

HeadSTRONG

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

A Survivor's Story Steve Auten

Written by Steve Auten

Just a simple ride to the hills on a Saturday morning. A friend and I were headed for a picnic, it was around 9:00 am. As we approached another hairpin curve, a station wagon was in my lane. I jerked the wheel to the right avoiding a head on collision. My friend happily only received a few scratches and bruises. I received multiple serious injuries, including a severe head injury.

In 2002 I had a closed artery (about 95%). A stint was put in the artery and it lasted about a month before it failed. Then it was open heart surgery. The operation wasn't smooth and I was left with lack of oxygen to the brain or "hypoxia". Hypoxia, changed my life in many ways. I just couldn't do the kind of work I was accustomed to and had many other problems.

I was in a motorcycle accident, again hitting my head pretty hard. At that time I was referred to the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado (BIAC) by a psychologist I was working with.

"...now I have everything I need to make my life comfortable and meaningful."

What a relief! I live alone so there is no one to be of help with decisions and everyday life. To add to things I was out of money. BIAC understood my problems quickly. They were there helping to not only give advice and suggestions, but to help get things necessary to my physical life. They were always a phone call or a visit away. When I don't contact them, they call and make sure I'm getting by alright. BIAC has helped with things like setting up food programs with organizations like "Meals on Wheels" making sure I'm eating right.

They have introduced me to programs I wouldn't have known existed. They have helped with vouchers to stores where I can buy essentials. I had a seven level back fusion and was sleeping on an old uncomfortable mattress. BIAC was able to find a donation service and I acquired a new mattress! They helped in finding a new apartment when I was in need and were instrumental in helping negotiate the move. They have gone to doctors appointments with me so I understand and remember the words I was told. I have always been disorganized with paper work and appointments.



In fact I would miss appointments or be so late it would be necessary to reschedule. BIAC has helped tremendously in helping me get organized. I use the calendar, an eraser board, a notebook, and a smartphone, which work in tandem to teach me organizational skills that were well over my head. I can't say enough about the help I have received, and always in a friendly, professional, and congenial manner.

Thanks to the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado for being there. I am now feeling so much better about myself. I am 73 years old, now I have everything I need to make my life comfortable and meaningful. Thank you and keep up the wonderful help!

Upcoming Classes and Events

Classes and Workshops

Due to concerns surrounding COVID-19, all in-person classes and workshops are cancelled until further notice. Please check our website BIAColorado.org for updates and virtual class options.

Virtual classes and workshops will be held via Zoom. Click [here](#) to register. Please provide email during registration to receive the Zoom link. For questions, contact Michael Zavala at Michael@BIAColorado.org or 720-907-1455.



Brain Injury Basics

Denver Metro

Thursday, March 25th

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Friday, March 26th

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Southern Colorado

Friday, April 30th

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Central Mountain and Western Slope

Friday, May 28th

1:00 - 3:00 pm

Grief & Loss Group

Every 2nd Wednesday of the month through March
1:30 - 3:00 pm

The Mindful Brain

Every 1st Tuesday of the month through March 10:00 - 11:15 am

Social Wellness

Every 3rd Wednesday of the month through March
2:00 - 3:00 pm

Music Therapy

Every 2nd Thursday of the month through March
10:15 - 11:15 am

Adaptive Skiing at Eldora

All beginners, intermediate or advanced skiers are welcome. Instruction through qualified and experienced adaptive instructors. Email or call Michael Zavala to register.
Monday, March 15th

❖ In person

Assisted Horseback Riding

Wednesday, March 31st

❖ In person

9:00 - 11:00 am

Cost: \$25

Details TBD

Monthly Youth Challenge

Last Thursday of the Month starting in March

❖ Virtual until further notice

Brain Injury Professional Networking (BIPN)

BIPN groups seek to "improve the availability of services and supports for individuals with brain injury, promote the ongoing sustainability of community support systems, and share resources".

For more information visit the [BIPN page](#) on our website.

Brain Injury 101 Professional Training

Wednesday, March 17th

10:00 am - 11:00 am MST

Free via Zoom. For more information contact Ellen@BIAColorado.org or 303-223-0824.

Tai Chi

Every 3rd Tuesday of the month through March
2:00 - 3:00 pm

Recreation Programs & Social Activities

For questions, contact Michael at Michael@BIAColorado.org or 303-562-0401.

