

Sharing OUR Recovery

A quarterly newsletter designed to support victims, survivors, caregivers and loved ones of motor vehicle collisions.

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Editor in Chief - Dawne McKay

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Spring Is All About New Beginnings



Spring seems to yawn and stretch as it brings the promise of longer days, shorter nights and warmer weather. Winter weather can wreak constant havoc on our injuries and as a crash survivor, I always find myself counting down the days until I see that first tulip appear in the garden. Spring makes it so much easier and safer for us to get out as we no longer have to feel trapped indoors.

This winter didn't slow us down as we continued to connect with so many wonderful Organizations and we are thrilled to announce that the Crash Support Network is now on Instagram [so please follow us!](#) We also collaborated with Warm Buddy to help aid in pain relief and sleeplessness in victims of motor vehicle crashes. Warm Buddy graciously offered a contest prize of a Weighted Warming Blanket and Aromatherapy Sleep Mask that was awarded to a member of our online support group and the winner was thrilled to win! You can read more about Warm Buddy as well as the comfy products they offer in our Business Spotlight and we look forward to further collaboration in the near future.

We are pleased to announce that we have added a resource section to our website and always looking to add more resources so if you support crash survivors, please get in touch with us! Crash Survivors are also able to reach us more easily as we have now added a "need support button" on our home page that allows survivors to reach out to us immediately if they are seeking help.

In this issue, you will read about what motorists should do if they are involved in a multi-car collision as well as two peer support programs that are supporting trauma victims and a crash survivor shares her story with us which lead her to found a non-profit organization that provides resources for survivors of traumatic brain injury.

Also, in this issue, we are pleased to introduce you to a young woman by the name of Alana Gledhill. Alana was a passenger in a horrific motor vehicle crash and shares her story of resiliency with us. Since her crash, she has become a public speaker for dangerous driving at local high schools and most recently has become a spokesperson for the Crash Support Network in her local area. *Thank you for your support Alana!*

Don't forget that May 20, 2020 is National Trauma Survivor's Day and the Crash Support Network is looking forward to participating! For more information on how you can get involved please visit: <https://www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org/pages/national-trauma-survivors-day>.

Many thanks to [Iacobelli Law Firm](#) for sponsoring *Sharing Our Recovery* for the third year in a row! We are so grateful for your continued support.

As always, we are thinking of those who continue to recover and wish you continued strength and healing.

Prominent Author and Educator Inspires Crash Survivor

Submitted by Celeste Palmer



My life changed in a moment. While returning from taking my son and his friend to school, a car crashed into my SUV, causing it to roll. It took the Jaws of Life to remove me from the vehicle, and I remember nothing.

When I woke up in the hospital, I didn't know who I was. I didn't recognize my son or have any knowledge of current events. Who was the President? It was more like what is a President?

I had suffered a traumatic brain injury, which left me with retrograde and anterograde amnesia. My past was totally gone. Doctors told me that my condition was the best it would ever be. A therapist later told me to think of it as if I were a newborn, learning everything from scratch.

Life didn't get easier after being released from the hospital. Day-to-day activities were confusing. Basics like dirty dishes going in the dishwasher and clothes being inside the closet were new concepts. Meanwhile, I had my youngest child, a thirteen-year-old son, to raise. I was trying to learn the duties required of a mother in addition to the basics of functioning at home and in society, and it felt overwhelming. One day, I burned cookies when the kitchen timer in my pocket went off... while I was standing in line at the post office. But give up? Never!

My motor skills were impaired, so I was constantly running into doorways. I thought, "I must be huge!" In reality, I wasn't going through the center of the doorway like I thought I was. I had little feeling on my left side, so there were confusing signals from my brain to my body parts. Pain was ever-present. The rest of my life will always include chiropractic, physical therapy, therapeutic massage, doctors, and believing in my instincts.

Prior to the accident, I ran my own consulting firm specializing in accounting and database management. Returning to consulting was not an option; I would have no idea how to help my clients. In

fact, trying to relearn even simple math was a challenge because I couldn't remember the number four—a common problem with my type of brain injury.

I began volunteering for my local hospital's auxiliary, editing the newsletter and raising money. Volunteering helped me learn what functions I was good at and which activities I wasn't able to do.

