



BRAIN INJURY CENTER OF VENTURA COUNTY

HEADTALES

Giving Hope a Helping Hand

Spring 2025

P. O. Box 1477 • Camarillo, CA 93011 • 805-482-1312

www.BrainInjuryCenter.org

BRAIN INJURY

MAR2025

AWARENESS MONTH

INSIDE

Banner House
A Safe Haven for Brain Injury Survivors

Turning Setbacks into Comebacks
Vance's Journey of Determination and Hope



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Message from the Board President

By Kristen Linton, MSW, Ph.D.

Brain Injury Center of Ventura County Board President &
CSUCI Associate Professor of Health Science



I am writing to you as a very proud Board President, reflecting on all that we have achieved together. Let me begin with a story that embodies the incredible work we do.

This past year, we were among the first to pilot the use of Virtual Reality (VR) as a rehabilitation tool for a participant with a severe Traumatic Brain Injury in an acute setting. Within a month of his injury, at Ventura County Medical Center, we introduced him to our VR program.

Seated in a chair at his hospital bedside, we placed the VR headset over his eyes and ears, immersing him in a scenario designed to improve focus and eye concentration. He saw himself, in third person, walking slowly along Pt. Mugu Beach. His task was simple yet therapeutic: to focus on a circle on the horizon during the six-minute session. The 360-degree view made him feel as though he were truly at the beach.

During only his second session, a moment of humor reminded us of the resilience and personality of the individuals we serve. As the scenario began, he quipped, "Oh man. I'm wearing shoes." Thinking he might be confused, I gently reassured him, "It's okay. You're not really at the beach; you're here in the hospital, but just see the beach." He grinned and replied, "I'm just joking. I'd never be caught dead at the beach in shoes!" We both laughed, and I said, "Me neither!"

This participant described the VR sessions as "the coolest thing I've done here [in the hospital]," praising the soothing sounds and low stimulation level. His mother, initially hesitant, later expressed her gratitude: "Thank you for your relaxing vibes." This collaboration between the Brain Injury Center of Ventura County, Ventura County Medical Center, and CSU Channel Islands made moments like this possible.

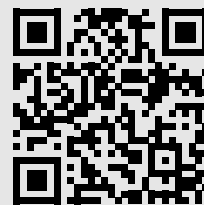
As Board President for nearly ten years, I've witnessed our small but mighty organization grow tremendously. When I first joined in 2015, we primarily offered support groups. Since then, we have expanded to include programs like Care Transitions and Trabajadora de Salud, a hospital-to-home support intervention made possible through a partnership with Ventura County Medical Center.

One of our proudest milestones is the acquisition of Banner House, which provides housing and 24-hour caregiving support for brain injury survivors. This beautiful home, complete with a garden, patio, and loving staff, is a haven for those who need it. If you know someone who might benefit from this, please don't hesitate to reach out to Chrissy at info@braininjurycenter.org.

We've also made an impact by providing career opportunities for over 20 CSU Channel Islands students, instilling in them a deep understanding of the needs of brain injury survivors and their families. With the support of local community foundations and our first state grant from the California Department of Rehabilitation, we have accomplished so much.

Our exploration of Virtual Reality as a rehabilitation tool continues to yield promising results. Among participants, 60% demonstrated memory improvement compared to 0% in the control group. These outcomes inspire us to keep pushing the boundaries of what's possible. If you're interested in trying our VR program, please email me at kristen.linton@csuci.edu.

Thank you for your support and belief in our mission. Together, we are truly changing lives.



[braininjurycenter.org/
donate](https://braininjurycenter.org/donate)

Banner House: A Safe Haven for Brain Injury Survivors

When Peggy Harris' daughter, Jennifer, was young she suffered a brain injury leaving her in need of opportunity and care. Peggy found several options, some further away from home than others, but none were the right spot for Jennifer. Finally, Peggy took matters into her own hands and through lots of hard work and dedication, established Banner House in Ventura, a 24-hour, six-bed Adult Residential Facility dedicated to providing compassionate and specialized care. With inviting patios and lush gardens designed by Peggy herself, Banner House offers a serene and comfortable living environment. LaVaida Olson, a Banner House administrator, explained, "Banner House is a calming place. It provides security, comfort, resources, it helps residents live a normal life—our goal is to help residents become as self-sufficient as they can."

