

CONNECT

Supportive Living Inc. | Brain Injury Programs | Vol 77 / Winter 2021

“I recognize the visible and invisible scars of brain injury for the person and their community.”

Krystyn Van Vliet, PhD
Professor of Engineering
Associate Provost, MIT
Board Member, SLI
Brain Injury Survivor

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Supportive Living^{INC.}

1991 — BRAIN INJURY PROGRAMS — 2021

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WINTER UPDATE: A LONG 12 MONTHS

March marks a full year since the coronavirus pandemic halted the life we were used to. Normal living was exchanged with a world of fear and uncertainty, and new rules and regulations – all designed to help keep us safe – were unsettling. Our residential facilities closed to visitors, leaving families and friends unable to visit their loved one, and residents often alone and isolated. All Neuro-Wellness classes were cancelled, leaving over 100 people living with brain injury without access to physical, cognitive and social fitness activities. All interns were sent home, and research projects were put on hold. The spring of 2020 was rough – very rough. By June we slowly re-started our health and wellness activities for residents. In the fall we re-opened classes to the community – all the while managing classes on a very modified basis to reassure safety for all. We survived 2020, thankfully. As 2021 unfolds we are hopeful.

This issue of CONNECT provides a number of brief updates and stories about our brain injury programs - and all those involved - from Board members, to residents, wellness instructors, research partners, interns, and more. Stay Well.

Peter J. Noonan, President/CEO



SLI BOARD OF DIRECTORS - JOIN THE TEAM

Good governance is mission-critical to nonprofits, and SLI's Board of Directors plays an active role in supporting its mission. Each Director, though tied to SLI and brain injury in different ways, understands the significant, positive impacts SLI's residential communities and Neuro-Wellness Programs have on people living with brain injury, their friends, family and the community. By leveraging their professional expertise and networks, Directors strengthen SLI in varied ways. Since SLI's founding, the Board of Directors have played an instrumental role in the growth and sustainability of the organization. While SLI thanks all past and current directors we are also recruiting for new members to lead us as we continue our mission. **For more information, please contact Peter J. Noonan, CEO at pnoonan@supportivelivinginc.org.**



COVID 19 VACCINATIONS DELIVERED!

Hopefully, by the time you are reading this every resident in SLI's homes will be fully vaccinated. It will be a great relief to know that our residents are much safer from being seriously affected by the virus. We will maintain safety precautions into the spring, and summer if necessary, but we do see life returning to normal, or at least the new normal.

We can't thank enough all the people who have helped us through the pandemic to date. Untold acts of kindness, heroism, and selflessness have occurred. Our community is strong, and we are so thankful.

BOARD PROFILE:

Krystyn Van Vliet

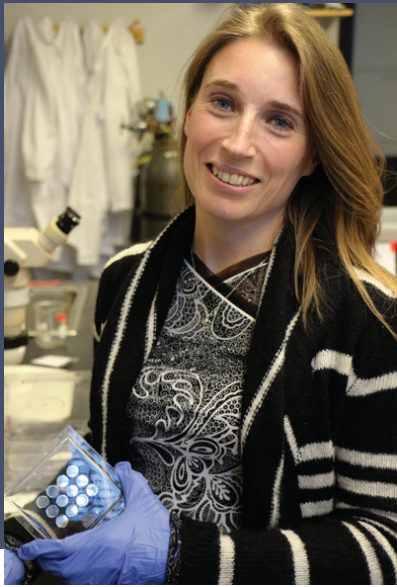


Photo by Denis Paiste

Every brain injury has a story of sudden change, and hers is the story of an automobile accident.

On weekends, Krystyn Van Vliet and her family walk trails near Lexington Center. But she did not know about SLI's Douglas House until seeing an article in the local paper a few years ago. "When I read that this place was not just a residence for those with brain injury, but also had assisted exercise to improve wellness, I felt so surprised and grateful that it existed," recalls Krystyn. "How could I have walked by this building so often and not noticed? More importantly, how could I get involved?"

