



# Supportive Living, INC.

BRAIN INJURY PROGRAMS

SUMMER 2016  
NEWSLETTER

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Left to right: Nate Berry, AccesSportAmerica program partner; interns Kristin Fechtelkotter, Ben Roop, Zoe Chace-Donahue, Elise Eng, Ryan Chinn, Emily Durette, Alex Landau, Yutong Li, Amy Zhang and Harrison Carmichael; trainer Matt Bruce; and Melissa Wolf of AccesSportAmerica.

This summer, with the assistance of 10 enthusiastic college interns, SLI offered a full menu of physical, cognitive and social activities to our residents and other brain injury survivors from local communities. The 10-week "SLI Summer Camp" provided opportunities for physical fitness, music, gardening, a bonsai class, cooking, game clubs, discussion groups, yoga, and more. Summer Camp was possible thanks to these energetic interns who spent their summer helping support staff and assisting residents in all these

activities. Interns were also required to write a short report on a topic related to brain injury and a short article about one of the survivors with whom they worked. This newsletter is dedicated to sharing highlights from some of those writings. Everyone involved with Summer Camp - residents, interns, instructors and staff - considered this a fun, fulfilling and special summer. Please enjoy the stories.

— Peter J. Noonan, Executive Director

## Summer Camp *Personal Stories*

**Harrison Carmichael**  
BOWDOIN COLLEGE

This summer I worked with Ben H., a fantastic young man who constantly impressed me with his consistent motivation and desire to work out and get into better shape. Ben has, no doubt, had a very difficult life that would be enough to drag any



Harrison and Ben H.

## Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of Supportive Living, Inc. is made up of concerned citizens from the community who are committed to the mission of SLI. They include family members of survivors, business leaders, physicians and professionals in the field of brain injury.

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person down. However, Ben has proved to be one of the most resilient people I have ever met. Ben is always ready and willing to work out, so much so that I would occasionally come upstairs to find that he was already on his way down to the gym, a smile on his face, as I would ask him if he was on his way to work out. He taught me a number of things, but the most significant thing I learned from Ben is that everyone should find and keep something in their life that they look forward to each day, regardless of their disabilities or limitations.



Kristin and Donald

### Kristin Fechtelkotter WILLIAMS COLLEGE

One of the first residents I met at Supportive Living was Donald. He and I immediately found many similarities between us. We grew up in neighboring towns and were able to discuss favorite restaurants and hang-out spots in the area. Once fitness began I was paired up with Donald and could not have been more excited. The motivation and positive attitude that Donald has, not just during his workout but throughout his daily life, is truly inspiring. He has taught me so many things including the importance of a positive attitude, to live in the moment and to be grateful for the life that you have because it is truly a gift. He has inspired me to remember the past but not dwell on it, and to be excited for what the future holds. I loved getting to know Donald and will miss him when I leave SLI, but what he has taught me will stay with me forever.



Ryan and Peter R.

### Ryan Chinn BATES COLLEGE

As a fully ambulatory and physically functional individual, many would not know of Peter R.'s brain injury upon first glance. However, after a couple of minutes of interaction, it becomes apparent that Peter suffers from serious cognitive impairments. As Peter continually asks to go to eat, or go to bed, I found coaching Peter through his workouts to be very tedious and sometimes frustrating. I felt at times like my effort was all going to waste. Though, every once in a while I would break through and see who Peter was: sarcastic, fun-loving father who loves being active. Peter has shown me not only how individualistic brain injuries are, but also the resilience of survivors. Often after he pushes me to the end of my patience, Peter will dawn a smile, ask a question, or bust a move and, in that instance, I know all my efforts have been worthwhile.





Teri and Zoe

## **Zoe Chace-Donahue** BATES COLLEGE

Working with Teri this summer has been a joy as well as an important educational experience. It especially opened my eyes to the parts of living with brain injury that are not obvious upon immediate observation. It is not obvious that Teri has a brain injury by looking at her or by interacting with her at first. The first few times that I worked with her I wondered why she needed my help – she could walk on the treadmill at a fast speed, do planks, pushups, wall sits, etc. with no problem. But I soon realized the major balance, coordination and memory problems that she is living with. Although she can present as though she is functioning normally, she really needs a lot of help. Teri especially showed me the vulnerable position that brain injury survivors are in – because I found that even she, as one of the highest functioning participants in the SLI fitness program, has major deficits that require a good amount of assistance to overcome.



