

OH Journal

The Newsletter for the Friends & Neighbors of Observatory Hill

November 2004

Friendship and Faith: The Layland Family Experience with Brain Trauma

Barbara Stanton

When you are 17, you never think about how your whole life can change in a matter of seconds.

When you are 17, you think you can do anything; you are so full of energy, ambition and big dreams. When you are 17, you don't realize how fate and the compassion, thoughts, and prayers of others can change the course of a whole year of your life.

On June 23, 2003, 17-year-old Mary Layland, the daughter of Mike and Carolyn Layland, realized just how fast life can change in mere seconds and how fate and the support of others can get you through some of the hardest times.

That Sunday night, just four days before she was supposed to leave for college at Brigham Young University, Idaho, Mary and her girlfriend were riding their bikes through Bloomfield. They were only three blocks from West Penn Hospital when Mary wiped out on her bike. Mary was not wearing a helmet.

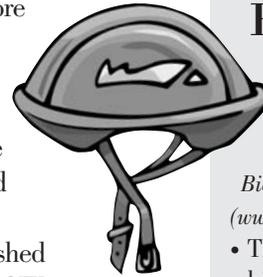
Her girlfriend was riding ahead and heard the crash and turned around to see Mary lying on the ground. She went to a home nearby and called 911. Mary was knocked out for a brief

moment but then came to before the paramedics arrived.

Everything seemed to be okay, but the paramedics recognized right away that she was suffering head trauma and started to treat her in order to stabilize her injuries. They rushed her to UPMC Presby instead of West Penn because they were better equipped to handle head injuries. This was the first time fate stepped in for Mary.

In the meantime, Carolyn was notified of the accident and met the ambulance at the hospital. When she arrived, it seemed as if everything was under control and that Mary would be fine. However, during the course of several hours, the family learned that the situation was worse than they had expected.

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Bicycle Helmets and Safety

*Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute
(www.bhsi.org)*

- There are 85 million bicycle riders in the US.
- About 800 bicyclists die in the US every year.
- About 540,000 bicyclists visit emergency rooms with injuries every year.
- Of those, about 67,000 have head injuries.
- 1 in 8 cyclists with reported injuries has a brain injury.
- 45-88% of these brain injuries can be prevented by a helmet.
- Two-thirds of bicycle-related deaths in the US are from traumatic brain injury.
- Half of these deaths are children under 15-years-old.

For additional information and safety tips log on to:
www.whohelmets.org/
www.healthunit.org/injury/su/mmer/bikehel.htm
www.cpse.gov/kids/kids.html
www.chp.edu/besafe



Mary Layland (right) with her sister Beth, attending college in Idaho. The picture was taken 14 months after the bicycle accident.

Friendship and Faith: *Continued from page 1*

Dr. Howard Yonas, one of the Hospital's top neurosurgeons, was on duty when Mary arrived at the hospital and immediately began to treat her. This was the second time fate stepped in.

As a result of the accident, Mary's brain began to swell and showed no signs of stopping. Mary was not expected to survive. The problem with brain swelling is that eventually the brain would run out of room, causing other vital body functions to shut down. Dr. Yonas was determined not to give up on Mary and began what became a two-week process to stop the swelling and get Mary on the road to recovery.

To stop the swelling, doctors put Mary in a medically induced coma to minimize brain activity and keep it from reacting to any outside stimulus. While she was in this coma, she wasn't supposed to hear anything. However, her parents began to realize that she was responding to the sound of their voices.

"We would talk to her and notice changes on the monitors," said Carolyn. Eventually, they had to watch her from outside the room because she was responding to their presence, which was the opposite of how the coma was supposed to work. The irony was that whenever the doctors or nurses would talk, there was no evidence of her hearing them.

By Thursday, the brain was still swelling, so the doctors had to resort to surgery where they detached a piece of her skull to make room for the brain. They also removed a part of her brain that was dead.

"The decomposition of the dead tissue was sending signals to the rest of the brain which caused the swelling," said Carolyn.

"When you are 17, you don't realize how big of a role hope and faith can play in the course of events that can change your life."

The surgery was successful and Mary spent the next two weeks physically recovering from the accident. Once she was discharged from Presby, she spent two more weeks in a rehabilitation hospital in Squirrel Hill. This was a long and painful process for Mary and her family. Physically she was improving; emotionally she was very angry, frustrated, and confused. When you are 17, you are not supposed to be recovering from major surgery and trying to get your life back.

Throughout this whole experience, her parents kept a journal of everything that happened, and friends and family wrote notes inside.

