

# Dare Mighty Things

It was 1985 and Blockbuster Video opened its first store in Dallas, Texas, Route 66 was no longer a designated highway in the U.S., and Brain Injury Association of Florida (BIAF) opened its doors as an organization that would 25 years later represent and serve Florida's 210,000 citizens living with TBI.

BIAF was the little engine that could. Through its founder's leadership and support from a small group of volunteers, they sought funding and helped to establish legislation that placed TBI in the forefront. With a limited budget and a registry of over 10,000 names, they advocated for change. Their purpose: to ensure that information was accessible and available to any family who was experiencing and living with the aftermath of TBI, and to provide the education necessary to help them manage their everyday lives.

When BIAF added eight Family Support Centers throughout Florida in 1996, it was to provide support to as many survivors of TBI and family members as possible. These were people who needed information to make decisions about how they would face the new and added challenges in their lives. How were they to obtain proper health and financial benefits; or develop

social networks; or possibly return to school or find work -- some of the many challenges after brain injury --without consistent personal advocacy?

It is BIAF's mission to connect the TBI family to a lifetime of hope and opportunity. BIAF's outreach came from understanding that teaching children about the use of helmets, changing the way teens approach driving, and helping seniors recognize risk, would ultimately result in fewer injuries across the state.

Florida's first five year strategic plan, *Enhancing the Traumatic Brain Injury System of Care* is testimony to BIAF's continued commitment to inform, educate, support and advocate for the growing number of Florida's survivors of brain injury and their families. The BIAF Board of Directors and Executive Staff engaged in an energizing, comprehensive strategic planning process in 2009, challenging all facets of the organization to become even better prepared to support the growing numbers of persons living with Traumatic Brain Injury, and to continue to be current on the most effective and responsive services to assist them. The resulting action plan is BIAF's vision for enhanced statewide information/referral/planning and advocacy; increased public awareness working through communities and support groups/TBI champions; certification programs for staff, as well as professional training/education; and securing long-term funding sources for the growing need for services and support.

In this moment we celebrate the many achievements that have brought us to this 25th year. We cherish each and every milestone for the people who were there and that made it possible. There is also a wonderful



heartfelt joy in knowing that these good works have made a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

BIAF has served many, with the help of many. Walking “By Our Side” have been partners like the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Program, the Florida Department of Health, the Florida Legislature and several Governors.

It is their generosity and funding that provides for continued assistance to Florida’s survivors and their families. Walking “By Your Side” have been thousands of volunteers, serving in many capacities, and professionals who have taught us and learned with us.

Most meaningful for BIAF, walking “By Your Side” have been those hundreds of thousands of Floridians who deal with traumatic brain injury every day of their lives. We have learned together, laughed together, cried together, and played together. We have shared our most vulnerable and our strongest selves with each other. Without you, there would be no BIAF.

25 years and counting....we are counting on you, to join us, to help us tell our story together, to ask for donations to pay for what’s needed now and what will be needed tomorrow, to advocate for and support our families and to secure long-term funding for TBI services in Florida. Support for families is a must. Legislators and citizens alike will continue to pay attention, because we care enough to tell them and not be afraid to ask for their support. Every dollar, every good word, every volunteer hour can and does create real support and dignity for our survivors and their families.

Our goal for the next 25.... to keep our doors open, to be your voice, to create and sustain services for survivors and families and institute lasting change... not just for the few, but for many. There is no better time than now!

As Margaret Mead once said...“A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

## MILESTONES

### 1985 - 1995

- ◆ Creation of central Registry for reporting TBI and 13 Member Advisory Council and;
- ◆ Impaired Drivers and Speeders Trust Fund.
- ◆ Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Trust Fund & 16 Member Advisory Council created.
- ◆ Toll Free 1-800 Helpline established.
- ◆ Helmutt®, BIAF mascot introduces Florida's helmet law.
- ◆ 200,000 bicycle helmets reach Florida’s children, BIAF wins national award for *Bike Helmets, A Crash Course for Adults*.

### 1996 - 2005

- ◆ Traumatic Brain Injury Act of 1996 becomes law.
- ◆ March designated National Brain Injury Awareness Month.
- ◆ Long Term Care Study on TBI completed.
- ◆ BSCIP Home and Community waiver enacted.
- ◆ TBI Grant for Florida creates Family/Community Support Program.
- ◆ State Award of Excellence received from Brain Injury Association of America.
- ◆ BIAF’s 20th Anniversary celebrated.

### 2006 - 2010

- ◆ Headquarters move to Tallahassee with 3 year contract and increased funding.
- ◆ *Mock THIS! Teens, Brain Injury and DUI* reaches teens about drinking and driving.
- ◆ *Project LEAP* - Law Enforcers Are Partners trains police officers throughout Florida about people who have survived brain injuries.
- ◆ *Project ACTION* begins statewide assessment to identify needs of survivors of TBI in three step project to design strategic plan.
- ◆ Statewide Information & Resource Center expanded.
- ◆ BIAF staff completes training certification as brain injury specialists.
- ◆ BIAF Awareness Day Event held at Capitol.