Visit the [Recreation Programs page](#) website for updates!

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month



An acquired brain injury

is damage to the brain caused by events after birth, including Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), brain tumor, anoxia, infection and poisoning.



Every 23 seconds
a person sustains an injury to the brain in the United States

The Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado recognizes every individual living with an acquired injury to the brain.
We ask that you help us raise awareness for the over 500,000 survivors living in Colorado by sharing at least 10 ribbons of knowledge with someone new.



Falls are the leading cause

of TBI, accounting for over 47% of all TBI-related ER visits, hospitalizations, and deaths in the U.S.



On average,
1 American dies from stroke every 4 minutes



Brains do not finish developing until the mid-20's

The frontal lobe, one of the last parts of your brain to develop, is where "adult thinking skills" reside.



An anoxic brain injury

is when the brain is deprived of oxygen for long enough that brain cells begin to die.



Encephalitis is inflammation of the brain, often due to viral infections. It can cause flu-like symptoms (fever or severe headache), as well as confusion, seizures, or problems with senses/movement.



Effects of brain injury can include impaired thinking, memory, movement, sensation (e.g., vision or hearing), or emotional functioning (e.g., personality changes or depression).



Approximately
90% of concussions are not associated with a loss of consciousness



Males are almost 2x as likely as women to sustain a TBI



Fatigue and cognitive challenges are the two most commonly reported outcomes of Coloradans with brain injury.



Together, We Can Shine a Light on Brain Injury

For more information regarding brain injuries, please visit BIAColorado.org or call us at 303-355-9969

How has COVID-19 impacted survivors living with an injury to the brain?

Celebrating resiliency in our communities



"Using the tools available with technology and social media, I made more progress than I ever knew possible. It also helped that I was able to use the isolation demanded by COVID-19 to rest in between therapies while limiting and picking and choosing screen time to only times that had significant impact on my healing."

- Teresa, BI Survivor



"I felt like everybody else's lives were slowing down to the point where I could catch up... then to be able to do school online was something that was way more in my comfort zone because the class took so much energy out of me, that if I had to drive and walk around campus and do the class, the relationships and the noise of people it would have tipped me over."

- Zorina, BI Survivor



"I have a better understanding of people around me – not personally... I just know now that everyone is going through something. And their personal something may be something unseen, like mine. Now we all get to share something. Yay?"

- BI Survivor



"There seems to be a slight additional hollowness – something like an echo – within my BI and being regularly stuck at home. But now I know I'm not alone in many ways, and maybe others will understand me better. I get to see my wife a whole lot more."

- BI Survivor



Staff in the Spotlight

Kate Fatica, *Youth Services Coordinator*

Describe your role at BIAC.

As the youth services coordinator for BIAC, I help families and school teams to better understand the impact that a brain injury has on learning. This includes how developmental level at the time of injury plays an important role in future development, as well as what strategies and accommodations best work to support the challenges that are often seen with students who have experienced brain injury. I attend IEP and 504 meetings as a collaborative consultant, and discuss with families the resources available to their students in the school setting.

What is your favorite experience working at BIAC so far?

My favorite experiences thus far at BIAC have been the connections I've made with students and families. I started in this role right when the state went into lockdown for COVID-19. While the situation was unprecedented, it was pretty amazing to see our state mobilize and adapt to needed changes in an effort to move forward with our lives despite the pandemic. The fact that BIAC was able to maintain services and support for families was really rewarding. I am thankful for the connections I've made with the students and families that are served through my program, and that we were able to reassure our clients that we are still an available resource in the midst of a challenging situation.

What three traits define you?

Driven. Grounded. Supportive.



Program Spotlight

Youth Education Consultation

After a brain injury, children and youth may have challenges in the classroom and their families may need support navigating the education system.

BIAC's Youth Services Coordinator provides free, statewide consultation and support services to children and youth, aged 0-21, with a documented brain injury.

How to Apply

If you are a parent or professional working with a child or youth with brain injury, please contact BIAC to request an application for education consultation: Info@BIAColorado.org or 303-355-9969, toll-free 1-800-955-2443.