For Krystyn, the connection was not only as a neighbor but also as someone living with brain injury. Every brain injury has a story of sudden change, and hers is the story of an automobile accident as a high school senior. The accident left her with serious internal and external head injuries. "I was extremely fortunate to recover so much," she comments. "I resonated with this idea of a Neuro-Fit trainer to address this recovery like we do for a torn ligament."

Now, she works as a professor of engineering and associate provost at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her brightest moments on campus are in mentoring her research group and MIT's talented students in "learning how to learn" and then trying to make that new knowledge helpful to others.

"I recognize the visible and invisible scars of brain injury for the person and their community. I get that

neighbors may not know how to approach us to talk about the weather." This highlights for her another benefit of SLI's Neuro-Fit program: the growing community of trainers who know about inclusive fitness and about communicating patiently with those who have cognitive or speech delays.



That very weekend she read the article about SLI, Krystyn and her husband Toby made an online contribution to the capital campaign to renovate the historic building adjacent to Douglas House. This building is the bright new home of SLI's Neuro-Wellness Studio, funded by the support of many in the community. Krystyn later joined SLI's Board of Directors and looks forward to walking over to her Douglas House neighbors when everyone can visit again safely.

In 1991, more often than not, individuals with a brain injury were sent to nursing homes where there was often limited opportunity for rehabilitation, and improved quality of life.

Celebrating Thirty Years

SLI was founded in 1991 by Carrol and Doug Stephens a few years after their young son suffered a severe brain injury in a car accident. What they learned, along with other families affected by brain injury, was there were few, if any, appropriate long-term care options for loved ones. More often than not, individuals were sent to nursing homes where there was often limited opportunity for rehabilitation, and improved quality of life.

SLI's original mission was to create appropriate and affordable life-long supportive housing options, which enable survivors of brain injury to live with dignity and achieve their highest level of independence in the community. By 1993 SLI had developed a model of affordable housing and support and was focused on opening Warren House in Woburn. After multiple years of required planning and permitting, Warren House opened in 1997.

Since Warren House, SLI has continued to grow in many ways - developing residential communities such as McLaughlin House in 2002, Douglas House in 2008, and Old Farm Rockport in 2014. During the same time SLI saw the need for ongoing rehabilitation and wellness programming and created the SLI Brain Injury Wellness Center which has evolved into SLI's robust Neuro-Wellness Program. SLI then launched an education program that offers internship and research

opportunities for students and academics from greater Boston, and throughout the country.

During the 2020-2021 pandemic, SLI has had time to review our core competencies and consider where we are headed as an organization. We will maintain our focus on the current residential, wellness and education programs, making them as impactful as possible, while evaluating expansion possibilities in housing and wellness.

SLI's current mission is to raise the quality of life for individuals living with brain injury and other neurological disorders.

SLI's current mission is to raise the quality of life for individuals living with brain injury and other neurological disorders. This spring, to reinforce this mission, SLI is launching a project to promote a healthy lifestyle called Live Healthy-Feel Good. This initiative is an SLI organization-wide effort which includes residents and members of the community living with brain injury, along with staff, clinicians, family, friends, and all others connected to our network. We look forward to sharing updates as we roll out Live Healthy-Feel Good over the next few months.

LIVE HEALTHY - FEEL GOOD

PHILANTHROPY:

Warren House Capital Campaign



When Warren House opened, we provided apartments equipped with accessible kitchens, and a majority of the residents were able to prepare most, if not all of their meals.

Fast forward almost 25 years and many of those residents, fortunately still living with us, have seen their needs increase. Over half of the residents would benefit from a common dining area where meals are prepared, and it would increase socialization for all.

We have also witnessed a growing requirement for increased education and training to care for our aging population. To address these two issues head-on, SLI is planning the renovation of the lower level of Warren House into a new kitchen and dining area for residents, along with three large conference rooms for training and other recreational activities. This project has an estimated budget of \$300,000.

