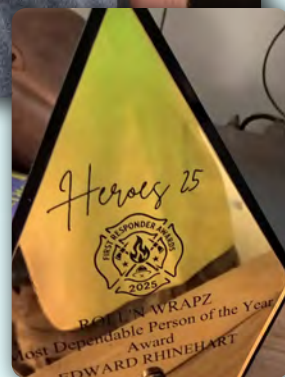
That message matters because brain injury can leave people feeling as though their lives have been divided into a before and an after. Red shows other survivors that the after can still hold purpose, leadership, service, and connection. He also shows professionals and community leaders why survivor voices must be included—not as an afterthought, but as an essential part of decisions affecting the brain injury community.

Red spent years running toward emergencies when others were running away. Now, he is bringing that same courage to advocacy. He is helping Arkansas move toward a future where more survivors are seen, heard, supported, and reminded that they still have something important to offer.

Red's story is not only about surviving a brain injury. It is about using that survival to make the path a little easier for the person coming behind him—and that may be the most powerful kind of purpose there is.



**Heroes
2025
Award
Ceremony**

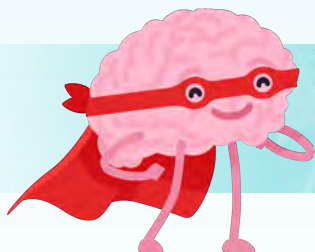


“

**Tell me what I can't do, let
me show you what I can
do, and then we can talk.**

- Red

”



Want to share your story?

EMAIL US AT BRAININJURY@UAMS.EDU



TOP 10



BRAIN INJURY MOVIES & DOCUMENTARIES

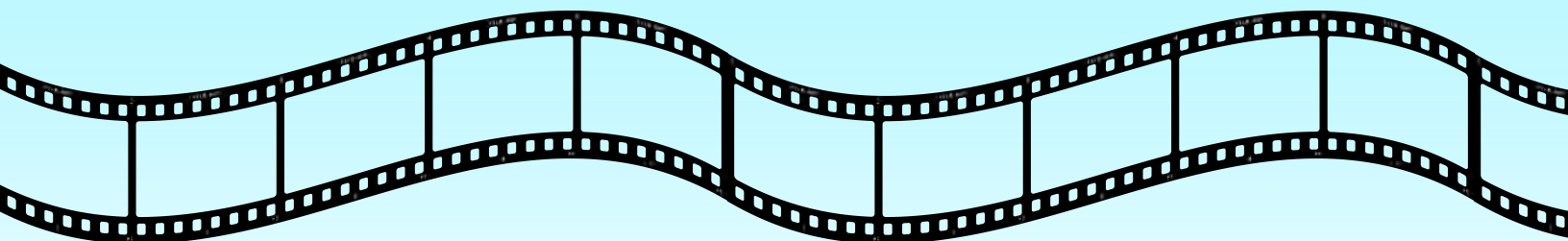
Looking for a movie or documentary related to brain injury? We asked our Brain Injury Community to share their top picks, and you answered! Here are the movies and documentaries that you all recommended.

- 1. Concussion (2015)**
- 2. 50 First Dates (2004)**
- 3. The Crash Reel (2013)**
- 4. Memento (2000)**
- 5. Welcome to Marwen (2018)**
- 6. Marwencal (2010)**
- 7. Regarding Henry (1991)**
- 8. Tell Me Who I Am (2019)**
- 9. The Rain People (1969)**
- 10. The Vow (2012)**

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Our community also recommended several films that aren't specifically about traumatic brain injury but explore other brain or neurological conditions:

- 1. Phenomenon (1996) - brain tumor**
- 2. The Music Never Stopped (2011) - brain tumor**
- 3. My Beautiful Broken Brain (2014) - hemorrhagic stroke**





Team Member Spotlight

Meet Our Health Educator Brandi Dawson, MS

Finding Purpose in People, Science, and the Power of the Brain

If you ask me what I love most about working in the brain injury community, the answer will always be the people.