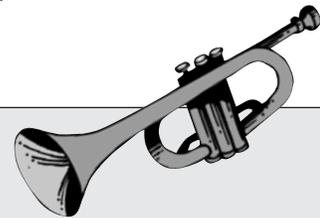
"We were never alone," said Mike. The whole time Mary was in the hospital they had the support of family, friends, and their church. She received several blessings and prayers and these kept the family going with their daily routine of hospital visits.

Mary spent the past year recovering at home. This spring she decided that she wanted to go back to college. Almost one year to the day that she was originally supposed to leave, she left for Idaho. She is now fully recovered from the accident and studying English at BYU. She is your typical college student with lots of close friends and family. She is living life like an 18-year-old.

When you are 17, you don't realize how big of a role hope and faith can play in the course of events that can change your life.

The Laylands have six children living in D.C., Idaho and Taiwan, with Peter still at home attending Perry.

Praise *Get someone to blow your horn and the sound will carry twice as far. – Will Rogers*



Barbara Pace

We all need to "blow our horns" in support of the neighbors in our community who graciously donated their valuable time and energies to beautify our neighborhood. They pulled vines, whacked weeds and spread mulch on two public properties located at Baytree and Venture Streets. Special thanks to Julia Vidic for organizing the neighbors and securing the donation of mulch.

Thanks to the following caring and involved neighbors:

From Richey Avenue: the Vidic Family, Jeff Heil, Jane Sestric, Maggie Evans, Kathy Tonery, and Ann Murray;

From Marshall Road: Barbara Glynn; **From Norwood Avenue:** the Rooney Family; **From Perrysville Avenue:** the Chapman Family, the Uhler Family, and the Gilbreath Family; **From Venture Street:** Marie Carr; **From Watson Boulevard:** the Stanton Family, George Linkhauer II; and **From Evergreen Road:** Deidre Gula.

In addition, horns need to be tooted for Luke Ravenstahl, who worked with Public Works to get a special pick-up for the bagged weeds and branches; and to fireman Ron from Engine House 34 and Riverview Park's foreman, Bob Lacki, who teamed up to hose out the Venture Street bus stop.

State Rep. Don Walko Reports from Harrisburg

PHFA Can Make a Difference in Affording and Keeping a Home

Since its creation in 1972, the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) has helped to finance the purchase of well over 100,000 single-family Pennsylvania homes. PHFA maintains a variety of programs to assist homeowners and potential homeowners.

Lower Income Homeownership

This program benefits families or individuals with a disability seeking to purchase their first home who have an income of no more than 80% of the average income in their county. The loan rates are low, there is no origination fee, and it can be used with conventional, FHA, VA, and RHS loans.

Closing Cost Assistance

Homebuyers who are using the Lower Income Homeownership Program also have the option of applying for a deferred payment no-interest loan of up to \$2,000 to help with closing costs. Repayment isn't due until the first mortgage is paid off, or the property is sold, refinanced, transferred, or the house is occupied by someone other than the property owner.

Purchase-Improvement Program

This loan can provide up to \$15,000 for improvements to the home's livability. The work can include repairs, alterations and improvement of accessibility, energy efficiency improvements, and enhanced safety.

Emergency Mortgage Assistance

This program is a safety net for homeowners who, through no fault of their own, are unable to make their mortgage payments and face foreclosure. The low-cost loan allows participants to bring delinquent payments current. It also continues making payments directly to the lender on behalf of the participant for up to 24 months. During this time, homeowners can continue to seek education, job training, and alternative employment to get them back on stable financial footing.

To contact the PHFA directly call: 1-800-822-1174, locally at: 412-429-2842, or go online at www.phfa.org

For additional homeowner programs, contact the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh at: 412-255-6666, or www.ura.org.



Don Walko
Pennsylvania State Rep.

Northside Office
3880 Perrysville Avenue
Observatory Hill
Pittsburgh, PA 15214
Phone: 412-321-5523

Lawrenceville Office
204 37th Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15201
Phone: 412-621-2818
(Hours by appointment)

It's New and Tasty Priory Fine Pastries Launches a Fresh Tradition

Looking for a place to purchase fresh coffee and pastries on the way to work or for a special dinner or event? In mid-October, Priory Fine Pastries opened its doors and invited in the Northside and visitors with the aroma of fresh, "fine baking in the old tradition."



Priory Fine Pastries offers a glorious assortment of pastries and desserts, as well as coffee service and catering. Expect fine European-style pastries perfected by master baker and manager of operations, Darrin McMillen. Plus, the new shop offers a variety of breads baked by Breadworks, another Northside original.

Delicious, fresh-from-the-oven bakery items include breakfast pastries, cookies, torte cakes, pies, coffee cakes, petit fours and biscotti – available Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to noon. As the holidays approach, be sure to try this premiere bakery for entertaining and special occasion dessert needs.