Located in a safe and accessible neighborhood, Banner House is close to essential services. This convenience allows residents to maintain their routines while benefiting from a stable and supportive home environment. Anna Gendron, Activities Director and Banner House Administrator, emphasized, "Banner House tremendously improves quality of life for brain injury survivors whose ability to live independently has been compromised. For example, care supervision around the clock lowers the chances of falls, accidents, or hospitalizations. There are more opportunities for social needs being met, activities that are geared and modified towards abilities, and medical care or concerns are able to be addressed immediately. But most importantly, our residents are surrounded by trained professionals who understand what they are going through

and know how to take care of them. That level of understanding is something that so many of our brain injury survivors are missing in their lives."

With a client-centered approach, Banner House ensures that activities focus on both cognitive and physical rehabilitation, fostering personal growth and independence. Banner House provides a balance between independence and support, giving residents the opportunity to live in a structured yet comfortable setting. With private and shared rooms available, residents can choose the living arrangements that best suit their needs, with shared spaces where individuals can interact, build friendships, and enjoy a sense of community. Carolina Estrada, a caregiver at Banner House shared, "I see Banner House as a way of supporting brain injury survivors. It's a safe space, a home for our residents—not just a place to live."

If you or a loved one are looking for a safe, welcoming place to live, Banner House may be the perfect fit. With a focus on community, security, and comfort, our home offers an ideal living arrangement for those seeking stability and connection. Contact us today to learn more and schedule a tour—we look forward to welcoming you home.



Hope and Guidance: The Care Transitions Program

The journey of recovery after a brain injury is often overwhelming, filled with uncertainty, and difficult to navigate. The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County's Care Transitions program exists to ensure that survivors and their families have the support, resources, and guidance they need to adjust to their new reality.

LaVaida Olson, who serves as a Care Transitions supporter and administrator of Banner House, emphasizes the importance of connection for survivors: "I think one of the most important messages brain injury survivors need to hear is that they are not alone. In the beginning, everything is new and hard, and a lot of people don't know

what is happening to them or what they are going through. Our goal is to guide them."

Brain injury recovery involves more than just medical treatment; it requires a strong support system. Olson adds, "Every brain injury survivor needs a support system, and those support systems need support systems. We are a support system. We have resources, we know where to send people for the help that they need."

The Brain Injury Center's Care Transitions program engages survivors and their families from the moment of hospital discharge, helping them strengthen their abilities, connect with essential resources, and build new skills. By coaching family caregivers, empowering survivors, and guiding them toward self-identified recovery goals, the program reduces caregiver stress and improves overall outcomes.

Miriam Packard, an employee of the Brain Injury Center, shares her experience working with survivors: "A brain injury can be completely overwhelming. The best part of my job is being able to tell someone, 'I have some ideas of who you can call. Let me send them to you.' And hearing the relief in their voice when they realize there is help. They are not alone."

By addressing immediate needs and providing early intervention, the Care Transitions program helps prevent avoidable readmissions, reduces emergency service usage, and supports long-term recovery. For brain injury survivors and their families, this program is a crucial bridge between uncertainty and stability, making an overwhelming journey more manageable.





Turning Setbacks into Comebacks

One Survivor's Journey of Determination and Hope

Vance was living his best life in Long Beach, California, working as a DJ until August 23, 2014, just before his 24th birthday, when he was booked to play a desert party in Lancaster. After a long day and night of work, he got into his car at two in the morning to drive home. Exhausted, he fell asleep at the wheel, flipping his car. The accident left him with a traumatic brain injury, a spinal cord injury, and a stroke.

Determined not to fall behind, he immediately contacted his professors. One of his mentors, Professor Amy Edwards, offered to bring him pizza, but Vance had one request: "Just bring me my assignments. I'm going to keep going." That semester, he graduated and went on to attend California State University – Channel Islands, earning his degree in May 2024 and in a moment of triumph, walking across the stage to receive his diploma.

Now, Vance has his sights set on a master's degree in communications, aspiring to become a professor. He wants to inspire and support students, just as his own mentors encouraged him. "I was always intelligent, but I used it to find the easy way out. Sometimes I feel like my brain injury knocked some sense into me," he reflects.

Vance discovered the Brain Injury Center (BIC) through a transition program early in his recovery.

"The support groups were empowering. People understood what I was going through. In the beginning, I needed that support. Now, I can give it."

His mantra, "I can find a way," keeps him moving forward. "My left side doesn't work. I thought I needed it. But I learned in support group—and from my friends at the Brain Injury Center that I don't need the ideal—I can work with what I've got—I just have to find a way. And that's enough."