Examples of Support

- ❖ Providing parent/guardian education of services and programming options available in schools
- ❖ Assisting in the partnership between parents and schools
- ❖ Educating parents and school teams on how a student has been impacted by their brain injury
- ❖ Collaborating with schools on intervention planning
- ❖ Attending transition, IEP, MTSS, and other planning meetings
- ❖ Partnering with hospitals to help with transition to school
- ❖ Any other student specific educational needs/concerns/questions

Heath First Colorado Members

Updates for the Disability Community and People 65 and Older

MONTHLY WEBINAR EVENT

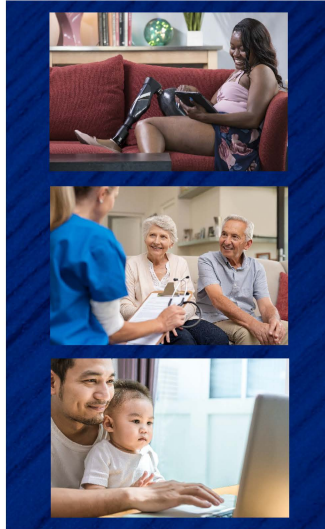
FIRST FRIDAY

10 - 11 a.m.

March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4

Join the Office of Community Living at the Department of Health Care Policy & Financing for a monthly webinar specifically for Medicaid Members in the disability community and Members who are 65 and older

- Updates on key projects that impact Medicaid members
- Accessible format slides
- Live video of presenters
- Ways to get involved
- Resources



WEBINAR INFO

Link: <https://cohcpf.adobeconnect.com/rzev483uwqcg/>

If you are unable to join online using the link or need alternative audio, you can call in using a phone line:

Phone: 720-279-0026 or Toll-Free: 1-877-820-7831

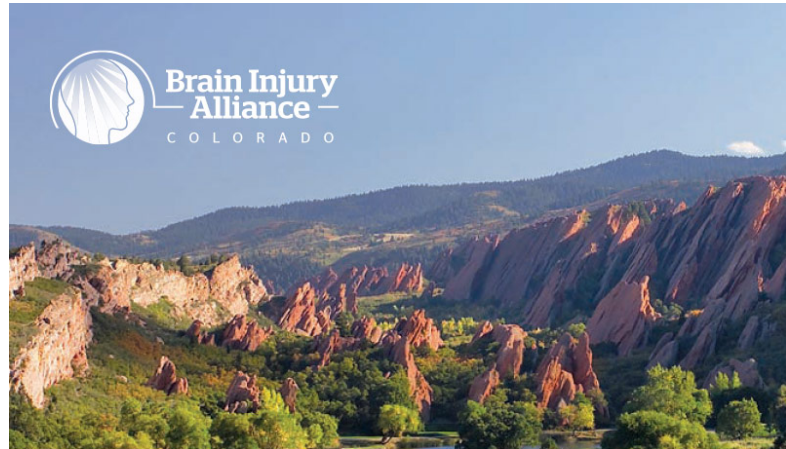
Participant code: 174363#

Reasonable Accommodations:

Contact John Barry at 303-866-3173 or John.R.Barry@state.co.us or the 504/ADA Coordinator at hcpf504ada@state.co.us at least one week prior to the meeting to make arrangements



The Department of Health Care Policy & Financing administers Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid program), Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) and other health care programs for Coloradans who qualify.



Cathleen's Cause GOLF TOURNAMENT

Benefiting the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Arrowhead Golf Course | Littleton, CO

Registration | 7:00 a.m.

Shotgun Start | 8:00 a.m.

Lunch & Prizes | 1:00 p.m.

Register at BIAColorado.org



For Professionals



Brain Injury 101 Training

In honor of Brain Injury Awareness Month, BIAC will be providing a **FREE** 1-hour educational training on brain injury 101 geared towards professionals.

Whether you are new to brain injury or need a refresher, this training will provide context and insight for professionals that work with survivors of brain injury.

March 17th

10:00 am - 11:00 am MST

Zoom webinar, [register here](#)

Training will include:

- ❖ An overview of brain injury, types of injuries, and terminology
- ❖ How brain injury presents itself, including common symptoms
- ❖ Accommodation strategies
- ❖ BIAC services and how to refer

For questions, contact Ellen Kordonowy at Ellen@BIAColorado.org or **303-223-0824**.