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# ◆ THE DERBY CITY NSCIA NEWSLETTER ◆

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APRIL 2006

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*The Derby City Chapter of the National Spinal Cord Injury Association Network- Serving Kentuckiana.*

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## Message From the President

*Dear Members & Friends-*

*As of this writing, no speaker has been scheduled. If one is not available, a video will be shown. Pizza and soft drinks will be provided. Please note the meeting location change in the calendar. We are now meeting in the 10th floor dining room.*

*April's meeting will be held at 6:30 at Frazier Rehab, 10th floor dining room.*

*-David Allgood*

***Please note in the calendar that May's meeting is held on May 22 instead of the 15th as it normally it would.***

## **VANCOUVER'S QUADRIPLAGIC MAYOR WITTIPLY OUTLINES CLOSING CERMONY ROLE** **By David Crary**

A new star emerged Thursday at the Olympics: the quadriplegic mayor of the city that will host the 2010 Winter Games. Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan has used a wheelchair since he broke his neck in a skiing accident when he was 19.

"Some have questioned the wisdom of Vancouver sending its worst skier to Torin," he said at a news conference where, with wit and charisma, he demonstrated how—despite minimal use of his hands—he will be on the receiving end of the traditional Olympic flag handover at Sunday's closing ceremonies.

Addressing reporters in a large auditorium, Sullivan drove his motorized wheelchair from behind his speakers' table to the front of the stage to exhibit a custom-designed attachment with a metal cylinder to which International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge will insert the flag.

Other mayors in the same role at past ceremonies have at that point proudly waved the giant flag; Sullivan plans to maneuver his wheelchair briskly enough so that the motion makes the flag flutter.

"The worst case scenario — the flag blows in my face and I fall off the edge of the stage," he said.

But such a mishap seems unlikely. Sullivan confided the "top secret" information that he has spent many hours practicing his routine in Various Vancouver parking lots, often at odd hours and sometimes arousing the suspicions of neighbors. After a quick spin in his chair, with a practice flag pole attached, he advised reporters, "Don't try this at home."

Sullivan was elected mayor in November after 12 years as a City Councilor. His term expires in 2009, but he could seek another term that would enable him to preside during the 2010 Games. Jokes aside, Sullivan made clear that this was a momentous personal occasion, as well as a milestone for the city.

"Twenty-seven years ago I was lying paralyzed in a hospital bed. For many years I was on welfare and in social housing," he said. "I never, ever imagined I'd be able to represent my country, my province, and my city in this wonderful event."

*From New Mobility.com, March 2006—ed.*

## **DEEP SNOW? NO PROBLEM**

This winter's deep Pennsylvania snowfalls were not a problem for Paul Brigidi, 32, a quadriplegic from North Wales, Pa. He shoveled through the drifts using a wheelchair-attachable plow.

"I said to my wife that I was going to put a plow on my wheelchair and she thought that I was absolutely crazy," Brigidi told an NBC-10 television reporter about his invention. "Now she helps to hitch the plow." Brigidi's wheelchair warranty may be void, but his driveway is always clear.

"I've had people stop and just watch, and I've had people comment," said Brigidi. "My neighbors probably think I'm nuts."

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**Derby City Area Chapter**  
*of the*  
**National Spinal Cord Injury**  
**Association**

**ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION**

The Derby City Area Chapter of the N.S.C.I.A. is a membership organization for individuals with spinal cord injuries, their families, and health professionals. Founded in 1984 as a Charter Member of the N.S.C.I.A., it was incorporated under IRS Section 501 (c) 3 as a not for profit organization. The Board of Directors consists of the Officers, Past President and the Board Members At Large.

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**NEWSLETTER**

Editor- Barbara Davis  
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**Visit Our Website at**  
**[www.DerbyCitySpinalCord.org](http://www.DerbyCitySpinalCord.org)**

*From the Internet—ed*

**EXERCISE FOR THE DISABLED**

**By Ivanhoe Broadcast News**

About 56 million Americans currently live with some type of disability. People with disabilities make up 17 percent of the Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, and they use about 47 percent of medical services.

Occupational therapist Kerri Morgan from Washington University in St. Louis says exercise can help disabled patients because it decreases the risk of developing secondary conditions.

“A lot of times when you have a disability, it’s not just that you can’t walk that’s the problem. You have bladder, bowel, and circulation problems, you’re more prone to being diabetic and having scoliosis, you have a decreased range of motion, so exercising helps control a lot of these things,” Morgan said.

Research also shows regular exercise can help disabled people reduce their pain medications, gain independence and improve everyday function.