This new, yet traditional, bakery in a beautifully renovated building at 528 East Ohio Street is the latest venture of Ed and Mary Ann Graf, former owners of The Priory Hotel and current co-owners of Pittsburgh's Grand Hall. The Graf's vision is to help transform East Allegheny back into the thriving shopping district it was historically, in an area of the Northside originally settled by German and Swiss immigrants. The new project also includes the renovation of three apartments above the bakery.

Call 412-321-7270 or visit www.prioryfinepastries.com.

Memories

Do you remember...

- ...riding the merry-go-round in Riverview Park?
- ...swimming in the old swimming pool?
- ...ice skating on the flooded fields behind the old pool?
- ...riding the Perrysville Avenue streetcar? What number was it?
- ...the names of the streetcars, #2, 3, 4, 8, 10, 18, 19, 22?
- ...the soda fountain in the Hites Drug Store?
- ...the Perry Show?
- ...the Atlas Show?
- ...when Robinson's bought out Hites Drug Store?



If you do remember, send your memories to becpitt@yahoo.com for our next publication of the *OHI Journal*.

Who's Watchful in Your Neighborhood?



Barbara Pace

Since the OHI general safety meeting held in August at Mt. Zion Church, there have been several well-attended, follow-up Block Watch meetings. Discussions centered around recent break-ins, loitering, noise, garbage/litter, zoning violations, policing, and the murder that occurred near the corner of Perrysville Avenue and East Street in August.

At one meeting, held at the Byzantine Seminary, former Pittsburgh police officer Jane McCann, who spent years as Officer McGruff, spoke about upcoming training that will be offered this fall for community citizens. It will provide a better understanding about what's involved in police work and give details about how to address safety and legal violations.

Officers Brian Roberts and Dent Edwards from the Zone One police station addressed another meeting held at Mt. Zion Church. They specifically asked the neighbors to take into account the various needs of each home owner, especially regarding noise levels and the ability to safely navigate down sidewalks without feeling intimidated. Perrysville Avenue residents voiced their concerns about the lack of activities for young people in our community, stating that it greatly added to the loitering problem. OHI thanks those who volunteered to organize Block Watches in their neighborhoods.

OHI has also organized a phone tree. Many neighbors have committed to calling the next person on their list to alert them to important news. The idea behind these Block Watches and phone trees is that we are each responsible for our own neighborhood watches. Have your individual meetings, but also send a representative to the monthly OHI meetings so they can share the issues that might be of interest to their neighbors. Use them to address any of your needs in our community to make this a safer, cleaner, desirable place to call home.

For more information or to get involved in your neighborhood Block Watch, contact Barbara Pace at 412-232-4379.

Taking Action and Making Progress

Since the OHI general meeting in August where many of our neighbors voiced their concerns, a number of steps have been taken.

- Graffiti was removed from the sidewalk and several buildings in the business district
- A speed warning sign has been placed on Perrysville Avenue near Ritchie to help curb speeding
- Street Watch and Block Watch captains have organized and attended training with Pittsburgh Police
- Several drug arrests have been made and reported stolen automobiles recovered

Membership dues support the efforts of OHI in:

- Keeping our community represented to government
- Sponsoring events such as the Observatory Hill House Tour, Family Swim Night, and other youth programs
- Organizing neighborhood block watches
- Monitoring crime activity, coordinating with the City's police force, and organizing community meetings to address crime problems
- Assisting residents with problems in the neighborhood
- Improving Riverview Park

OHI Membership Drive

The Membership Committee of OHI has been undertaking a drive to increase membership, streamline the membership process, and welcome new residents and businesses to our neighborhood. Membership is only \$5 per year for families and is an inexpensive way to support your community organization. Membership benefits also include voting privileges on OHI issues and direct access to information from OHI. We have added over 100 new members this year and welcomed over 35 families with Welcome packages. These packages include a coffee mug with OHI's logo, a business guide to Observatory Hill, and a complementary one year membership.

OHI mails our quarterly newsletter, *OHI Journal*, to everyone in the community regardless of membership status. However if you are receiving the newsletter and are not a member, please consider joining. A registration form is included in every newsletter, or you can call 412-231-2887 and leave a message. Better yet, come to our open meetings held every third Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. at the Byzantine Seminary, 3605 Perrysville Avenue. We look forward to seeing you there!

Report from Councilman Luke Ravenstahl

New Playground in East Commons

On Friday, October 1, 2004, my staff and I participated in the building of a new playground in East Commons. The building of this playground was made possible by Home Depot, as part of its National Week of Service; KaBOOM!, a national non-profit organization committed to creating healthy play spaces for children by bringing together communities and businesses; the Northside Leadership Conference; and local volunteers.