Though his brain injury does not define him, it has shaped his perspective. "It taught me that how I respond matters." Vance is now determined to help others find their own way, proving that resilience and determination can turn adversity into triumph.

Vance remained in a coma for three weeks and then moved to a care facility for three months. These facts are easy to tick off for Vance, but the memories are less so—Vance has little to no memory of those months of initial recovery. Later, he transitioned to another facility, underwent surgery, and relearned how to walk. His journey continued at a transitional home in Goleta before finally returning home (finally!) in the spring of 2015.

Recovery was an uphill battle. He received physical and occupational therapy at home, supported by his family, including his aunt and uncle, who were experienced caregivers. One of his therapists encouraged him to pursue college, emphasizing how fortunate he was to retain his cognitive abilities. Although Vance had previously dismissed higher education, he decided to give it another shot.

Initially a business major, he later switched to communications, excelling academically and earning excellent grades. But more than that, Vance was a curious and engaged student, thriving in the classroom. In the spring of 2019, he faced another setback when he broke his shoulder and hip, requiring a replacement.



Support BIC with a generous donation

The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County is grateful for your support. Because we are not government funded, we rely on the community's generosity to enable us to fulfill our mission of helping people with brain injuries and their families. Brain Injury is permanent, yet survivors' lifelong challenges and needs change over time. BIC provides programs and resources for survivors and caregivers at every stage in life and continue to fill a huge gap in services for adults with brain injury. Especially during National Brain Injury Awareness Month, please consider giving a gift that will make a significant difference in the lives of those affected by brain injury. If you can, please complete the attached envelope with your contribution and drop it in the mail.

Thank you!

2025 Memories



Demographic Characteristics of Service Participants

CLIENT CATEGORY

Brain Injury Survivors:	426	(50.4%)
Family/Caregivers:	166	(19.6%)
Professionals/Other:	253	(29.9%)

GENDER

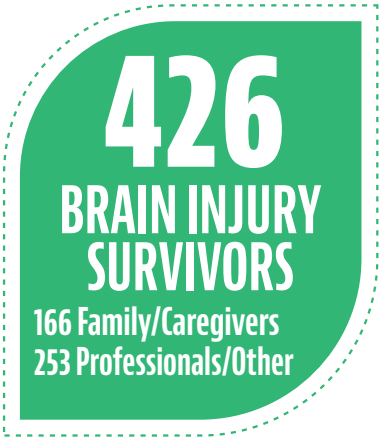
Female	378	49.0%
Male	299	38.7%
Other/Declined to State	95	12.3%

AGE

Under 5 years old:	16	2.1%
5-19:	24	3.1%
20-24:	16	2.1%
25-59:	201	26.0%
60 and over:	143	18.5%
Unknown/Declined to State:	372	48.2%

GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

Agoura Hills	3	0.4%
Camarillo	48	6.2%
Fillmore	15	1.9%
Moorpark	3	0.4%
Newbury Park	6	0.8%
Oak View	0	0.0%
Ojai	13	1.7%
Oxnard	112	14.5%
Port Hueneme	13	1.7%
Santa Paula	25	3.2%
Simi Valley	10	1.3%
Somis	1	0.2%
Thousand Oaks	15	1.9%
Ventura	96	12.4%
Westlake Village	5	0.7%
Other	22	2.8%
Unknown/Declined to State	385	49.9%



ETHNICITY/RACE

American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.3%
Asian	4	0.4%
Black/African American	0	0.0%
Hispanic/Latino:	22	2.9%
White	72	9.4%
Two or More Races	2	0.2%
Unknown/Declined to State	669	86.8%

HEALTH INSURANCE

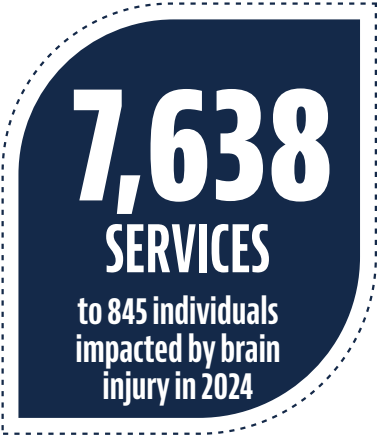
Medi-Cal/Gold Coast	101	13.1%
MediCare	55	7.1%
Private Insurance	53	6.9%
No Insurance	14	1.8%
Other/Unknown	549	71.1%

