

# Brain Injury Press

**First Quarter 2023, Issue 255**

**OUR MISSION:** to improve the quality of life for brain injury survivors and their families

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**Juanita Rios, MA, CRC**  
Program Coordinator &  
Community Liaison



For the 16<sup>th</sup> year, on **March 18, 2023**, the brain injury community will unite again at **SDBIF's surviveHEADSTRONG event at Mission Bay Park De Anza Cove** to celebrate all the brain injury recovery achievements made over the past year. Survivors, family, friends, caregivers, students and brain injury community professionals will gather to share, encourage, empower and inspire the world with their individual stories of brain injury recovery.

We have more exhibitors than ever signed up to be a part of the surviveHEADSTRONG Health Fair, AND we are on pace with registrations for this to be the largest event yet! DJ Jason Morris will be keeping participants dancing, NeuroLab 360 will be leading the warm up exercises, we will be giving out awesome raffle prizes, but most importantly, our brain injury community friends will be there ready to reconnect and cheer on each other.

SOOO...be a part of this year's surviveHEADSTRONG Celebration. Registration is open to join a team, create a team, or simply register as a participant. Even if you can't be at the event, we encourage you to create a team and use this to educate, advocate and raise awareness for brain injury...March is Brain Injury Awareness Month after all! Plus, the raised funds go directly back into providing free-of-charge resources and services to the brain injury community.

Only when we come together can we truly show how impactful our community is—so, register today at **[give.classy.org/SH2023](https://give.classy.org/SH2023)** to be another voice for brain injury recovery. See you on March 18, 2023 at 8am for check-in!

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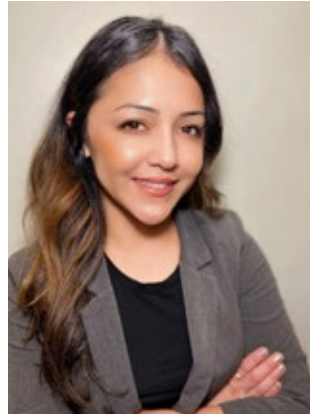


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# Meet SDBIF's Newest Team Member: **Juanita Rios**



Juanita Rios was born, raised and is a life-long resident of Riverside County. Dedicated to helping those in need in her community, she earned her Master of Arts in Rehabilitation Counseling and a Certification as a Rehabilitation Counselor.

For the past seven years, Juanita has worked in the behavioral and mental health field working with at-risk communities such as: foster youth and their families, undocumented persons, and persons with disabilities. Additionally, she has experience in community outreach, sharing resource information and education to increase access to various health services for community members.

Juanita continues to serve her community by assisting the San Diego Brain Injury Foundation in expanding its services to Riverside County. As SDBIF's Program Coordinator & Community Liaison, Juanita conducts case consultation services, educational presentations to communities and professionals, advocates for survivors' needs, represents SDBIF in community fairs and events, and much more. Juanita loves her role within SDBIF, especially because the services she provides are free to brain injury survivors and their families, and as she says often, "help spread the word!"

## To Our Friends, We Can't Thank You Enough

SDBIF knows that our community is incredibly loyal, giving and dedicated ... so, the abundance of love and generosity you showed during our end-of-the-year Friends of the Foundation Drive was overwhelming. With everyone's efforts, we raised \$20,000, all of which will be put directly back into providing the free-of-charge services, information, activities and resources to our expanding brain injury community.



Thank you for being a voice to raise awareness. Thank you for graciously donating. Thank you for being a friend to brain injury recovery.

# A Message from SDBIF's Executive Director, Dr. Roslyn Knox



## Happy New Year SDBIF Community!

We have entered another year stronger and more motivated than ever! My first few months serving the brain injury community has been an exhilarating journey. I'm so proud of the men and women I have met that are valiantly fighting to reclaim their lives step-by-step. It is an honor to walk alongside you. Welcome to 2023!

The Board of Directors have approved the SDBIF strategic plan for 2023 that builds on the 40 years of service and accomplishments of the Foundation. SDBIF efforts are sponsored in part by a grant from the Department of Rehabilitation, generous Sponsors, Donors and YOU that believe in the power of our survivors.

