



*Brain Injury
Association of Utah*

News Release

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The Tragedy of Traumatic Brain Injury *Conference Aims to Help Utah Victims Battle Back*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – This January, 10-year-old Benjamin Mitchell of Sandy was skiing with his grandmother when he lost control and crashed headfirst onto the slope. He wasn't wearing a helmet and suffered a devastating frontal lobe brain injury.

"I still remember that terrible phone call from my mother-in-law," said Benjamin's mother, Kari. "I also remember the guilt I felt for not making him wear his ski helmet like he always did while riding his bike."

Nearly 10 months later, Mitchell still deals with memory problems caused by the traumatic brain injury. He is just one of thousands of Utahns who suffer a TBI every year. As a young male, he is in the highest risk category.

"Most males under age 30 sustain a TBI in car crashes and sports activities," said Trisha Keller, manager of the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program "And the real tragedy is that most of the injuries are easily preventable."

When asked if he would wear a helmet when skiing again and what he would tell his friends, Mitchell said, "Definitely I would wear my helmet. It may not be cool but it's your life."

On Wednesday, October 7, the Brain Injury Association of Utah (BIAU) will host the 20th annual Families and Professionals Conference to help Utahns like Mitchell cope with the effects of traumatic brain injury. BIAU is the only non-profit organization dedicated solely to education and support for the issues of prevention and recovery from

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brain injury in Utah. Each year an estimated 44,000 Utahns receive services through BIAU.

Like Mitchell, 19-year-old Andrew Allred of Salt Lake City deals daily with the life-changing effects of several sports-related TBIs. Allred sustained multiple concussions in football, lacrosse, longboarding, and snowboarding. His first was during his first football game as a freshman at Olympus High. Allred was cleared to go back in and play, but after struggling to catch the football and remember the plays, he knew his injury was more serious than previously thought. Allred has suffered from depression, memory loss, dizziness, and even had to re-learn how to read as a result of his brain injuries.

“Going back in the game after the first concussion only increased the severity of it,” said Allred. “Coaches and athletes need to understand how serious a concussion is. I’m going to be dealing with these issues for a long time,” he added. “Sitting out and letting your body heal is a small sacrifice when you’re talking about the rest of your life.”

Utah Department of Health data show just how serious the problem of TBI is:

- In 2007, 2,329 Utahns suffered traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) severe enough to require hospitalization
- 205 (9 percent) of the injuries in 2007 occurred during sports-related activities like biking, skiing/snowboarding, skateboarding, water sports, and baseball.
- 500 (23%) died of their injuries.

TBI patients, their families, and treatment specialists can choose from a variety of topics scheduled for this year’s conference, including: Sports Concussion Management; TBI-related Behavior Issues at School; A Functional Approach to NeuroRehab; Going Back to School with a TBI; Acquired Brain Injury; and TBI Challenges and Advocacy.

For more information on the conference, visit the BIAU website at www.biau.org. To learn more about TBI-related data in Utah, visit www.health.utah.gov/vipp/.

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preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.