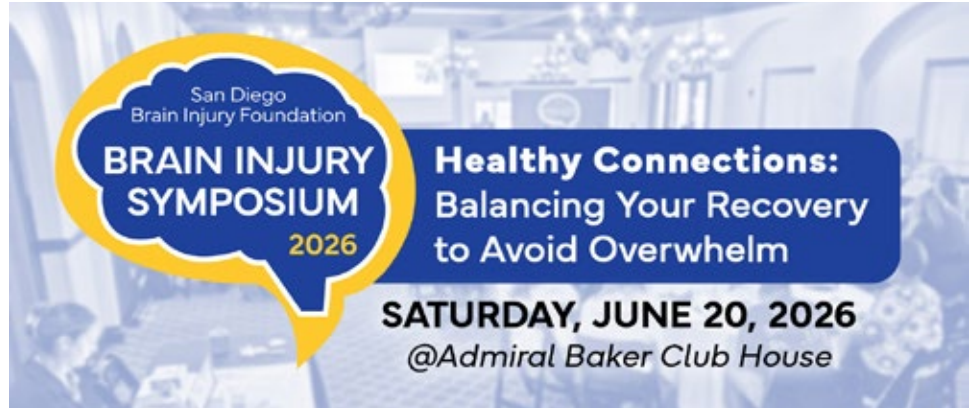


**OUR MISSION:** to improve the quality of life for brain injury survivors and their families

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## 2026 Brain Injury Symposium

Feeling overwhelmed by the brain injury recovery journey? You aren't alone.

Our Annual Symposium is returning on June 20<sup>th</sup> at the Admiral Baker Club House, bringing together a diverse and supportive community for a day dedicated to growth, understanding, and connection.

This year's theme, **Healthy Connections: Balancing Recovery to Avoid Overwhelm**, highlights an essential part of the reintegration journey after brain injury. The event is designed for survivors, professionals, as well as families, friends, and caregivers— *continued Page 4*



## surviveHEADSTRONG Walk 2026: A Day of Strength, Community, and Celebration

What a truly inspiring day we shared on March 21<sup>st</sup> at our annual surviveHEADSTRONG Walk presented by Thorson Law group! With over 600 people in attendance, our community came together in a powerful show of support, resilience, and unity for brain injury survivors and their families.

We are incredibly grateful to **Thorson Law Group**, our Title Sponsor, whose generous *continued Page 6*

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## COMMUNITY STANDOUT



### Team ABI & San Diego College of Continuing Education

At this year's surviveHEADSTRONG Walk & Health Fair presented by Thorson Law Group, we were once again inspired by the incredible dedication and impact of **Team ABI**. Year after year, this remarkable group shows up with passion, purpose, and unwavering commitment to the brain injury community.

Thanks to their continued participation and fundraising, Team ABI has raised nearly \$300,000 over the years—an extraordinary accomplishment that has made a lasting difference for brain injury survivors and their families. **We are deeply grateful to every team member and supporter who helped reach this milestone.**

We also extend heartfelt thanks to the leaders behind this effort, including **Dr. Tina King**, President of San Diego College of Continuing Education; **Rosa Monzon**, DSPS Counselor/Instructor; **Heike Kessler-Heiberg**, retired Associate Professor for the ABI Program; and **Brandi Bass**, who served the ABI program for 14 years.

The Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Program for adult survivors plays a vital role in helping students navigate life after injury. The program supports individuals as they grieve the loss of their "old self" and begin building a "new self"—whether through volunteering, returning to work or school, or living more independently. It is truly life-changing work.

In a meaningful show of collaboration, SDBIF proudly donates a portion of Team ABI's fundraising back to the ABI program, helping expand these essential services.

We are forever grateful for Team ABI's dedication, heart, and teamwork. Your continued support exemplifies the power of community and the difference we can make together.

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

### Greetings Brain Injury Community Friends,

As we step into the second quarter of the year, I am filled with gratitude and excitement for everything we are accomplishing together. At SDBIF, our focus remains clear: strengthening the bridge between survivors, families, and the providers, practitioners, and advocates who help make recovery and reintegration more supported, more connected, and more achievable. Brain injury can change everything, but it does not have to isolate you from the world, resources, relationships, or hope.