The dedicated SDBIF team is implementing strategies to help make social re-integration and other services more accessible for survivors. Here is a snapshot of what you can expect in 2023:

- » Enhancing support services
- » Implementing a Peer Mentor Program
- » Developing and distributing multi-lingual materials and support services for the Hispanic population
- » Developing new partnerships with brain injury service providers
- » Working to centralize recovery resources
- » Expanding our resource database
- » Refreshing our website, newsletters & logos
- » Reducing application processes
- » Expanding service areas into Riverside and surrounding areas
- » Hosting in-person social activities
- » Implementing Vocational Services Program
- » Providing expanded outreach to under served brain injury survivors and their families
- » Providing more BI education and awareness to health and well care providers
- » Providing individual resource care coordination services

Oh yes! There's a lot of things going on at SDBIF to ensure survivors and their families have the tools they need. During this first quarter, we are bringing on new staff and organizing the 2023 programs to offer seamless services and promote a healthy recovery process.

We appreciate the brain injury community for staying tuned in with us. It is going to be a phenomenal year. **Together, We Thrive.**







## Howard House Gets A Makeover



The residents of Howard House have been busy! From a Halloween party and attending the SDBIF Holiday party and having their own holiday party, the resident's days are full. They enjoy music therapy twice a month and have weekly sessions with various therapists.

We want to thank **Señor Grubby in Carlsbad** for providing free lunch to our residents when they

are out and about in north county. Also a big thank you to **Hugh and Evelyn Bess** for all their Christmas donations to Howard House.

Howard House has also had a minor make-over with new sofas, desks and lighting. We continue to upgrade our home so that we can continue to improve the quality of life for our residents.



## San Diego Disability Law Group, APC

*Helping brain injury survivors and their families for over 35 years*

1901 First Ave., Ste 104, San Diego, CA 92101

[sandiegodisabilitylaw.com](http://sandiegodisabilitylaw.com)

### **Personal Injury**

If you or a loved one has suffered a traumatic brain injury, you may have legal remedies available to you. These can include money for medical expenses, long-term medical care and rehabilitation, lost wages, pain, suffering and emotional distress. Brain injuries are often difficult to prove, and require the experience and expertise of a qualified brain injury attorney.

### **Social Security Disability**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is governed by complicated rules and regulations. To understand them, you need to speak SSA language. In California and across the country, the SSA denies more than half (about 65%) of all initial applications for disability benefits. We understand how important it is to present a claim correctly from the outset, and your chances of obtaining benefits improve with the help of an experienced disability attorney.

**To receive a FREE case review from an experienced attorney, please call:  
(619) 338-9000 or toll-free (877) 700-3994**

# Family, Friends, and Caregivers Peer-to-Peer Virtual Support Group Meetings

While a noble deed, it is never easy to watch a loved one going through the winding struggles of recovering from a traumatic brain injury. As friends, family and caregivers, we try our best to make sure that survivors know they have the love and support they need to recover—to let them know they are not alone. SDBIF wants you to know that YOU are not alone either.

**Coming Spring 2023, SDBIF will begin hosting a virtual Family, Friends, and Caregivers Peer-to-Peer Support Group on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month.** This will be a safe space to discuss topics important to you, share tips, best practices, concerns, and lean on each other for support.

Registration will be required to get the Zoom link or meeting place, and space will be limited to ensure quality interaction.

SDBIF is building a list of people interested in this group, so each month we can email them the link to register for that month's meeting. To get on that email list, please send an email to [info@sdbif.org](mailto:info@sdbif.org), or click [HERE](#) to update your email preferences.



# Brain Injury Survivor Peer-to-Peer Virtual Support Group Meetings

SDBIF knows that it's important to connect with people that understand you. Since 2020, SDBIF has been hosting a Brain Injury Survivor Peer-to-Peer Support group to create an opportunity for brain injury survivors to come together so they don't feel alone.

This support group provides a safe forum for survivors to share challenges, triumphs and strategies with a group of peers. We try to have a loose topic for group discussion, but it's NOT a traditional speaker group. Think of it as a "check in" chat about how everyone is doing and coping. Dr. Roslyn Knox, Executive Director of SDBIF, will be facilitating these meetings.

This group meets on the last Friday of every month from 2-3:30pm PST, except for November (the Friday before Thanksgiving) and December (no meeting). Registration is required and space is limited to 15 participants.

Every month SDBIF sends out an email with the registration link for that month's virtual support group (through Zoom). To get on that list, please send an email to [info@sdbif.org](mailto:info@sdbif.org), or click [HERE](#) to update your email preferences.