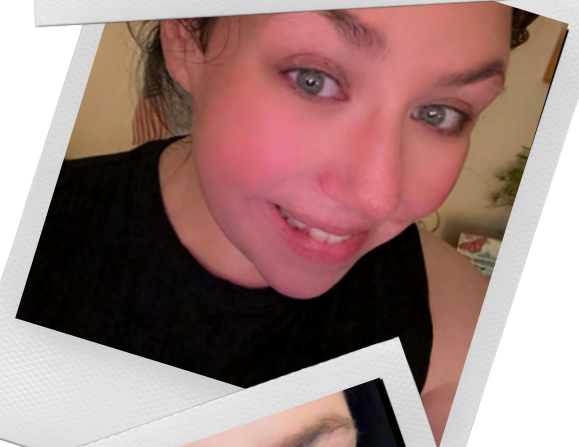
Brain injury survivors have a kind of grit that is difficult to put into words. I have watched people face enormous changes, losses, and challenges while continuing to find reasons to laugh, connect, help others, and move forward. Survivors are often the first people to reach out when someone else is struggling, even while navigating challenges of their own. Their strength does not mean every day is easy. It means they continue showing up, and I am constantly inspired by them.

I have also always loved science, especially biology, the brain, and the reasons people think, feel, and behave the way they do. The brain is fascinating because it is involved in everything that makes us who we are, yet there is still so much we do not fully understand. This job allows me to combine that curiosity with work that can make a real difference in someone's life.

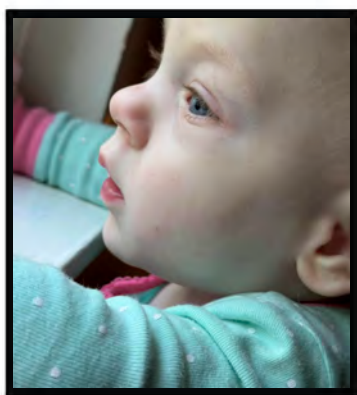
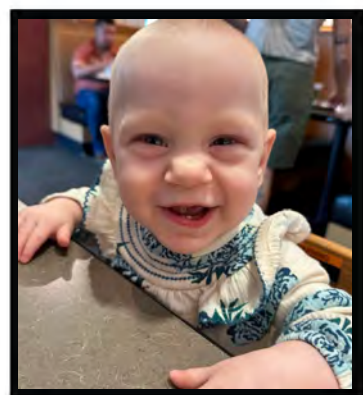
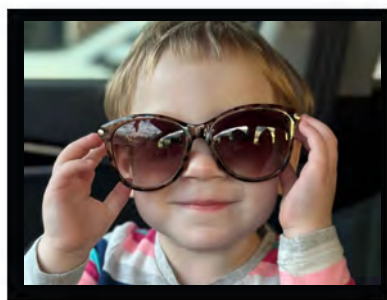
One of the most unexpected things I discovered through this position was a love of public speaking. I never imagined I would enjoy standing in front of a room full of people, but somewhere along the way, it became one of my favorite parts of my job.



Brandi



I love taking complicated information and making it understandable, useful, and hopefully memorable. Whether I am teaching professionals about brain injury, leading a group, or speaking at a conference, I enjoy helping people see the brain, and brain injury, in a new way.



Outside of work, the most important part of my life is my children. I love spending time with them, watching movies together, creating things, cooking, or simply being at home. They have taught me more about patience, advocacy, resilience, and unconditional love than any classroom ever could.

I am also an avid reader and would happily spend an entire free afternoon with a good book. Reading gives me a place to learn, imagine, recharge, and occasionally escape when life feels especially loud.

This work brings together so many things I care about: science, education, creativity, advocacy, and people. It gives me the opportunity to keep learning while helping survivors and families feel seen, supported, and connected. Most of all, it allows me to be part of a community filled with some of the strongest, funniest, most determined, and most generous people I have ever met. That is something I never take for granted.





Team Member Spotlight

10 Fast Facts: Get to Know Brandi Dawson, MS

Favorite Season?

Fall! I love the colors, the weather, hot cocoa fireside!

Favorite Color?

Cornflower blue followed closely by Periwinkle.

Dream Vacation?

Italy. Rome. Food. Sights. Perfection!

Beach or Mountains?

Mountains. I am not a beach girl.

Favorite Holiday?

It is an equal split between Halloween and Christmas. I love them both entirely too much to pick just one!

Favorite Way to Spend a Free Afternoon?