Friends encouraged me to enroll at Claremont Graduate University, where I earned a certificate in leadership. After lots of hard work, and with the help of patient professors and student-led study groups, I earned my master's degree in management with honors. While at the university, I became a student of Peter F. Drucker, the prominent author and educator. I was fortunate to become friends with him and his wife Doris. They encouraged and inspired me.

While earning my master's degree, I became director of the MBA program at the Peter F. Drucker School of Management. I found my rhythm as a productive, effective team member—bringing alumni, staff, students, and Professor Drucker together for the enrichment of all.

At some point during my journey, I decided to sculpt a personality for myself because I couldn't remember my character traits from before the accident. Based on observing others, I realized that if I became known as a happy person, people would want to be around me. From then on, becoming happy in spite of my circumstances was my mission. It became what I call my "happiness project."

As I focused on being happy, the key was to not dwell on the negative aspects of my life. For example, I made a conscious decision not to lament the absence of special memories, like giving birth to my children. Instead, I concentrated on the present.

I also became determined not to let setbacks destroy my happiness. When I was involved in a second car crash, I suffered another brain injury. It happened as I was finishing my master's degree, and schoolwork was much harder after this second injury. But I decided that happiness is a choice, and I just needed to make a conscious effort to stay positive.

In recent years, I have become focused on speaking, writing, and coaching, to empower people to break through self-imposed barriers, implement new strategies, and achieve successful outcomes, just as I have. I have founded a non-profit organization (www.tbibridge.org) that provides resources for survivors of traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder. My motto is "Believe. Be patient. Never give up!"

"I don't know what my life was like before the accident, but all that matters is that I'm happy now. Attitude truly is everything!"

My life now is rich with close friends, family, and activities I enjoy, in addition to my non-profit work. I don't know what my life was like before the accident, but all that matters is that I'm happy now. Attitude truly is everything!



Personal Injury Lawyer Discusses Multi-Car Collisions

Submitted by Andrew Iacobelli, Personal Injury Lawyer

Driving in the winter can be extremely hazardous and unfortunately most highways have already experienced numerous pile-ups this season. Pile-ups typically occur in low-visibility conditions as drivers are caught off guard by driving too close to the vehicle in front and not adjusting to the road conditions. While the weather may play a big part in these types of accidents, distracted driving and impaired driving can also cause multi-car pile-ups. Being stranded on a major highway as a motorist in treacherous weather conditions is terrifying for everyone involved including first responders.

Although any type of motor vehicle accident can create unexpected medical, financial and legal issues, multi-car crashes can magnify these matters. Multiple cars involved in an accident such as an unexpected chain reaction can amplify the chaos, making it more difficult to ascertain fault and making insurance claims much more complex. If you are involved in a multi-vehicle accident, here are some reminders to keep in mind.

Consider Your Safety First

- If you have been in a multi-car crash, your first priority should be staying safe. Stay in your car with your seatbelt fastened until the police or EMS tell you it is safe to exit. The biggest risk is getting hit by another car after leaving your vehicle.
- Make sure everyone else in your vehicle is okay. If you are badly injured, call 911 to alert them to the fact that you need an ambulance and wait for EMS to come help you and transport you to a hospital.
- If possible, put your hazard lights on to warn oncoming traffic to slow down.
- See a medical professional as soon as possible after the accident. Some injuries are not immediately apparent, especially soft tissue injuries.

Keep Calm

When an accident involves multiple cars, the accident scene invariably turns more chaotic. If you can, use your phone to take photographs of the accident. With more than two cars involved, the attending police officers will likely collect eyewitness statements and contact information themselves. Try your best to write down how the accident happened, what transpired, and any mitigating circumstances that may have contributed to the accident (such as inclement weather, debris in the road, a detour, or a reckless driver). In the chaos of a multi-car accident, your memories may fade quickly and writing it down will help you keep your memories clear.

Questioning at the Scene

When involved in any type of motor vehicle accident, the less you say, the better off you are. If police interview you, respond truthfully with short answers that address only the exact questions that the officers ask you. In multi-car crashes, ascertaining who is at fault is more complicated than in two-car accidents, and you do not want to place unwarranted fault on yourself.

Because of the complex nature of chain reaction car accidents, it is wise to consult with a lawyer as soon as possible to get advice on how to proceed with your claim. If you were injured in a multi vehicle pile-up, you owe it to yourself to get a free consultation with an experienced personal injury lawyer.

“Multiple cars involved in an accident such as an unexpected chain reaction can amplify the chaos, making it more difficult to ascertain fault and making insurance claims much more complex.”