Elise, Peter C., Ben

## **Ben Roop** BATES COLLEGE

Building a relationship with Peter C. has impacted me more intensely in 10 weeks than I thought possible. Peter worked as a mechanical engineer at Harvard before suffering a stroke. He worked diligently to recover, but two additional strokes have left him mostly confined to a wheelchair. Still, he fights on. Every day he arrives at fitness with a determined smile and a positive outlook on life that I can describe as nothing short of inspiring. Peter's job, his mobility, even his ability to eat and drink has been taken at no fault of his own, yet he still keeps his head high and lives every day to the fullest. His work ethic in the gym surpasses the effort that I see from college athletes at school, all fueled by his drive for self-betterment. Peter has reinvigorated my desires to go into brain injury research so that I can help people like him get their lives back. Seeing him stay positive every day has helped me to worry less about the trivial problems in my life and focus on the bigger issues in the world.

## **Yutong Li** BATES COLLEGE

It has been inspiring working with Luise this summer. She is a sweet lady who also loves to challenge herself at the gym. We had a wonderful time working out together; she felt satisfied and gave out generous compliments when I helped her to accomplish a good session of challenging physical exercises (especially generous after I give her a shoulder massage). In that sense, Luise has been very strict on herself when it came to fitness practices, even sometimes in a "stubborn" way, being very specific on time length



Yutong Li and Luise

of workout and quality of her practices. Even though she is able to support herself with a walker while walking, some help when standing up and when she experiences a seizure is necessary to prevent her from falling. During the first week walking with Luise, I realized that Luise has a strong expectation of walking independently. This expectation has motivated her to work harder and not to miss any fitness sessions.



John and Elise

### **Elise Eng** BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Like many other participants in the program, John has good and bad days. Some afternoons, he would be extremely tight in his hamstrings or tired to the core. If the next exercise seemed impossible, he wanted to give up. But Alex and I loved to cheer him on and motivate him to do one more rep. I love seeing John trying his best or laughing after a hard set of sit-ups. “No pain, no gain”, John would say. It has been incredible to watch John get stronger and become more capable of being more

independent. Every time I see John, I am reminded by his wristband that says, “Not Alone in Brain Injury.” Working with John has been an incredible experience.

### **Alex Landau** BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY

In my time working with Marjorie in the fitness program, I’ve come to understand that this program offers more than just a way for the residents at SLI to better themselves physically. Marjorie is a sweet and engaging woman, and over the course of this summer the greatest thing we have given each other is the gift of social interaction. Though her physical wellbeing has improved since June, it has also been rewarding to see her open up and tell me stories about both her daily life and her past. In return, I feel that I have been able to provide her with another outlet through which she can express herself. In this manner, the fitness program demonstrates an alternate way in which it can be beneficial to its residents: having new and positive young adults around gives them a consistent and reliable group of people with whom the residents can interact with and confide in.



Alex and John



Jedi and Emily



It was truly a life changing experience - from becoming more aware of people’s thoughts/feelings to learning the ins and outs of brain injury. It really assured me that I am happy with continuing

to major in neuroscience and opened my eyes to possibly pursuing physical therapy. I learned so much from the staff, other interns, and especially the participants at SLI.”

— Emily Durette, SAINT MICHAEL’S COLLEGE





Music Education

to learn about and discuss music. One of the best things about this program was the lack of restrictions—anyone with an interest in music and a desire to participate could contribute to the group in their own unique way. Additionally, residents had the fantastic opportunity to tell their own stories, which were then incorporated into lyrics for a song that spoke to both their struggles and their accomplishments. This experience had a very positive effect on the residents, as they were offered a space in which to discuss the most difficult aspects of living with brain injury while simultaneously expressing hope for the future and joy for what they have to celebrate in their lives. Hearing their own stories placed into the context of a song, one that they can sing along to and has a special meaning, was an experience that people found quite meaningful and I am thankful for having had the opportunity to assist with this important program.