Reading, creating art, cooking/baking, spending time with my kids watching movies.

One Item That is Always in Your Bag or Purse?

Scissors! Usually more than one pair. I also have them in my car, several drawers throughout the house. You never know when you are going to need a pair of scissors!

What is Something People Are Usually Surprised to Learn About You?

I am an ambivert! Some people would say I am an extrovert, but I am just as equally an introvert. It depends on the situation, energy level, and people involved.

If you Could Instantly Become an Expert at Anything, What Would it Be?

The brain. Everything to do with the brain. I find it fascinating.

What is Your Favorite Part of Working with the Brain Injury Community?

My favorite part of working with the brain injury community is witnessing their incredible grit, resilience, and ability to find joy in life, even after everything they have faced. I especially love how they become a source of support for one another and are often the first to step forward when someone else needs help.



Memphis



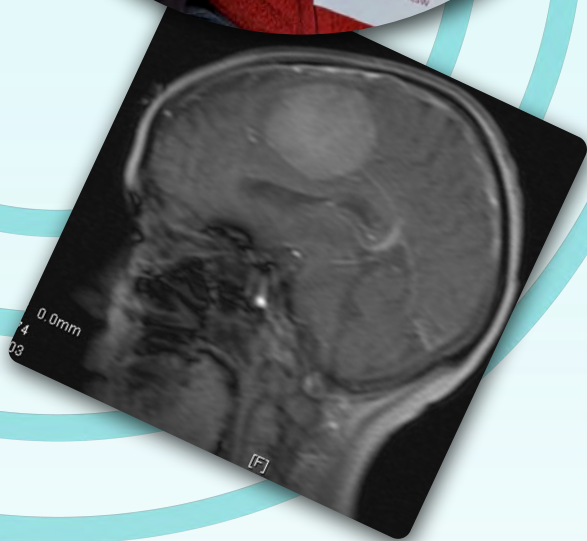
Londyn



Survivor Shout-Outs!

BIG OR SMALL, WE CELEBRATE THEM ALL!

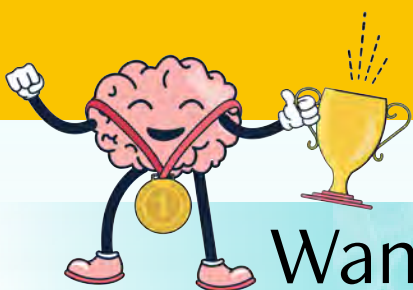
SHOUT OUT TO PHYLLIS MILES!



“ I had my brain injury a little over 16 years ago and wrote a book about it about 10 years ago — my story and how I have coped. Even though I was a neuro social worker and had advocated for many people, I was not sent to rehab and had to rehab myself. My only advocates were my family. Only recently have I found and joined support groups. Who would have known that now I have a published book about my experience. I just want to encourage others that it's okay to be a new person and to accept that new person. It's hard to deal with at times but we can do it. I also find it hard to believe that I have now been included in brain injury support group Zoom meetings in several states and have more planned. I also plan to present my book in person to a group soon. It's a conversational speech (not academia), larger print, short chapters book, which is the type I can handle now. Thanks so much for letting me share this. ”

Phyllis Miles, LCSW

**You can find Phyllis' book,
When I Went Missing, on BN.com.**



Want to share your accomplishments?

EMAIL US AT BRAININJURY@UAMS.EDU

Social Determinants of Health **Spotlight**

MORE THAN MEDICAL CARE: THE EVERYDAY THINGS THAT AFFECT OUR HEALTH

BY: DIANNE CAMPBELL, LCSW, CBIS

When we think about staying healthy, we usually think about seeing a doctor, taking medication, or going to therapy. Those things are important, but they are only part of the picture.

Many of the things that affect our health happen in our everyday lives. Do we have a safe place to live? Can we get to our medical appointments? Do we have healthy food to eat? Are we able to work or go to school? Do we have family, friends, or neighbors we can count on when we need help?

These everyday factors are called social determinants of health. While the name may sound complicated, the idea is actually very simple. Social determinants of health are the everyday conditions that can make it easier, or more challenging, for each of us to stay healthy and recover from an illness or injury.