For more information on Iacobelli Law Firm, please visit their website at: www.iacobellilaw.com.



St. Michael's Hospital Offers Peer Support Program

Submitted by Amanda McFarlan, Trauma Program Registry Manager

St. Michael's Hospital was founded in 1892 to care for the sick and poor of Toronto's inner city. Affectionately known as the Urban Angel, we are the downtown Toronto adult trauma centre, and a hub for neurosurgery care, care for individuals experiencing homelessness or disadvantage and one of the province's major sites of care for critically ill patients. Now part of the Unity Health Toronto, our health network serves patients, residents and clients across the full spectrum of care, spanning primary care, secondary community care, tertiary and quaternary care services to post-acute through rehabilitation, palliative care and long-term care.

Systems of trauma care have evolved over time to ensure patients with most significant injuries are transported to designated trauma centres like St. Michael's where teams of care providers are dedicated to managing and coordinating provision of care by multi-discipline subspecialties. With the advancement in medical and surgical treatments, critical care medicine and coordinated multi-discipline inpatient care, there are increasing numbers of individuals that survive severe injury. Patients have follow-up care arranged with their respective care providers but this does not always reveal some of the challenges that survivors of traumatic injuries may experience as they work towards resuming life back at home, in the community or back at work. The success of 'surviving' a severe injury and being discharged from acute care does not always translate into successful adaptation back to a person's frame of reference for what used to be their life prior to injury.

There is a growing recognition that long-term outcomes, and particularly adverse long term outcomes for survivors of serious traumatic injury, are underappreciated. Organizations including The American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma, the London UK Trauma System and the Trauma Association of Canada are recognizing the need to move beyond survival and discharge. They are also focusing on patient's long-term outcomes and how we ensure patients are thriving post discharge.

To address the challenges, in April of 2017, St. Michael's Hospital Trauma Program created a peer support group for survivors of traumatic injury. The idea to do this came directly

from a trauma survivor. The support group, a first for a Canadian hospital continues to grow and remain a vital part of care for injured patients after their discharge from hospital. Called My BeST (Beyond Surviving, to Thriving), the program is a network of survivors of physical trauma—including their families and caregivers—designed to support rebuilding their lives after serious injury.

Getting the program started required almost a full year of working and planning with expert patient and clinical advisors before the first group meeting was held. It was part of a carefully planned, thoughtful and intentional process. We were profoundly fortunate to have an expert trauma survivor who was key to the initiation of the program. <http://www.stmichaelshospital.com/programs/trauma-survivors-network/>

About 10-15 trauma survivors and loved ones attend monthly meetings. The curriculum is a mix of guest speakers and topic based discussions. The topics are frequently based on what members have identified as areas of need for additional knowledge or information – or a chance to discuss an issue in their recovery that has not been addressed elsewhere. A cache of resources (sleep hygiene, stress reduction, time management, etc.) has been created over time and is available for the group. The evening meetings have transformed into pot luck dinners which contributes to a relaxed format that is inviting for participants.

Monthly support group meetings are open to any interested participants who have sustained or been affected by traumatic physical injury. The program accepts individuals into the group that were treated at St. Michael's as well as those treated elsewhere. The program is being used as a template and example for implementation at other Trauma Centres in Ontario.



One of the challenges of serious traumatic injury is that it takes patients by surprise; it's a terrible thing to go through. This patient support program allows St. Michael's to go beyond patients surviving to ensuring they thrive - and isn't that something we'd all want?



Warm Buddy Helps Relieve Pain and Stress

Submitted by Karen McKee, Owner & Jin Kim, Marketing Assistant

Getting into an accident can be a very traumatic experience. Merely talking to the police and doing your paperwork for auto insurance claim leaves you exhausted and stressed. Once the adrenaline rush subsides, occupants of the vehicles will start to feel aches and pains. Some of these may be instant but many symptoms are delayed. These symptoms could indicate a multitude of problems; neck pain, collarbone (clavicle), pain in ribs or backs. Other than a broken bone, most of this pain comes from muscles. In a sudden jolt, muscles “over-react” and tighten to protect your body. In this process, they get damaged or torn. Healing of the damaged muscle tissue is not an easy process. Once a scar tissue forms on a muscle, the body keeps the muscle in a shortened and inflamed state to prevent re-injury. It takes a long time for the body to regenerate these muscle fibers and align in same direction. During recovery, pain will gradually dissipate.