## Monthly In-Person Survivor Activities



It's time to enjoy a little sunshine, friends, and peers! The challenges of being couped up during the pandemic made it difficult to be able to get out and have fun with others. Social engagement is an important part of the physical and mental healing process. **SDBIF is excited to announce that we are returning to our in-person social activities for the brain injury community!**

There is nothing like getting out and enjoying time with fellow survivors and loved ones.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, we are kicking off the year bringing survivors, family, friends, and the community together for the Annual

surviveHEADSTRONG Walk March 18, 2023. Remember to Register and tell your friends!

### **Beginning in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, SDBIF will be:**

1. Hosting Friday Night Liberty on the first Friday of each month at the SDBIF Office. Stop by for snacks and special artwork presentations by our own survivors while you browse and enjoy other exhibits, food, and fun throughout Liberty Station.
2. Collaborating with partners to bring you in-person social activities. Come out and enjoy activities such as Day of Art, Great Day for a Movie, Picnic Day, Game Day, and other fun-filled activities.

Beyond our plans, we want to hear what activities are important to you! Email us at [info@sdbif.org](mailto:info@sdbif.org) or give us a call at **(619) 294-6541**, to let us know what you would like to do with your peers!

## Art of Giving with Deborah Consaul

SDBIF always takes pleasure in sharing our survivor's accomplishments. So, after a few years of not having these in-person Friday Night Liberty events, hosting Deborah Consaul on December 3rd at our Art of Giving event in our office in Liberty Station was incredibly special. SDBIF partnered with all the artists in our building to create an evening full of art, music, and festivities to kick off the holiday season.

Deborah Consaul set up her beautiful hand-made greeting cards that she creates for various occasions including Christmas, birthdays, general inspirational cards and much more. As many people came through to enjoy her artwork, she



was also able to share with them her brain injury recovery journey and educate the importance of the services and resources SDBIF provides

We look forward to many more evenings such as this to educate about brain injury awareness and support our survivors on their journey to recovery!



# FOUNDATION NEWS

## SDBIF Saturday Meeting Recaps & Video Links

### TIPS & TRICKS TO ORGANIZE AFTER BRAIN INJURY



### OCTOBER 2022

Cindy Pahr, M.Ed., CBIST  
*Certified Brain Injury Specialist Trainer*

Learn tips & tricks to stay organized after surviving a brain injury

[▶ WATCH THE VIDEO NOW](#)

### SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS & WORK INCENTIVES



### JANUARY 2023

Aleyda Toruno  
*WIPA Project Director, Disability Rights California*

Social Security work incentives that allow you to transition to work while receiving benefits

[▶ WATCH THE VIDEO NOW](#)

MORE 2022 RECAP VIDEOS						
JANUARY	FEBRUARY	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
<b>KEY PRINCIPLES OF RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>YOGA HEALING JOURNEY FOR TBI SURVIVORS</b>	<b>BRAIN INJURY &amp; ALZHEIMER'S</b>	<b>EMPLOYMENT AFTER A BRAIN INJURY</b>	<b>PHYSICAL THERAPY EVALUATION AFTER A TBI</b>	<b>MINDFULNESS AND COGNITIVE REHAB</b>	<b>SDCCD'S ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY (ABI) PROGRAM</b>

## Upcoming SDBIF Saturday Meetings

### NEUROFEEDBACK AS A TREATMENT METHOD



### FEBRUARY 18, 2023

Divya Kakaiya, Ph. D., M.S.  
*Licensed Clinical Psychologist*

Learn how Neurofeedback works and why it's successful in brain injury rehabilitation.

[Add This to Your Calendar](#)

## MARCH

### BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

**There Will Be No March Saturday Speaker Meeting.**

Instead, join us at



on

**MARCH 18, 2023**



### **CLICK HERE**

to go to SDBIF's  
YouTube Channel to see  
all available videos

**SUBSCRIBE** to get notified of new videos!

# FOUNDATION NEWS

## SDBIF is Exhibiting at the TBI Med Legal Conference in March



The San Diego Brain Injury Foundation will be exhibiting at the largest gathering of TBI experts in both medicine and law at the TBI Med Legal Conference from March 9-12, 2023. Having been a part of this conference for more than 15 years, SDBIF finds that it is a great opportunity to educate and bring awareness to brain injury recovery and what SDBIF has to offer for survivors and their families.