Think of the social determinants of health as the everyday conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, learn, and age. They influence our ability to stay healthy, recover from illness or injury, and enjoy a good quality of life.

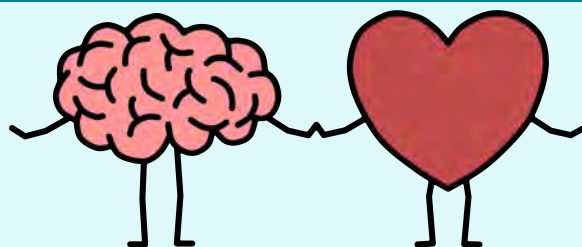
For people living with a brain injury, these factors can have a big impact on recovery. Someone may be ready to return to therapy but have no way to get there. Another person may understand what they need to do but struggle because of financial stress, housing challenges, or a lack of support. Even something as simple as having someone to encourage you or help you remember appointments can make a meaningful difference.

Social Determinants of Health **Spotlight**

The five major areas of social determinants of health include:

- **Healthcare Access and Quality** – Having health insurance, access to providers, rehabilitation services, and quality medical care.
- **Economic Stability** – Employment, income, financial security, and access to benefits.
- **Education Access and Quality** – Opportunities to learn new skills, return to school, understand health information, and access vocational services.
- **Neighborhood and Built Environment** – Safe housing, transportation, accessible communities, and places to be physically active.
- **Social and Community Context** – Family support, friendships, community involvement, peer support, and feeling connected.

Recovery is about more than healing the brain. It is also about having the tools, resources, and support needed to live as independently and fully as possible. While we cannot always change every challenge we face, understanding these factors helps us identify resources, advocate for ourselves or loved ones, and build stronger support systems.



Throughout this year, Brain Waves will feature a new social determinants of health spotlight each quarter, examining one domain or aspect of each one. We'll explain why it matters, share practical tips, and highlight Arkansas resources that may help brain injury survivors, caregivers, and professionals navigate these everyday challenges.

Because when we understand the whole picture, we can better support recovery—one step at a time. Together, we'll discover that recovery isn't just about healing the brain—it's also about creating the conditions that allow people to live their fullest lives.



Coming Next Quarter

Social Determinants Of Health Spotlight: Transportation Matters

Did you know that transportation is one of the biggest barriers to healthcare after a brain injury?

Without reliable transportation, people may miss medical appointments, therapy sessions, support groups, employment opportunities, and community activities. Transportation challenges can increase isolation and make recovery more difficult.

In our next issue, we'll explore:

- Why transportation is considered a social determinant of health
- Transportation challenges unique to brain injury survivors
- Arkansas transportation resources
- Questions to ask your healthcare team
- Tips for planning appointments
- Community transportation options
- How caregivers can help build transportation plans

As I present the social determinants of health information for you, please think of creating your own “playbook” (like your own resource guide or binder) with all of the resources and plans you can think of gathered and placed in the binder where you can easily find them. I would love to hear your ideas about what sort of system you develop and how that works for you.

With your permission, I plan to share some of your ideas and thoughts as you provide them to us. Also, if you have a favorite resource, please let us know what that is. Email Dianne at dcampbell4@uams.edu. It can be a statewide resource or something that is particular to your area of the state.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

**The human brain
can recognize and
remember over
50,000
distinct scents.**

**Neural signals
in the brain travel
at a speed of
268 miles per hour.**

**The brain
generates enough
electrical current
to power a
25-watt bulb.**

**The American Journal of Medicine,
2024; 138, 921-922**



IN LOVING *Memory*

Michael S. Jackson

July 30, 1982 – August 3, 2026

It is with great sadness that we remember Michael S. Jackson, a valued member of our brain injury community who touched the lives of those around him with his warmth, humor, positivity, and remarkable resilience.

Michael's life changed following a traumatic brain injury sustained in a workplace accident. As he navigated life after his injury, he faced many challenges, but he continued to move forward with strength and determination. He often spoke about the importance of acceptance in his recovery and credited the support of his family and healthcare team for helping him along the way.

Those who knew Michael will remember his warm laugh and his larger-than-life personality. Michael cherished his family and the time he spent with them. His love for his family was an important source of strength throughout his journey. Michael also loved being outdoors, admiring big trucks, attending church, and perhaps most of all, enjoying McDonald's fries.