With that in mind, we are eagerly preparing for our Brain Injury Symposium on Saturday, June 20, 2026. As we recently discussed, this year's theme is "**Healthy Connections: Balancing Recovery to Avoid Overwhelm.**" The brain injury recovery journey affects everyone involved, and daily challenges can quickly cause overwhelm for survivors, supporters, and the broader community alike. This event will bring together survivors, families, professionals, and advocates to share knowledge and practical tools to recognize early signs of burnout. Through expert keynote insights, interactive panel discussions, and collaborative breakout sessions, we will discover actionable strategies to set healthy boundaries, manage energy, and build sustainable routines that foster meaningful connections.

Beyond the Symposium, we are continuing to expand access and deepen the impact of the programs we've built to meet your real-life needs:

- **SISR (Students Invested in Survivor Reintegration):** We are continuing our weekly one-to-one advocacy and personalized resource plans to help survivors move forward, week by week.
- **ALT Library & Mini Technology Workshops:** We are providing hands-on guidance and assistive technology, as well as practical, in-person sessions to build confidence in everyday technology skills.
- **Brain Injury Collaboration Network (BICN):** Our growing, vetted inter-referral network continues to connect brain-injury-informed providers and advocates to create coordinated, streamlined pathways of care.
- **Support Groups & Social Programming:** We continue to foster connection, expression, and healing through our Peer-to-Peer support groups and Social and Creative Arts Programming.

To get involved, request support, or learn more about the upcoming Symposium, reach us at **619-294-6541** or **info@SDBIF.org**. To our generous donors, dedicated educators, healthcare professionals, families, and every survivor—thank you. Your support makes our free programs possible, and every dollar helps expand access, services, and outreach to brain injury survivors in every community in San Diego County and surrounding counties.

With hope and forward momentum in 2026—Let's Thrive Together!

*With gratitude and anticipation,*

Roslyn Knox, Ph.D., MBA,  
Executive Director of SDBIF





continued from page 1

recognizing that recovery is not a solitary path, but one shaped by the people and support systems around us.

Attendees can expect a day filled with meaningful dialogue, learning opportunities, and shared experiences. Expert panelists will provide practical insights and strategies to help survivors better understand how to balance activity and energy levels, reducing the risk of overwhelm while supporting continued progress. These discussions aim to empower individuals with tools they can use in everyday life, while also offering valuable perspectives for those who support them.

Beyond the presentations, the symposium fosters connection across all groups. By bringing together survivors, loved ones, and professionals in one space, the event creates a unique opportunity to build understanding, exchange ideas, and strengthen the network of support that is so vital in the recovery process.

Whether you are navigating your own recovery journey or supporting someone who is, this symposium offers a welcoming space to learn, reflect, and connect. Join us for an inspiring and informative day as we continue to grow together as a community.



### Why SURVIVORS Should Come

A brain injury can change every part of your life, and the recovery and reintegration journey can often feel overwhelming. Join us to learn how to better understand your limits, manage your energy, and build healthy connections that support your progress without pushing yourself too far. Gain practical tools for recognizing when you need to slow down, ask for help, and avoid isolation—so you can continue moving forward with confidence on your recovery journey.

### Why Family, Friends & Caregivers Should Come

Supporting a brain injury survivor can be deeply meaningful, but it can also feel exhausting, emotional, and overwhelming. Join us to better understand how to recognize signs of stress and burnout in yourself while learning ways to support your loved one without sacrificing your own well-being. Discover practical strategies for setting healthy boundaries, maintaining connection, and helping both you and the survivor in your life navigate recovery without retreating into isolation.

### Why Brain Injury Professionals Should Come

The reintegration journey after brain injury looks different for every survivor, and setbacks, frustration, sensory overload, and shifting expectations can quickly lead to overwhelm. Join us to gain practical tools for recognizing the signs of overwhelm in both survivors and their support systems before it leads to withdrawal or isolation. Learn strategies to help clients build healthy connections, set realistic expectations, pace activity, and create sustainable routines that support long-term recovery and reintegration.