Heat Therapy Wraps such as a Warm Buddy Weighted Warming Blanket is an excellent way to promote healing of the damaged muscles, relieve and block pain and help with relaxation.

Applying penetrating moist heat to an inflamed muscle will dilate blood vessels, promote blood flow, and will relax sore and tightened muscles. Heat is also psychologically reassuring. There is the added benefit of weight, giving the user a calming and relaxing experience. Aromatherapy in Warm Buddy Products further enhances the soothing experience.

Warm Buddy Company and the Crash Support Network have collaborated to help aid in pain relief and sleeplessness in victims of accidents. A contest prize of a Weighted Warming Blanket and Aromatherapy Sleep Mask was awarded to a winning entry for contributing their story. There was a tremendous amount of response from this online contest asking why they need a Warm Buddy. After reading all of the responses, we felt that all of them would love to have a Warm Buddy to relieve their pain. According to the many responses, it's evident that people are suffering from three major categories of discomfort after a crash; “sleep problems”, “aches and pains”, and “anxiety”.



Sleep Problems

It is clear that people are having issues sleeping after an accident. “Developed sleep apnea and must go on servo ventilator at night”, “intense sensitivity to light”, “nightmares and terror of seeing my

accident replay in my mind”. The Warm Buddy Aromatherapy Sleep

Masks are very effective in helping with sleep issues. The fabric is ultra soft against the skin, elastic and Velcro holds it firm against your face, blocks out light, and provides acupressure and soothing aromatherapy. They may be warmed or cooled as required.

Aches and Pains

Crash victims have expressed a wide variety of pains, whether a small or big accident. “Nerve damage, severe back and joint pain”, “disabled and in constant chronic pain...heat has been the only thing that's helped”, “paraplegic with lots of nerve pain and spasms that can be unbearable...” These are just a few of the ailments we received from the victims. Most prefer heat rather than medication. Some have to go through surgeries and deal with post op pains associated with those as well. Victims who had to go through shoulder reconstruction surgeries or spine reconstruction surgeries wanted the Warming Blanket for the pain relieving properties of heat therapy. The Warming Blanket is easy to use, holds the heat for a long time, and provides pain relief, as well as promoting sleep and healing.



As with any traumatic experiences in life, accidents can bring on anxiety. One contestant writes “struggle with intermittent anxiety... heat helps to relax and find my calm again.” Another says “only thing I find comfort in is heat.” Majority of the contestants are saying that heat is very comforting and pain relieving.

There aren't many products that can help with so many different symptoms. Warm Buddy Heat Therapy Wraps provide serious relief from aches, pains and aids in relaxation. Victims of motor vehicle crashes should all have access to Warm Buddy products. Warm Buddy company has been helping relieve pain for the past 25 years and holds a Class I Medical Device License from Health Canada.

Warm Buddy Company is proud to have worked with CSN and will continue to support their efforts in healing and providing more opportunities to acquire Warm Buddy Heat Therapy Wraps for its members.



Other comforting items include our ultra plush, soft Warm Buddy Animals, great for any age! How about an Ultra Cozy Plush Robe to keep warm and look fabulous while recovering?



Trauma Survivors Network – You are not alone!

Submitted by Katherine Joseph, TSN Coordinator



In 2008, the Trauma Survivors Network (TSN) was developed by the American Trauma Society (ATS) to help trauma centers provide the support and service that patients and their families need during their recovery from serious injury. To date, the TSN is now active in over 115 adult and pediatric trauma centers and rehabilitation hospitals across the United States and Canada.

The TSN offers a variety of services including: peer visitation; peer support groups for adults, children, and families; Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) screening; and NextSteps, a self-management course. All services focus on providing structured support to survivors and families while they adjust to a “new normal” life after trauma.

Some of the benefits of joining the TSN include: connecting with others in similar situations and sharing your experiences, learning about injuries and their treatment from trauma experts, discovering how to meet the challenges of everyday life after injury and giving hope and inspiration to others.

The TSN aims to connect trauma survivors with others and help trauma survivors realize there is “life after trauma” and you are not alone. May 20, 2020 is National Trauma Survivors Day. We invite you to join us in celebrating the honor, strength, courage and hope that those impacted by trauma show every day in the healing process. To learn more about participating in National Trauma Survivors Day, please visit <https://www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org/pages/national-trauma-survivors-day>.