We have launched a capital campaign, and are happy to report our first pledge of \$10,000. For more information on the project contact Lisa Leake, Development Manager at lleake@supportivelivinginc.org

INTERN DEDICATION:

Driven to drive 4 hours a day

Intern Jillian, a first-year student at UCONN studying neurobiology and physiology, is a dedicated figure skater. A native of Canada, she was accepted into both the US and Canadian World Teams figure skating, accepted a slot in the US team, but then had to halt practice and competition due to Covid-19. Remote learning at UCONN meant she had time on her hands, so she applied for an internship in SLI's Neuro-Fit Assisted Exercise class. A two-hour drive each way didn't deter Jillian from her twice-weekly appointments with exercise class participants. "I want to pursue a career in rehabilitation or physical therapy," says Jillian. "And as an athlete, I see lots of concussions." She found a UCONN class "The Biology of the Brain" fascinating and the SLI internship seemed a good fit. "The program wasn't what I expected, and I was pleasantly surprised. I didn't expect to be able to work one-on-one with participants, and I didn't expect to bond so much with them. I like helping class participants set and work towards their goals." Jillian thinks the class helped her too. "The experience helped me grow as a person. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do when I started college. But I really like helping people."



Jillian is now at home with her parents in North Carolina, attending fully-remote classes, hoping to someday return to campus and hit the ice again.

2021 INTERNS:

Our largest semester class to date

This winter / spring semester we are hosting 25 interns from a number of local colleges and universities, along with students visiting from South Carolina and Colorado. These students are studying exercise physiology, occupational therapy, nutrition, and many other related subjects. Welcome to SLI University!

Neuro-Fit

SLI'S NEWEST PARTNER, MERRIMACK VALLEY YMCA, MAKING AN IMPACT!

In 1999 Teresa Windrush was involved in a rollover automobile accident on a Maine backroad. She likely hit or swerved to avoid a deer. Among her injuries, she suffered a traumatic brain injury and was in a coma for 10 days. On emerging she had to re-learn how to speak, walk and eat. After a great deal of effort, she has come



to a near full recovery. However, she learned the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle to ensure she continued to progress.

Teresa moved to Andover in 2019 to be closer to one of her daughters, and through an advocate, was introduced to Carrol Stephens, SLI Founder and board chairperson. Carrol directed her to the assisted exercise program at the Merrimack Valley Andover YMCA which recently launched in September 2020.

“The only time I had been previously to a Y was to try to learn to swim after my accident,” says Teresa. “I’m not a real exercise enthusiast but I really like the assisted exercise program there. It gives me structure

and something to look forward to.” Teresa works one-on-one with a specialist trainer on machines and free weights for arm and leg strength, and a treadmill and outdoor walking when she can. “I want to work on strengthening my core. It should help with balance and reduce my falling.”

“We started the Neuro-Fit Assisted Exercise program at the Merrimack Valley Y in the fall of 2020,” indicates Kara Lavertu, Manager Neuro-Wellness at SLI. “They have a beautiful Wellness Center exercise area, perfect for the hands-on assisted exercise classes we run. Teresa was one of our first participants. She radiates positivity as she continues to improve, which is incredibly inspiring.” Teresa is especially appreciative of her trainer and YMCA representative, Dale Haavind-Berman. “During our sessions, Teresa’s determined work ethic makes every session a positive experience, improving her balance, strength and core stability,” Dale reports. “Teresa’s upbeat attitude makes each session fun and always seems to go by too fast.”

“The exercise has definitely helped me,” indicates Teresa. “I’m looking forward to starting again in the Spring term.”

PHILANTHROPY: Supporting Neuro-Wellness

SLI would like to thank the following organizations for their vital support throughout the pandemic in 2020, which allowed us to offer Neuro-Wellness classes to hundreds of survivors living in our local communities.