Over 100 employees of Home Depot, members of the Northside Leadership Conference, and others from H.J. Heinz Company, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, East Allegheny Community Council, Winn Residential Allegheny Commons housing complex, and Allegheny Center Alliance Church, as well as local volunteers joined forces to complete the playground in just a few short hours.

It was amazing and encouraging to see people and organizations coming together on behalf of the Northside's children. Playgrounds such as these encourage physical activity and creativity in a safe and fun environment. In addition, I sponsored a proclamation at Council to declare October 1, 2004 as the "Day of Play" in the City of Pittsburgh. I would like to thank all the volunteers and supporters of this project.

National Comcast Cares Day

On Saturday, October 2, 2004, over 200 volunteers from Comcast and the Northside Leadership Conference spent the day in the Northside volunteering on projects including painting the Allegheny YMCA and planting flower gardens at the Aviary and Allegheny Commons Park. This was the 2nd annual National Comcast Cares Day, and I'm proud to say I assisted in bringing Comcast to the Northside. In addition to supplies, professional services, materials, and long hours by the volunteers, Comcast donated a check in the amount of \$6,025 to the Northside Leadership Conference. Thank you to all volunteers who contributed in such a positive way to our community!



Annual OHI Meeting and Elections of Officers

When: November 17, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

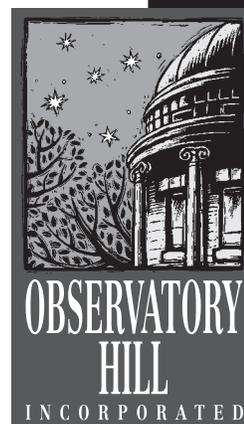
Where: Mt. Zion Church Social Hall, Perrysville Avenue

Candidates for Officers of OHI:

Katrina Blabham	Walt Nalducci
David Gilbreath	Scott Pipitone
Malcolm Hardie	Tim Tunistra

Join the community for a potluck supper – OHI will provide drinks and desserts.

Come out, meet some new neighbors, and see what is happening in Observatory Hill.



Family Swim Night

OHI will be sponsoring open swim nights at the Perry High School pool.

When: Thursdays, 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.
February through April

Cost: \$1.00/person.

See you there!

Perry High Graduates of 1958 - 1960

Yes, we were/are far from *traditional* but we're still raring and ready to meet "old acquaintances" and enjoy each other's company once again.

We are currently in the planning stages for a 2005 Reunion.

Help plan or just email your address to:
Jean Norris, jeanbeanpgh@comcast.net or
Shirley Stoof (Wyman 59), sstoof@comcast.net.

Annual Registration Form for Membership to Observatory Hill, Inc.

Mail to: Observatory Hill, Inc.
P.O. Box 7651, Pittsburgh, PA 15214
412-231-2887

Member's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Date Paid _____

E-mail address _____

Interests _____

Annual Membership Dues (check one)

Community Member - \$5.00/household (adults over 18)

Business Member - \$50.00

Make Checks Payable to: Observatory Hill, Inc.

About OHI

Observatory Hill, Inc., serves our neighborhood as a member of the Northside Leadership Conference. Call one of the Officers if you'd like more information or to get involved in your community. There are open board meetings the third Wednesday of every month at the Byzantine Seminary at 3605 Perrysville Avenue at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome to listen and participate!

The OHI Board

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Scott Pipitone
Vice President
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Committees

Entertainment

Brian Pinter*
Quynh McGuire
Susan Rooney

House Tour

Entire Board
Mark Masterson
Glenn Miller
Peg Perlik
Lorraine Schwartz
Julia Vidic

Housing Initiative

Lynn Schraf*
Brian Chapman
Denise Colbert
Dave Gilbreath
Barbara Glynn
Michelle Kowalczyk
Rafal Kowalczyk
Quynh McGuire
Barbara Pace
Stacey Regan
Mark Reisman
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Barbara Glynn
Glenn Miller
Barbara Pace
Peg Perlik
Susan Rooney
Lorraine Schwartz

Newsletter

Brian Chapman*
Moses Carper
Denise Colbert
Dave Gilbreath
Skip and Jason McCrea
Barbara Pace
Scott Pipitone
Susan Rooney
Lynn Schraf
Rich Sestic

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Entire Board

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Dave Gilbreath
Barbara Glynn
Richard Sestic

Northside Leadership Conference (NSLC)

Scott Pipitone*
Barbara Glynn
Richard Sestic

Parks

Moses Carper*
Brian Chapman
Denise Colbert
Barbara Glynn
Skip McCrea
Barbara Pace
Rich Sestic

Public Safety

Susan Rooney*

*Chairperson

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