### AGENDA

- 9:30** Registration, breakfast & coffee
- 10:00** Welcome & Opening Statements
- 10:30** **KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Interdisciplinary Collaborations: Creating Consistent Support Systems**  
Cassandra Thorson, *Thorson Law Group*
- 11:00** Break & Browse Health and Wellness Vendors
- 11:30** Panel Discussion and Q&A:  
**SPEAKER: Creating Sustainable Habits**  
Diana Mueller, *Empowered Purpose*  
**SPEAKER: Balancing Activity, Relationships & Recovery**  
Micaela Connelly, *Collage Rehabilitation*
- 1:00** Lunch & Browse Health and Wellness Vendors
- 2:00** **Breakout Session Topic: How do you recognize that you (or your client) are in a state of overwhelm and how do you address it?**
- 2:40** Group Facilitators present their group's thoughts
- 3:30** Closing remarks & survey collection

Get your tickets today!



### PRE-EVENT TICKET PRICES

- \$35** Survivors
- \$50** Family, Friends, Caregivers, Professionals

### DAY-OF TICKET PRICES

- \$75** Walk-Up Registration





throughout the day are a reminder of the strength of this community and the importance of coming together to support one another on the journey to recovery.

We are so thankful to everyone who attended, volunteered, sponsored, and supported this event. Your involvement helps us continue our mission to improve the quality of life for brain injury survivors and their families.

We're already looking forward to doing it all again next year, on **Saturday, March 20, 2027!**



support helped make this event possible. Their commitment to our mission continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve. We also extend our sincere thanks to **The DeRose Foundation**, whose generous donation provided SDBIF water bottles, and to **NeuroRestorative** for once again sponsoring our tote bags. **South Bay Rehabilitation Center / Paradise Valley Hospital** generously provided number cards for each walker, helping with event organization and participant identification throughout the day. The support from these valued partners played a vital role in making this event truly unforgettable.

This year's event featured a vibrant health fair, where numerous exhibitors shared valuable resources, services, and information with attendees. It was wonderful to see so many connections being made and to witness the impact of bringing our community together in one place.

A big thank you to **DJ Jason Morris**, who kept the energy high throughout the day with great music, and to **Oliver Rhodes**, who led us in a fun and energizing warm-up to get everyone ready for the walk.

As teams gathered and participants set out on the walk, there was a shared sense of purpose and inspiration. The smiles, stories, and support seen



Thank you 2026 Sponsors!



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## Meet the New SDBIF Team Members



### Meet: Juliana

Outreach & Engagement Coordinator

Hi all! My name is Juliana Arguelles, but I go by Jules. As the new SDBIF Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, I connect with community partners, meet with providers, and share resources available to brain injury survivors and their families. I care deeply about making people feel supported and informed, and I enjoy building connections throughout the community. I graduated from UCSD in 2022. Before SDBIF, I worked in education for three years, where I discovered how much I value supporting and guiding others. My volunteer work sparked a strong commitment to serving the community in a more meaningful way. I build relationships with practitioners and service providers to better connect survivors, families, and caregivers to these trusted resources. I also focus on raising awareness about programs and improving access to services throughout San Diego and nearby communities. Since starting this role, I have connected with inspiring survivors, compassionate family members, and passionate professionals. Knowing there are more people to meet, more events to unite, and more resources to discover makes me excited to contribute to SDBIF.

### Meet: Xitlali “Lali”

Program Resource Coordinator

Hello Brain Injury Community! My name is Xitlali Vazquez, but I prefer to go by Lali. I am the new Program Resource Coordinator for SDBIF. Typically, you can find me answering our helpline calls and sending out pertinent resources. But, I’m also the lead on our Students Invested in Survivor Reintegration (SISR) program. I am very excited to be part of this team, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with such amazing and empowering people! Before SDBIF, I worked as a case manager for unhoused folks or folks at risk of homelessness, supporting them in their journey to find affordable housing. I have also worked with at-risk youth in a group home setting—so I have a wide array of experience working with people of different backgrounds. I enjoy working with people closely, assisting them in any way that I can; speaking with new people and discovering different perspectives. Everywhere I go, new people that teach me more about life. SDBIF has done the same thing, as I get to meet people from all kinds of walks of life, yet all connected by one thing, brain injury. I am so happy to be part of such an inclusive community, and I look forward to meeting you all at our community events and support groups!