Advocates, Boston Evening Clinic, Dana Home Foundation, Hamilton Companies Foundation, and the Statewide Head Injury Program – a program of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission



Intern Lindsey working with a class member in Andover

NEURO-WELLNESS

Meet Instructor, Urvashi Chogle, DPT

Dr. Chogle leads the always popular SLI Neuro-Wellness Chair Yoga classes at McLaughlin House in North Reading. She completed her Doctorate in Physical Therapy in 2005 from Mass General Institute of Health Professions and has since pursued a specialty in treating patients with brain injury, stroke, neuro diagnoses and amputations. Having worked with patients in rehabilitation settings for over 25 years, she developed an interest in the benefits of yoga and pursued specialist training.

Dr. Chogle's varied training and experience includes working with Boston Marathon bombing amputee survivors, robotic gait training, and developing a specialty in adaptive chair yoga. "We can implement the chair-based yoga program for any individual with spinal cord injury, brain injury, multiple sclerosis, degenerative arthritis, amputations, stroke, or who is confined to a

wheelchair. It improves functional mobility, breathing patterns, focus and concentration, and overall well-being while reducing pain and anxiety."

At the Spaulding Outpatient Center Dr. Chogle was seeing rehabilitative patients when Covid-19 hit in 2020. While she couldn't continue to treat patients in-person during the early stages of the pandemic, she knew they could benefit from continued therapy. In March, a virtual yoga class via Zoom sponsored by Spaulding gave Dr. Chogle the opportunity to continue to help her patients. "We open the virtual class so that all participants could see each other on the screen from week to week and connect even though not physically together. This social interaction helped uplift the mood. Then we switch to speaker view only. After the final segment

we open the class again so all can see each other again for queries and goodbyes." It seems to work well.



Urvashi Chogle, far right, leading a Tuesday evening chair yoga class at McLaughlin House

Dr. Chogle has between 15 and 20 regular attendees in her weekly class.

Wearing masks and practicing social distancing Dr. Chogle's in-person chair yoga classes have restarted at SLI and are consistently filled. "Even after Covid I hope to continue virtual classes. They work well for some people and are much easier for them to access from the comfort of their homes."

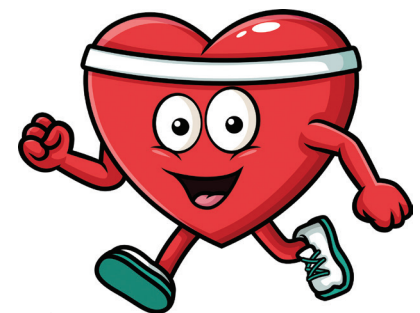
RESEARCH RETURNS:

Have you suffered a stroke?

Has the stroke left you inactive?

Would you like to feel a little better?

You are invited to join a complimentary 12-week aerobic exercise class created to study blood flow to the brain and the benefits it may have on cognition. While you are participating, you can also benefit from increased stamina and strength, weight management, improved mood, a fun social environment, and more. Remember: Exercise improves your health - you feel better! This study is a collaborative effort between Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and SLI. **For more information contact info@supportivelivinginc.org**



Join us in Celebrating our 30th Anniversary by attending one or more of our annual events - we hope in person!

Final details to follow as event plans will be based on safety guidelines.

JUNE Douglas Stephens Memorial Golf Tournament



OCTOBER 30th Anniversary Gala



NOVEMBER Team SLI Battlegreen Run



We thank the many businesses and organizations who have sponsored our recent events:

Advocates, Beverly Hospital, Brookline Bank, Calare Properties, Inc., Cambridge Savings Bank, Chestnut Hill Realty, Cummings Foundation, Enterprise Bank, First Ipswich Bank, Goodwin Proctor LLP, Hall Properties, Inc., Institute for Savings, The Leland Group, McLaughlin-Dello Russo Funeral Home, Micozzi Management, Inc., Newbury Comics, North Shore Neurology & EMG, Rockland Trust, Sheehan Phinney, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, Sullivan, Sorgi and Dimmock, LLP, The TJX Companies, USI New England and Winchester Savings Bank

For information on sponsorships contact Lisa Leake, Development Manager, at lleake@supportivelivinginc.org

Supportive Living, Inc. is a nonprofit organization with a mission to raise the quality of life for brain injury survivors by providing appropriate affordable housing, neuro-wellness programs, collaborative research and education.
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