Tagged as being Law School for medical professionals and Medical School for lawyers, it is a four-day, six-track, jammed-packed conference teaching attendees how to handle traumatic brain injury cases from injury through trial.

If you are interested in attending or finding out more about this conference, you can go to this link: [tbimedlegal.org](https://tbimedlegal.org).

You can also volunteer! To sign up for that, please click here: [tbimedlegal.org/volunteers](https://tbimedlegal.org/volunteers).



## Upcoming Events

### SDBIF EVENTS

#### FEBRUARY Speaker Series Meeting

Saturday, **February 18**, from 10-Noon (PST)

**ZOOM:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5019416338>

**IN-PERSON:** Joyce Beers Community Center

3900 Vermont St., San Diego, CA 92103

#### FEBRUARY **ZOOM** Survivor Peer Support Group

FEBRUARY 24, 2022 from 2-3:30 pm (PST)

Only 15 spaces are available—[REGISTER HERE](#)



### ALVARADO / PALS MEETINGS

**MORE INFO:** [alvaradohospital.com/pals](https://alvaradohospital.com/pals),  
(619) 229-7362

**Online** Aphasia Class—Mondays @ 10 am (PST)

Art Class—1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday @ 2 pm (PST)

**Online** Book Club—Wednesdays @ 10 am (PST)  
Starting February 15

### SCRIPPS STROKE & BRAIN INJURY

**MORE INFO:** Deborah Pimstone, 760-633-6709  
[pimstone.deborah@scrippshealth.org](mailto:pimstone.deborah@scrippshealth.org)

Survivors & Loved Ones Support & Education Grp  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays each month, 2:30-3:45pm

**In-Person** (w/ masks) & **Online** (contact for link)



Select programs funded  
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## Does Brain Plasticity Increase After A Head Injury?

Medically Reviewed By  
Nancy Hammond, M.D.

Written By James Roland  
for [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com) on July 28, 2022



Brain plasticity, also called neuroplasticity, refers to the brain's ability to adapt its structure and function in response to changes, such as a head injury or aging. Brain plasticity also involves the formation of new connections between neurons (brain cells).

The brain's ability to reorganize these features after an injury affects the nature of post-injury recovery.

The severity of the injury goes a long way toward determining how the brain responds. But it's often possible to boost brain plasticity with interventions and rehabilitation during the healing process.

### WHAT IS BRAIN PLASTICITY?

Brain plasticity is a term that refers to the brain's ability to restructure and reconfigure itself in response to change.

Change that can influence the brain comes in several forms. Expected changes include learning, experience, and aging. Unexpected changes include things like stroke and head injury.

Neuroplasticity has long been observed in children. It involves a process called neurogenesis, which is the formation of new neurons in the brain (and elsewhere in the nervous system).

There are two basic types of brain plasticity: structural and functional.

### STRUCTURAL PLASTICITY

Structural plasticity refers to the way the brain's physical structure changes in response to learning.

For example, a small 2018 study showed that healthy adults who participated in balance training twice a week, for 12 weeks, experienced thickening in certain areas of the brain involved in spatial orientation.

A 2016 study examined neuroplasticity in people learning to read Braille. It found that over the course of daily lessons, for 3 weeks, study participants developed increased connectivity in regions of the brain involved in processing sensations like touch. →

# BRAIN INJURY IN THE NEWS



## FUNCTIONAL PLASTICITY

Functional plasticity refers to the brain's ability to heal itself after injury. To achieve this, healthy regions of the brain adapt to take over certain functions that the damaged parts of the brain used to perform. This makes functional plasticity especially relevant for people recovering from head injuries.

A 2017 review of studies examining the role of neuroplasticity in stroke recovery found that a stroke can actually trigger neuroplasticity in certain areas. Neuroplasticity plays a role as the brain tries to resume regular functions, like speaking and controlling the movement of limbs.

## CAN BRAIN PLASTICITY HELP YOU HEAL AFTER A TBI?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) refers to changes in brain function or brain health caused by an external force, such as a serious blow to the head.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Trusted Source reports that there were more than 220,000 TBI-related hospitalizations in 2019 and more than 64,000 TBI-related deaths the following year.

A TBI differs from a nontraumatic brain injury, also known as an acquired brain injury. Acquired brain injuries are those caused by internal factors, such as a stroke, which can damage brain tissue and affect muscle control, speech, cognition, and other functions.