### Meet: Cynthia

Consumer Navigation Specialist

Hi everyone! I am the SDBIF Consumer Navigation Specialist. In my role, I’m fortunate to have the responsibility of connecting survivors and families to resources, organizing and facilitating workshops, coordinating the ALT Library and helping with program implementation. After getting my bachelor’s degree, I pursued a master’s which expanded my passion of protecting and improving the overall health of communities. Throughout my career, I have focused on environmental research collecting and interpreting data. I realized I wanted to work directly with people to understand the implications and applications of research. So, I decided to transition to the private sector and joined SDBIF in January with the goal of impacting brain injury survivors’ lives by increasing their access to resources as they navigate their community reintegration journey. I am awe-inspired by the people I have met and spoken with thus far, stories of resilience and bravery echo through every story I’ve heard. I am honored to have the opportunity to be a part of the brain injury community and to share my experience and passion to improve the quality of life for others. I look forward to assisting you with your navigation needs.



### San Diego Disability Law Group, APC

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#### 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**

## Celebrating Howard House's Growth & Evolution



The past few months at Howard House have been filled with growth, celebrations, fun outings, and exciting improvements around the home. We are grateful for our residents, staff, and families who continue to make Howard House such a supportive community.

### April Highlights

April was a busy and joyful month. Residents and staff celebrated Easter with a special brunch and dinner, along with making Easter baskets filled with goodies.

Residents also enjoyed an outing to Moonlight Beach and participated in an Earth Day park activity where they created art projects using leaves and natural materials. Throughout the month, staff also participated in several important trainings around the home to continue supporting the best care possible for our residents.

### April Birthdays

- Kimberly
- Reggie

### May Highlights

May included a Mother's Day lunch outing and a flower arranging activity that encouraged creativity and self-expression. Staff also participated in earthquake preparedness and self-care trainings to support wellness and safety throughout the home.

### June Highlights & Upcoming Fun

We have several exciting outings and activities planned for June, including:

- Picnic at the Park
- Bowling Trip
- San Diego Zoo Outing
- Movie Outing

We are also excited to celebrate resident Guy Waters' birthday this month!

### Renovation Updates

Howard House continues to undergo exciting improvements, including roof repairs and the installation of a brand-new elevator.

Recently, we came across an old photo of Howard House believed to be from the 1980s or 1990s. It took us back in time and reminded us of the long history and heart behind this home. It's amazing to reflect on how far Howard House has come while continuing to grow into something even better for our residents and staff.

Thank you to everyone who supports Howard House to make it feel like home every single day.



## Latest BICN News & Updates

Finding trusted professionals within the brain injury community can often feel overwhelming, like searching for a needle in a haystack. Recognizing this challenge, SDBIF is developing a new initiative designed to make connections easier and more reliable. The Brain Injury Collaboration Network (BICN) is an carefully-vetted referral network created by SDBIF of professional services that work with brain injury survivors and their families.

BICN aims to strengthen collaboration across the community by creating a dependable circle of partners who can confidently refer individuals and families to one another. By fostering these relationships, the network helps ensure that survivors are guided toward knowledgeable, compassionate, and reputable providers.

BICN aims to strengthen collaboration across the community by creating a dependable circle of partners who can confidently refer individuals and families to one another. By fostering these relationships, the network helps ensure that survivors are guided toward knowledgeable, compassionate, and reputable providers.

Getting involved in BICN begins with an application process. Qualified professionals and organizations are invited to apply to become part of this growing network. Each applicant is reviewed to ensure alignment with the network's values and commitment to serving the brain injury community with integrity and care.

\*As BICN continues to develop, its objective is to expand the category of providers in network via increasing awareness throughout the county. By spreading the word and building strong partnerships, SDBIF hopes to create a more connected, supportive system with a vast array of resources where survivors and their families can more easily access the trusted resources they deserve.