To learn more about the Trauma Survivors Network, please visit www.traumasurvivorsnetwork.org



How Dangerous Driving Changed My Life Forever

Submitted by Alana Gledhill



On April 27th, 2012 I was 17 years old and full of amazing goals for the future. It was a sunny, Friday afternoon in Bolton, Ontario, when my friends and I decided to go to McDonalds for lunch. The thing is, other than our plan to go out for lunch, I don't remember much of what happened. What I do remember is that this is the day that my life changed forever. I was unconscious and lost about 45 minutes of my memory, what I do remember was waking up in the dirt not knowing where I was or how I got there. Being put in the ambulance and asking the paramedics not to go anywhere until they brought James (my boyfriend) to me. This was the start of my whole world being turned upside down.

I was a victim of a horrific motor vehicle accident. I was a passenger in a vehicle that, according to the police, was going 3x the posted speed limit. This was a single vehicle accident caused by dangerous driving, where the driver chose to ignore the rules of the road and didn't stop when they were asked to. The driver wanted to create that "roller coaster" feeling in the pit of our stomachs. And just like that, it was too late. The driver had lost control of the vehicle, going up the embankment and taking out the fence, causing us to then flip end over end multiple times before coming to a stop about 300ft into a farmer's field.

Today, this accident has changed so much in my life. The impact coupled with the trauma of those events has caused me so much pain, emotionally, physically, and mentally. It's something that I would never wish upon my worst enemy. But this has also been my inspiration for writing about it and how I have been working through my daily challenges. I don't want to have this happen to anyone else. This is my story of how dangerous driving caused an accident that changed my life forever.

In the accident I broke my neck at the C5 vertebrae. Many don't know this, but the higher up your spinal injury is, the higher level of corresponding paralysation you will experience. Because of the

site of my injury, I was 2mm away from becoming a quadriplegic, meaning I would be paralyzed from the neck down. But that wasn't the end of my injuries. I experience soft tissue damage on the entire right side of my body, I have 3 slipped discs in my lumbar spine (my L4,L5,S1) and have nerve impingement on my right side. I now struggle with chronic pain as well as chronic headaches. But this was only the physical aspect of things. My mental and emotional state has been greatly impacted. I now suffer with short term memory loss, depression, severe passenger anxiety, and PTSD amongst other things, but the list of ways in which my life has now changed from that day could go on forever. I should never have been able to walk away from that crash but I did.

I was put in a halo to recover which, is a class two medical device designed to hold your neck in perfect alignment from your head to your waist. The experience was painful, and my appearance definitely caught people's attention. It wasn't easy hearing others talking about me, I knew I looked different. I wanted people to approach me, to ask questions, and I wanted to teach people about the halo I was wearing. What many people didn't realize was that the halo saved me from a lifetime of surgeries and the possibility of becoming paralyzed.

My recovery has been far from easy and often times feels like it just happened yesterday. I was told that I would forever have to live in pain and that I'd never get better. I view that as a challenge and have never given up since day one. The harsh reality of surviving an MVA is that the effects just don't go away, it's a lifelong process of learning to adjust to your new way of life, learning to love and accept yourself for who you've become. I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't have such an incredible support system throughout my journey. This accident changed me but I've come out stronger than ever. It kills me to know that I've lost such an important piece of who I am such as my athletic personality, but that just pushes me to keep fighting. You don't realize how strong you are until fighting is your only option.

When it comes to resiliency, I thank my social worker, as she always challenged me to find a positive for every negative. I use to struggle to find the good but now it's become a natural instinct for me. I go to the gym, practice yoga, utilize art therapy, and express myself through tattoos. All these things have helped me build my self-confidence, motivation, strength, and determination to never give up. Sometimes all you need is for someone to believe in you when you no longer believe in yourself.

Alana is currently in school to become a social worker and since her crash, she has become a public speaker for dangerous driving at local high schools. Alana recently became a spokesperson for the Crash Support Network in her local area and we are truly grateful for her support! Alana is a true inspiration and we wish her continued healing.

To read the full article please visit our website at: www.crashsupportnetwork.com under our Survivor Story Section.



Would you like to be part of Sharing Our Recovery?

We are always looking for articles or stories, and we would love to hear from you!

Email us: info@crashsupportnetwork.com

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CRASHSUPPORTNETWORK

Our Mission is to provide online support, resources and to raise awareness for survivors that have been affected by a motor vehicle crash.



CrashSupportNetwork.com

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