INJURY TYPE

Trauma	62	8.0%
Stroke	16	2.1%
Other	15	1.9%
Unknown/Declined to State	679	88.0%

PROGRAMS/SERVICES

Care Transitions/Trabajador(a) de Salud:	329 individuals 1,058 services
Care Coordination:	203 individuals 571 services
Information & Referral:	298 individuals 897 services
Education & Awareness:	217 individuals 459 services
Support Groups:	64 individuals 211 services
Reminder Calls:	89 individuals 4,223 services
Virtual Reality:	5 individuals 15 services
Socialization:	58 individuals 146 services
Vocational Services:	15 individuals 56 services
TOTAL:	1,278 individuals 7,638 services



Thank You to our Volunteers



We couldn't do it without you!

If you would like to volunteer with us please contact
Izepeda@braininjurycenter.org

2024 DONATIONS

Thank you for Giving Hope a Helping Hand

100 Women Who Care	Chuck Watson and Sara Radding	James and Sherryl Keegan	Livingston Memorial Foundation	Rod and Laurie Oberlander
Adolfo Grill & Daily Bar	City National Bank	Jane Hill	Logix Federal Credit Union	Ronnie Stein
Allied Managed Care, Inc.	Claudia Alamillo	Janet Slifka	Louisa Wallace Jacobs	Rosewood Dental Group
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Camarillo Rotary Club Foundation	Frank and Christine Longbine	Keith Urtubees and Graham Hueber	Nansi and Charlie Richard	Ventura Downtown Lions Club
Carmen and Ron Berry	Frank and Sylvia Aguirre	Kevin and Pat	Noelle Lawson	Wayne and Barbara Davey
Carole Savala	Fred and Donna Davies	Kimberly Valencia	Noemi Valdes	William and Sherri Sowik
Cary and Patty Hansen	George and Stefania Mallet	Kroger	Oceanview Medical Specialists	William Burke
CCF - Keith Family Fund	Gerard and Allyson Harney	Larry and Cindy Holloway	Odus Caldwell	Winchesters Grill & Saloon
Centre For Neuro Skills	Gold Coast Health Plan	Latitudes Gallery	Oxnard Peace Officers Association	Yolanda's Mexican Cafe
Channel Islands Family Practice & Urgent Care	Grapevine Giving Foundation	Laura Riley	Pacific Pain Management Inc	
Charities Aid Foundation America	Grassroots Yoga	Le Vigne Winery	Pacific Western Bank	
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	Jacquelyn Gargano		Robert and Laurel Householder	

OUR APOLOGIES IF WE HAVE MISTAKENLY MISPELLED OR LEFT OUT ANYONE

Dates to Remember 2025

MAR 28 Workshop: The Psychosocial effects of Traumatic Brain Injury in the Central Nervous System at the Camarillo Health District

APRIL 5 Springtime Brunch at Banner House

SEP 13 An Evening of Magical Memories, our annual fundraiser and gala event—Not to be missed!!
Sign up on our mailing list for Save the Dates, fun sponsorship opportunities, and ticket sales!
We will have a silent and live auction and honor some very special people.

please contact our office for more information



**Brain Injury Center
of Ventura County**
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Camarillo, CA 93011-1477
(805) 482-1312
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Stay Connected

The Brain Injury Center of Ventura County offers several ways to stay engaged and informed.



Join us for quarterly social activities.
Check our website calendar for details!



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@Facebook.com/eveningofmagicalmemories



Instagram
@braininjurycenter



Visit our website
www.BrainInjuryCenter.org

An Evening of Magical Memories



Benefitting the Brain Injury Center

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2025

Las Posas Country Club, Camarillo

Sponsorship opportunities are available

Champagne Reception, Silent and Live Auction,
Gourmet Dinner & Award Presentation
To purchase tickets or inquire regarding
Sponsorship Opportunities
Please call 805-482-1312
www.braininjurycenter.org

Brain Injury Center is a 501C (3) non profit organization
Tax ID 77-0491413

Stephanie Coppage



Celebration of Survival COMING SOON!

Join us as we celebrate with
Stephanie Coppage, friends and family.
Music, raffle prizes, opportunity
drawings and more.

For more information contact
Laurel Coppage at 805-415-3702 or email
her at lcop0112@hotmail.com.
All proceeds benefit the Brain Injury Center of
Ventura County.