A 2020 review of alternative neuroplasticity therapies to treat stroke survivors suggests that approaches such as brain stimulation therapy and virtual reality might help enhance brain plasticity. It may also be possible to transfer nerves from healthy parts of the brain to injured parts.

Similarly, a 2017 review of studies on cognitive rehabilitation following TBI, suggests that memory and other thinking skills may be recovered to some degree with the help of cognitive rehabilitation. The studies showed how cognitive rehabilitation helped to modify damaged neural connections and various brain functions.

## DOES TBI INCREASE NEUROPLASTICITY?

Because different regions of the brain are responsible for different functions, the location and severity of an injury determine which functions are affected and to what degree.

For example, certain areas of the brain are responsible for your ability to move certain parts of the body, like your left arm or your right foot.

This is where brain plasticity can help you heal after a brain injury. Just as exercise and learning can enhance brain structure and function, the body's natural healing and recovery process after an injury can also increase neuroplasticity.

When neurons die due to injury, the brain responds within a few days by developing new neural networks and recruiting various types of cells to take the place of those damaged in the injury.

The extent to which neuroplasticity occurs depends on an individual's age, the location of the injury, and other factors.

## DOES AGE MATTER AFTER BRAIN INJURY?

Whether it's a brain injury or a broken wrist, being younger is always an advantage when it comes to recovery.

# BRAIN INJURY IN THE NEWS

A 2008 study noted that disability scores following a TBI tended to be significantly better among younger TBI survivors compared with older individuals, even when those older survivors had less severe injuries. And the younger patients improved more in the first 5 years after the injury.

A 2019 report states that age affects neuroplasticity, the need for more strategies and therapies to compensate for age-related changes should be a higher priority for the aging population.

## **CAN YOU SEE BRAIN PLASTICITY ON AN MRI?**

One of the most useful tools in diagnosing the impact of a TBI, stroke, or other injury affecting the brain is magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

An MRI can detect many changes in brain structure and function. Current technology is far from perfect, but it's continuing to improve.

A 2021 article suggests that advanced MRI techniques are helping doctors develop a more accurate picture of mild TBIs. This may help improve the treatment and understanding of mild TBIs in the future.

A newer type of MRI, called functional MRI (fMRI), can help doctors observe brain activity, not just brain structure. This may be particularly helpful in studying brain damage and recovery.

A 2017 study of neuroimaging after TBI notes that fMRI can detect changes in thinking skills, emotions, and the course of neuroplasticity after an injury to the brain. The study says that fMRI is a helpful tool in assessing the damage caused by TBI and tracking brain changes during recovery.

But fMRI, the study says, will need to be accompanied by other data if it's going to inform treatment decisions. This includes information gathered during cognitive-behavioral evaluations and other assessments.



## **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO HEAL AFTER A TBI?**

The time necessary to heal from a Traumatic Brain Injury can vary considerably from one person to the next. This is based mostly on the seriousness of the injury, as well as its location, the age of the individual, and that person's overall physical and mental health.

A full recovery from a mild TBI can be expected in about 3 months. People with a moderate TBI will take longer to heal and will typically need cognitive rehabilitation, physical therapy, and other interventions.

Predicting the degree and length of recovery from a severe TBI is very difficult, and should be done on a case-by-case basis.

## **TAKEAWAY**

Brain plasticity after a head injury is when brain functions thought to be lost due to damage begin to be adopted by other, healthy brain tissue.

While not all functions can be reorganized or reestablished completely, the brain's remarkable adaptability can often help people who had a stroke, traumatic brain injury, or other harmful events recover some function.

Brain plasticity can be encouraged through cognitive therapy, physical therapy, and other treatments.





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to send SDBIF your video

In San Diego County alone, over  
**30,000 people**  
sustain a brain injury each year.



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**MARCH IS BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH!**

Saturday, March 18, 2023 · 8 am-1 pm · Mission Bay Park De Anza Cove

**Celebrate With All Your Brain Injury Recovery Friends**

REGISTER, CREATE OR JOIN A TEAM TODAY AT:

**[CLICK HERE](#) OR GO TO [GIVE.CLASSY.ORG/SH2023](http://GIVE.CLASSY.ORG/SH2023)**

**There are so many ways to raise awareness, funds and support for this community...you can:**

**Register, Create or Join a Team**



**Share this with Friends & Family**



**Make a Donation**



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