Roger and Luise

### **Harrison Carmichael** BOWDOIN COLLEGE

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I was fortunate to be a part of the music education program for the summer. This program consisted of residents meeting at Warren House



Nicole, Scott and KJ



Ben and Emily at Old Farm gardens

### **RYAN CHINN** BATES COLLEGE

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Nutrition is an essential element to an individual's wellbeing and health, especially when dealing with brain injury. In rehabilitation settings, it is crucial to provide brain injury survivors with the best diet possible to help fuel their minds and body toward recovery. However, the benefits of a balanced, healthy diet often are outweighed by impulse and urge to satisfy deeper and more

Interns harvesting greens



powerful cravings to experience one of the few levels of pleasure similar to pre-injury conditions for ABI survivors. The SLI and Boston University joint ABI Nutrition Project has given me a greater understanding not only into areas of health and wellness for brain injured individuals but revealed a deeper primal drive to experience pleasure and satisfaction for a person who lacks inputs of unadulterated pleasure and reward. Thus, the project has exposed me to a systematic struggle to establish a balance between fulfilling residents' happiness and health.

## Zoe Chace-Donahue

BATES COLLEGE

As part of my internship with SLI, I have been researching the benefits of physical activity on the aging injured brain and the barriers that prevent brain injured patients from engaging in physical activity. This research opportunity has been especially interesting because I have been able to look into physical fitness as a long-term treatment plan and then see just how well it is working through observation of the fitness program.

Brain injury such as TBI and stroke can immediately induce typical symptoms of aging such as loss or decline in mobility, memory, hearing, vision, etc. at any age. As the injured person ages, he or she are subject to the normal physical and cognitive declines that come with age, but to a higher degree (early onset) due to the injured brain. Physical activity can prevent or delay this decline and, in some cases greatly improve both physical and cognitive function. I have learned so much about brain injury through this research – from brain physiology to health programs and policy. Specifically, I have become aware of how much work needs to be done to make physical fitness more of a priority in brain injury and I am inspired to continue to be a part of the movement toward this achievement.



Marjorie dancing at Old Farm



Amy and Jeffrey H.

Working with Jeffrey requires constant attention. Jeffrey suffers from occasional seizures which is why he always wears a helmet. The first time Jeffrey suffered a seizure during physical fitness, I was right behind

him to catch him. But what if I had been late? The more I paid attention to Jeffrey, the more comfortable I got with him. Sometimes, trust falls actually do work."

— Amy Zhang, BRANDEIS UNIVERSITY



**Yutong Li**  
BATES COLLEGE

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Horticulture is undoubtedly a powerful approach to get residents stepping out of their rooms to get their hands dirty and create aesthetically satisfying space as well as nutritionally dense food. Residents can easily engage in this program as they are invited to water and trim their own plants. This summer I've seen that gardening is definitely a rewarding experience to all of them. Gardens at each of the houses build strong connections between residents' daily diet and plants in the garden. An

example of this is Joe. He is a salad lover. As many other residents, it is a daily routine for Joe to go into the garden, check out plants, water them and harvest some veggies for meals. Food from the garden has become a vital component of his healthy diet.



Joe and Yutong at Old Farm



Leslie Doig, Horticulture Manager at SLI, and Deb

Brady, a neighbor's new puppy, and  
Luise at Old Farm Rockport cookout



◀ Steve, Laura Lorenz, *Director of Research at SLI*, and Roger playing cards



## Summer Highlights

### A Great Day for Golf (and fundraising)!

On June 24th SLI hosted the **24<sup>th</sup> Annual Doug Stephens Memorial Golf Tournament**. The weather was perfect and the Andover Country Club course was in great shape. Over 120 friends and sponsors participated in this event, helping SLI raise over \$20,000. Proceeds for the event are allocated to the **Doug Stephens Memorial Fund (DSMF)**.

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The Doug Stephens Memorial Fund (DSMF) was established in 2004 upon Doug's death to honor Doug and the role he played as co-founder of SLI. The fund is used to enhance life for SLI residents by providing a variety of recreational and social activities. One of those activities is an evening with the Red Sox.

### Red Sox – and another home run for Big Papi!

In July over 50 SLI residents and staff made their way to Fenway Park. A beautiful night, a win, and a home run by Big Papi—what else could you ask for.



### Old Farm Rockport – 2nd Annual Cookout

A growing annual favorite is the Old Farm Rockport Cookout. This year Old Farm hosted nearly 100 people. Residents, survivors from local communities and staff had a great day of games, food, and a fantastic concert provided by Tentumbao, a Rockport music outreach program.