Michael's journey was one of courage, perseverance, and hope. As a valued peer support mentor, he used his own experiences with brain injury to connect with and encourage others who were navigating their own recovery. Michael understood firsthand the challenges that can come after a brain injury, and he offered his peers the reassurance and understanding of someone who had walked a similar path. His generosity in sharing his story and supporting others will remain an important part of his legacy within the brain injury community.

We are grateful to have known Michael and to have been a part of his journey. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and the many people whose lives he touched through the brain injury community.

Our thoughts and deepest condolences are with Michael's loved ones during this difficult time.



EVENTS

EXERCISE WITH NEUROSIZE

The BIP has partnered with Neurosize to bring you monthly sessions of virtual brain games. Come have some fun with us!

1st Wed. of Each Month
12:00 - 1:00 PM CT



[tinyurl.com/
NEUROSIZE](https://tinyurl.com/NEUROSIZE)

CONNECTION HOUR

A weekly virtual hangout exclusively for survivors. A space to socialize, build friendships, laugh, share stories, or talk about what's on your mind.

Every Friday
12:00 - 1:00 PM CT



[tinyurl.com/
CONNECTIONHOUR](https://tinyurl.com/CONNECTIONHOUR)

BOOK CLUB!



TURNING PAGES TOGETHER EBOOK CLUB

This is a virtual eBook club for brain injury survivors. This eBook club is adapted with audio/visual chapters and the books are specific to TBI. This club is co-hosted with the UAMS Brain Injury Program.

Held Online Every Thursday 10:30 - 11:30 AM CT
ReinventingOurselves.org/ebook-club

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY



NASHIA.org

SOS: STATE OF THE STATES IN BRAIN INJURY CONFERENCE

August 31 - September 3, 2026
Little Rock, Arkansas

Join us in welcoming NASHIA's 37th annual State of the States in Brain Injury conference. SOS continues to bring state leaders together, alongside brain injury support/education organizations, partners, researchers, and providers.



SUPPORT GROUPS

Brain injury support groups provide a safe space for survivors to connect, share experiences, and learn strategies from others who truly understand. They reduce isolation, build hope, and offer encouragement throughout the recovery journey.

Online Survivor Group

Meets every Tuesday
1:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Online Caregiver Group

Meets 1st Monday of each month
2:30 to 3:30 p.m.

BHRI Support Group

In-Person at BHRI
2nd Wednesday of the Month
11:30am to 1:00 p.m.

Looking for more support group options?

Find support group details, sign-up information, and a list of current groups on our website: idhi.uams.edu/brain-injury-program

FEATURED RESOURCE



iCAN (Increasing Capabilities Access Network) helps Arkansans find and access assistive technology that can support learning, memory, communication, work, safety, and greater independence. Services are available to all Arkansans, regardless of age, location, disability, or income, and include free and low-cost assistive technology options and equipment resources.



(800) 828-2799



ar-ican.org

Brain Moments

We all have those moments when our brain does something unexpected! Share your funny, relatable, or memorable “**Brain Moment**” with us for a chance to be featured in an upcoming Brain Injury Program newsletter.



**SCAN QR
CODE OR
CLICK TO
LET US
KNOW!**

RISE TO THRIVE

Would you like to learn more about your brain injury and how to cope with it? Now you can! Join RISE to Thrive. Work with a neuropsychologist and content experts to gain new knowledge and skills after a traumatic brain injury.

The workshop is hosted by Baptist Health and supported by the UAMS Brain Injury Program. The workshop is **free** and **spots are limited**. The workshop will be held a few times each year with both in-person and virtual options.



**Learn more and complete the interest form at
idhi.uams.edu/brain-injury-program/resource-directory/rise**

Connect with Us!



(501) 526-7656



braininjury@uams.edu



idhi.uams.edu/brain-injury-program



instagram.com/uams_idhi_bip



facebook.com/arbraininjury

Brain & Spine Call Center

1-855-767-6983

**Have a brain or spine related health question?
We have nurses on call 24/7!
It's completely FREE!**

This is not for emergency services. For emergencies, call 911



UAMS
Brain Injury Program

