

## **June 8, 2012 meeting of the SD Brain Injury Alliance**

### **New Business:**

#### **Proposed 2012 Advocacy for Individuals with Brain Injuries Living in SD**

The SD Brain Injury Alliance recognizes that the income of many individuals who have sustained brain injuries is low (at or below poverty line?). The board is aware that this low income excludes many of their members and other disabled people not only from needed rehabilitation programs but also from many forms of recreation available in this state, and makes everyday life a challenge.

The Brain Injury Alliance is very aware that in order for a program offered by the state or a private business to be accessible to disabled persons it must also be financially accessible to those individuals and their families.

The board recognizes that businesses that offer recreation such as restaurants, movies, miniature golf, swimming, bowling, health clubs and other recreation in our state offer discounts to senior citizens to encourage their business. These programs rarely are offered to disabled persons.

The Brain Injury Alliance also recognizes that a significant portion of the disabled population has contributed to this state in the past and many continue to find ways to support their community and the state of SD as disabled persons. Many are veterans who were injured serving this country.

The board members recognize that recreation continues to be a significant unmet need of the brain injury community as a whole in our state.

The board also recognizes that the state needs to update some of its programs to assist disabled people in this state.

The board also feels that recreation programs run by this state should be fully accessible to disabled persons who are residents here.

The board also recognizes that the SD Game Fish and Parks has increased accessibility for people some veterans, blind people and now developmentally disabled people, but most people with brain injuries still do not qualify for reduced rates for disabled people.

Rodney and Lori Sletten propose that the SD Brain Injury Alliance actively advocate for individuals with brain injuries living in SD in the following ways:

- 1) The board recognized that many of our state funded recreation facilities are not accessible to the disabled community due to their costs, it is proposed that the SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the SD Game Fish and Parks to:

- A) Include brain injured individuals receiving social security disability payments in the total disability reduced fee hunting and fishing license (only paraplegics in wheel chairs, 20/200 blind people and DEVELOPMENTALLY disabled qualify now.) This program issues an applicant a \$10 for 4 years small game hunting and fishing license.
  - B) Create a program to offer a free lifetime State Park pass for disabled persons. The federal program has a one time \$10 fee for application.
  - C) That the SD Game Fish and Park offer a competition for the design of the disabled person sticker to artist with the criteria of depicting disabled persons participating in an outdoor recreation activity
  - D) Extend the camp site and cabin rental Senior Citizen discount to individuals with disabilities, or give them 50% off like the federal program. (100% disabled veterans get 50% off)
  - E) Create a program to offer a free camping site to each disabled SD resident that applies once per year, available during the week.
  - F) The Federal Government already offers a \$10 for life pass for disabled persons. This application does not require a doctor to fill out as the state does
- 2) The SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the SD Retailers Association, the SD Chamber of Commerce, and other organizations identified by the board to encourage all SD businesses who offer Senior Discounts to extend them to disabled persons also. Using a Medicare card as verification if needed.
- 3) The SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the State Library, all college and city libraries, and all museums in the state to offer their services free to individuals with disabilities. (Rodney was admitted for free to the Louvre in Paris as a disabled person but it will cost our family \$55 to attend the Ansel Adams show at the Sioux Falls Pavilion this weekend.)
- 4) The SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the cities and counties of SD to offer their recreation services: swimming, fitness, museums, etc. free of charge to disabled persons and their families.
- 5) The SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the State of SD Dept. of Revenue and the legislature to change the income guidelines for the property tax and municipal tax reduction program to reflect more current income guidelines.
- a) At present, the qualification income guidelines are less than \$10,500 for individuals and less than \$13,700 for families.
  - b) A family making less than \$24,000 per year is in need of assistance.
  - c) The Tax Freeze on Assessments income guidelines up until this year has always been the same as the property tax and municipal tax reduction program. The Tax Freeze and

Assessment income guideline has recently been upped to single member households \$25,116.03 and Multiple member households at \$31,395.04.

- d) The SD Brain Injury Alliance could advocate for the property tax and municipal tax reduction program income limits be made the same as the assessment program.
  - e) I do not know what percentage they refund. Our board should find out this percentage
  - f) I believe representative Jerstad tried to address this issue several years ago at the legislative session.
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- 4) The SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the Dept of Revenue and legislature to extend the Property tax exemption for disabled veterans to all disabled veterans not just paraplegics and those 100% disabled as a result of service duty. Veteran Paraplegics now have a 100% prop tax exemption. Those 100% disabled in service related injury have up to \$100,000 but not if disabled after service.
  - 5) The SD Brain Injury Alliance advocate with the Dept. of Revenue and legislature to change the income guidelines of the veterans municipal tax reduction to the higher guidelines of the assessment program for disabled: individual \$25,116.03 and family \$31,395.04. at present those making more than \$12,000 / year get no reduction of municipal taxes.
  - 6) The SD Brain Injury Alliance should include a link to the Dept of Rev. tax refund on our website.
  - 7) We should also have a link to the game fish and parks reduced price applications for disabled and the national park free access application on our web site.