For more information visit our website, [SDBIF.org](http://SDBIF.org), or reach out to me at [Juliana@SDBIF.com](mailto:Juliana@SDBIF.com).



## How's the SDBIF SISR Program Going?

The Students Invested in Survivor Reintegration (SISR) Program has continued to grow since launching in early 2025, with increasing participation and interest in future sessions.

Dr. Stephanie Ries of San Diego State University (SDSU), connects SDSU students to the program, and Dr. Dan Gardner, M.D., advises the student advocates. The program has also partnered with Rehab Without Walls, a neuro rehabilitation team specializing in brain injury and neurological recovery.

During Spring 2026, Rehab Without Walls led workshops on:

- Community Mobility
- Durable Medical Equipment
- Emergency Preparedness
- Volunteerism and Work Reintegration

To improve accessibility, workshops are now in a hybrid format so participants with transportation or mobility challenges can attend virtually while still encouraging in-person connection.

The program gives students valuable hands-on experience in advocacy and neurological support fields, while survivors receive weekly support tailored to their recovery goals. Survivors also help students better understand the real-life challenges of living with a brain injury.

As the program grows, SDBIF is introducing improvements including a two-part student orientation, enhanced communication tools, and more detailed semester planning to create a smoother experience for participants.

SDSU students and brain injury survivors interested in participating should contact [info@sdbif.org](mailto:info@sdbif.org) or **(619) 294-6541** for more info.

# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Upcoming 2026 Saturday Speaker Series Meetings

**SATURDAY,  
JUL 11, 2026**

**In-Person & Zoom**

*Dr. Matsuura, San Diego Center for Vision Care Optometry*

**IN-PERSON LOCATION**

SD Writer's Ink, Liberty Station  
2730 Historic Decatur Rd #204,  
San Diego, CA 92106

**SATURDAY,  
AUG 16, 2026**

**In-Person & Zoom**

*Kate Khoukaz, PsyD  
Licensed Clinical Psychologist*

**IN-PERSON LOCATION**

SD Writer's Ink, Liberty Station  
2730 Historic Decatur Rd #204,  
San Diego, CA 92106


**SATURDAY,  
OCT 11, 2026**

**In-Person & Zoom**

*Bill McAweeney  
Learning Services*

**IN-PERSON LOCATION**

Admiral Baker Club House  
2400 Admiral Baker Rd, San  
Diego, CA 92124

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# COMMUNITY NEWS

## SDBIF & Community Upcoming Events

**SDBIF EVENTS**

[sdbif.org/events](https://sdbif.org/events)

**JUN ZOOM Family & Friends Support Group**

**Friday, June 12, 2026** from 2-3:30 pm (PST)

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



San Diego Brain Injury Foundation  
**BRAIN INJURY SYMPOSIUM 2026**  
**REGISTER NOW!!!**  
**SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026**  
@ ADMIRAL BAKER CLUB HOUSE  
SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE

**JUN ZOOM Survivor Peer Support Group**

**Friday, June 26, 2026** from 2-3:30 pm (PST)

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

**JUL ZOOM Family & Friends Support Group**

**Friday, July 10, 2026** from 2-3:30 pm (PST)

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



**Friday, July 17 is an In-Person Day of Art for Brain Injury Survivors**  
Scan the QR Code to Reserve Your Spot by July 3

**JUL ZOOM Survivor Peer Support Group**

**Friday, July 31, 2026** from 2-3:30 pm (PST)

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


**AUG ZOOM Family & Friends Support Group**

**Friday, August 14, 2026** from 2-3:30 pm (PST)

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

**Help SDBIF keep your info up-to-date!**

Scan this QR code to update your preferences and profile information, so that you are only receiving the information you want. No spam from us!