David Gray, a professor of neurology at Washington University says exercising can also help people with disabilities gain self-esteem. Gray fell off a roof 30 years ago and broke his neck. Now, he writes grants to fund exercise programs for disabled people.

“Exercise makes such a difference in your day, and your self-awareness of your body,” Gray said.

Finding a suitable place to exercise is one major obstacle for people with disabilities, said Gray.

“We can’t just go to the general spandex exercise facility because we don’t have any equipment; it may not be accessible, and many people, unfortunately, have a problem with looking at people who are different, whether it’s color or gender or your body shape. So, we want to go places where we’re accepted,” Gray said.

If you’re disabled, you should talk to your doctor about starting an exercise program; choose a facility that has accessible equipment; hire an occupational therapist who can work with you one-on-one; try using at-home exercise videos for people with disabilities, Gray said.

The exercise program at Washington University is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Patient Research. The program is free to participants. It offers supervised training sessions one to four times a week.

Anyone can start an exercise program like the one at Washington University in St. Louis. For more information, call Judy Martin at (314) 286-0105.



# **Refrigerator Calendar**

## **\*2006**

### **APRIL**

**3rd - Elderly & Disabled Advisory Council Meeting**

**Mon 1:00-2:30 p.m.; TARC; 1000 W. Broadway; Board Room.**

**17th - Derby City Chapter Meeting, 10th floor dining room; 6:30 p.m.**

**Mon Frazier Rehabilitation; 220 Abraham Flexnor Way**

**15th - Metro disAbility Coalition Meeting; 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.; PVA Office on Goss Avenue.**

**Sat Speaker to be announced; if questions, contact Terri Leasor at 589-6620 or at mdclouky.org**

### **MAY**

**1st - Elderly & Disabled Advisory Council Meeting**

**Mon 1:00-2:30 p.m.; TARC; 1000 W. Broadway; Board Room.**

**22nd - Derby City Chapter Meeting, 10th floor dining room; 6:30 p.m.**

**Mon Frazier Rehabilitation; 220 Abraham Flexnor Way.**

**20th - Metro disAbility Coalition Meeting; 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.; PVA Office on Goss Avenue.**

**Sat Speaker to be announced; if questions contact Terri Leasor at 589-6620 or mdclouky.org**

**For More Information Call**  
**David Allgood at 502-589-6620**

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## UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING STRESS

Many people believe that having a spinal cord injury must be extremely stressful. While no one knows this for sure, some recent research is helping us to find the answers to this question.

One group that was studied was made up of almost 200 British spinal cord injury (SCI) survivors between the ages of 34 and 74 and injured more than 20 years. They were followed for 6 years, and the stress they reported was compared with their medical diagnoses, their other health problems, their level of physical and emotional function, and their involvement in their communities.

It seems that what wasn't found is at least as important as what was found. The severity of the spinal cord injury was not at all a factor in how much stress people felt. No matter how you measured the severity of the disability—by how much paralysis the person had, by how physically dependent they were, or by how much help they needed—it did not predict how much stress a given SCI survivor might have. Another stress study involving younger SCI survivors, done at the Baylor College of Medicine in Texas found the same thing: there was no connection between the severity of the disability and the amount of stress.

What was related to stress? Not much: not heart disease, not ulcers, not cancer, not even such common SCI problems as pressure sores or shoulder pain. Among the British people studied, those with the most stress did complain of more fatigue. Some of them also had more stomach pain and nausea. Over time, those with higher stress also seemed to use more alcohol. These were the only health issues that seemed to have any relationship to stress.

Does this mean that SCI survivors don't have to worry about stress-related health problem? No. What it likely means is that the SCI group studied was too small, and the time period too short for these serious but slowly developing stress-related problems to show up.

On the other hand, this same research showed that stress in spinal cord injury does play a role in psychological adjustment and happiness. The British SCI survivors who had more stress thought that their quality of life was lower than those who had little stress. They were more dissatisfied with their lives and they had more physical and emotional symptoms of depression too. When studied again three years later, they were still unhappy and depressed. The stress study done in Texas with spinal cord injuries also found that life dissatisfaction and depression were

related to high stress.

All of these findings seem to tell the same thing: If you have stress now, look into stress management and other ways to get a handle on it!

How does the stress reported by SCI survivors compare with that of nondisabled people? The only way we have to make comparisons is by looking at the work of other researchers who used the same stress test as we did. Here's what we found out:

- In one study of Americans without disabilities, their stress scores were about the same as the British SCI survivors.
- The Texan SCI survivors, however, had more stress than the British SCI survivors did. This could be because the Texans were younger and weren't injured as long.
- College students had more stress than the SCI survivors.
- The wives who cared for the British SCI survivors themselves had more stress.

Unfortunately, until there's research that directly compares SCI survivors and nondisabled people, we won't know for sure how you stack up, but you can safely assume that:

- Newly injured people may have more stress
- Their stress level should decrease over time
- No one should tell you that because you've got a spinal cord injury you ought to have more stress. Since we know that the severity of your injury isn't a factor in stress, it may be that just having a spinal cord injury isn't a key factor, either.

Whether you're spinal cord injured or not, we know that too much stress is not good. These are possible signs of stress:

- Headache
- Trouble sleeping
- Dry mouth
- Irritability
- Teeth grinding
- Moodiness
- Forgetfulness
- Lack of creativity
- Anger
- Increased smoking
- Sadness
- Dissatisfaction
- Tight shoulders & neck muscles
- More alcohol or drug use
- Depression
- Tension
- Feeling too hyper or out of control

There's a good chance that your spinal cord injury is not, in itself, the cause of your stress. However, there is an

**(Continued On Page Five)**

**STRESS (Continued From Page Four)**

equally good chance that problems related to your SCI are contributing to your stress. Think about what's going on in your life. Some of the things causing stress you can change; others you can't. Focusing on the things you can't change only create more stress, so work on those things that you think you might be able to do something about. Try to solve the problem that's creating the stress.

Exercise is great. An aerobic workout, stretching, or weightlifting can really help you feel better. Stretching exercises for your neck, shoulders and back might also "hit the spot."

Relaxation is also helpful. Special relaxation activities, called "progressive relaxation" are good. "Thinking your way through" relaxing, focusing on slow, deep breathing or guided imagery might help. Don't forget about the stress-reducing effects of just listening to quiet music, reading, or going to a movie, too. Better yet, take a trip and get away. There's nothing wrong with taking some time to do something for yourself that takes your mind off the source of your stress.

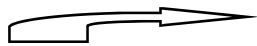
Finally, let go of things. You don't have to be a "superpara" every minute of the day. Your house doesn't need to be spotlessly clean. You don't need to read every magazine that comes in the mail. You don't need to accept every invitation you receive, or volunteer for everything that comes along. Set more realistic goals and find easier ways to do things. As the commercial says, just say, "No!"

If these solutions don't work, and you find that your stress is getting worse, you might want to consider getting some outside help. This can include counseling or a stress management workshop. It can mean hiring a house cleaner. Maybe sign up for a yoga class, or take a course that targets your stress directly. Is your problem with communication and bottled up feelings? Then consider communication classes or an assertiveness training workshop.

Here are some organizations, found in most communities, that are possible resources:

- Parks departments and recreation centers
- The YMCA, the YWCA
- Your local health department or mental health pro.
- Mental health professionals like psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers
- Your church and its leaders
- College or university counseling centers, social work departments, even their health physical education departments.

**(Continued In Next Column)**

**FOR SALE \*\*\***

**97 Mercury Sable LS**; station wagon. Leather interior; 6-cylinder; 6-passenger seating; rear-facing third seat; Braun wc top; Monarch hand controls. 93,000 miles. Price negotiable. **Call Ruth @ 239-9754 after 5 p.m.**

**2001 Dodge Intrepid**. 30,000 mi; leather interior; automatic transmission; Braun overhead wheelchair carrier & hand controls. **Call Ruth at 239-9754 after 5 p.m.**

**\*2003 Ford F-250 lift-equipped green/gray van**; leather seats, TV, DVD player. Playstation hookup, am-fm radio. Rick Miller, 937-2245.

**\*Shower Chair**; 2 yrs old, negotiable; **2 RoHo cushions; low profile**; \$150 each; **Invacare 900 Action Power Chair**; 4 yrs. Old; \$600. Call 448-5296.

**\*Cookbooks for Sale**: Recipes compiled by Chapter members; \$10:00. Call David @ 589-6620.

**\*Video tapes for sale**. Various topics related to spinal cord injuries. Call David Allgood or Buddy Lawson.

*\*\*\*If assistance is needed to pay for any of the above items, contact Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation at 1-800-327-5287 for information on loans at 5% interest to qualified candidates.*

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLACE A  
FREE AD IN FOR SALES,  
CALL 589-6620.  
ASK FOR BARB OR DAVID.  
YOU CAN ALSO EMAIL THE INFO TO  
bdavis@calky.org**

**BUSINESSES WANTING TO RUN A  
YEAR'S PAID AD SHOULD CALL  
DAVID AT 589-6620.**

**STRESS, Continued**

Regardless of what you do, remember. You can change the cause of the stress. You can change what you do about it, or you can change how you feel about it. However, no matter what you do, you have to do something if you want your stress level to be less!