**3<sup>RD</sup>-PARTY PARTNER EVENTS**

**NEUROLAB 360**

**MORE INFO:** [neurolab360.com/free-services](https://neurolab360.com/free-services)  
(760) 704-8237

In-Person Adaptive Yoga—**EVERY Wed** @ 12 pm  
In-Person CogFit Group—**1<sup>st</sup> Thurs** @ 2 pm  
In-Person Aphasia Group—**2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tues** @ 11 am  
In-Person Stroke Support Grp—**2<sup>nd</sup> Wed** @ 4 pm

**UCSD PALS MEETINGS**

**MORE INFO:** [mmw002@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:mmw002@health.ucsd.edu)

In-Person Art Class—**1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Wed** @ 2 pm  
In-Person Support Group—**1<sup>st</sup> Fri** @ 11 am  
**ONLINE Aphasia Class—3<sup>rd</sup> Thurs** @ 9 am

**SCRIPPS STROKE & BRAIN INJURY**

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

In-Person Brain Masters—**EVERY Wed** @ 2:30 pm  
**HYBRID Stroke & TBI Support Group—2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Tues**  
@ 2:30 pm

**SHARP EVENTS**

**MORE INFO:** [Grace Latimer or Jim Lizardo,](mailto:Grace.Latimer@sharp.com)  
619-740-4683

Online Gentle Fitness—**EVERY Tues** @ 9 am

**SD PARKS & REC OUTINGS**

**MORE INFO:** [mmw002@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:mmw002@health.ucsd.edu)

In-Person Summer Picnic—**FRI, 7/24** @ 11:00 am  
@ Lake Murray in La Mesa



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## Introducing the NEWEST SDBIF Program for Survivors: The ALT Library

New software, new applications, new phone, new AI agent, forever an ongoing update of the existing technology. This overwhelming influx of information can be stressful to decipher, especially after suffering a brain injury. The foundation is happy to introduce a new program, The **Assisted Learning Technology (ALT) Library**, its purpose is to help survivors, and their families and friends navigate their world with technology.

The ALT library, located in the SDBIF Liberty Station office, provides support to help you re-integrate into technology via workshops, hands-on assistance and access to computers, the internet, and technological assistive devices. You can use the computer/equipment independently, or we can help you with navigating agency websites, form completion, information management, and app walk-throughs. Our goal is for digital tools to work for you and not against you.

We are extremely excited to bring you a series of Navigation Workshops this summer. Topics will cover a variety of topics to help with learning applications and tools, such as:

- **Setting up your Calendar online**
- **How the Transportation Assistant app can work for you**
- **Organizing your email to organize your life**

The ALT Library is in its infancy. We are committed to providing access to technology to help survivors and their families stay connected to the technological tools that help improve their lives. **We continue to welcome feedback for topics that matter to you.**

To receive a case-specific navigation plan, make an appointment by calling the SDBIF office line, **(619) 294-6541**, and scheduling with our Consumer Navigation Specialist, Cynthia.

## More Photos from the 2026 surviveHEADSTRONG San Diego presented by Thorson Law Group





SAVE THE DATE!!!

SATURDAY, JUNE 20, 2026

@ ADMIRAL BAKER CLUB HOUSE

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE



Speakers & Topics to be announced soon!



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**“The San Diego  
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helped me recover  
it all...They saved me  
from the isolation  
that some people  
actually experience.”**

Christina Hardy,  
brain injury survivor

**SATURDAY  
June 20, 2026  
10 am - 3 pm**

San Diego  
Brain Injury Foundation  
**BRAIN INJURY  
SYMPOSIUM  
2026**

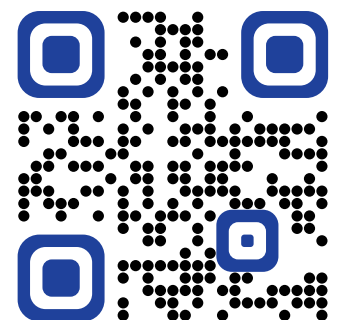
Healthy Connections: Balancing  
Recovery to Avoid Overwhelm

**ADMIRAL BAKER CLUB HOUSE**

Register today for an interactive & engaging day of learning at the Annual SDBIF Brain Injury Symposium as we discuss navigating the reintegration journey after brain injury.

To learn more go to: [SDBIF.org/symposium](https://www.sdbif.org/symposium)

Scan the QR Code  
to **REGISTER**



Scan the QR Code  
to **DONATE**

