

OURS — Onward & Upward, Relief & Support

The OURS group is a new adventure, open to all people with a brain injury. It provides an opportunity to develop friendships with others who have been through a similar experience and allow for casual support and socialization. This group meets every Wednesday, except the first Wednesday of the month, at Everyday Joe's which is a coffee house located at 144 South Mason in Fort Collins. The first Wednesday of the month the OURS group meets at a local restaurant.

The OURS is planning a kick-off barbecue on Saturday, September 11th at Rolland Moore Park in Fort Collins from 12-5 pm. Please feel free to stop by with your families to eat, laugh and socialize.

There are two co-chairs of OURS and they have provided the following introductions:

Sharon Bottoms: My new beginning for the rest of my life began August 23, 2001. My journey started when I was injured in an automobile accident. I was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury. I was a patient at CNS for two years. I wanted back the part of my life that was taken away. My goal was, and still is today, to merge my old self with my new self. There are times of sadness and joy. I take one day at a time. Along my journey I have found wonderful friends who understand me. My connection with my friends has led me to OURS — a support group for people with brain injuries. I think of it as my healing place for my mind, body, and soul. There is no explaining necessary. They already know where I have been. We laugh, listen, support, and encourage each other.

Dorothy Eckas: After working many years in administration at the University of Northern Colorado, I retired to complete a Master of Arts degree program in Community Counseling: Marriage and Family Therapy from UNC. I completed internships at Maria Droste Services in Denver and North Colorado PsychCare — Youth Passages in Greeley. I am a National Certified Counselor and volunteer at CNS to gain more experience with clients on their journey to recovery from Traumatic Brain Injury or other neurological conditions. This summer I am enjoying working in my yard,



Pete Sanchez, designer of OURS logo

redecorating, and reorganizing my home.

Sharon Bottoms interviewed several members of the OURS group at one of the weekly gatherings to gain a better understanding of why members con-

tinue to participate and grow from this experience.

Among the many coffees and mochas, members like **Donna Stanley-Johnson** enjoy interacting with a wide variety of people every Wednesday night. She said, "This group is for socializing and meeting people and just having fun. We don't have to worry. We can come here and have a great time and laugh. Laughter is good." These meetings are a way for individuals to release stress and enjoy the company of others who are experiencing similar situations.

Dave Wick said that he "looks forward to getting out and socializing with different people about their misfortunes and how they are dealing with it." **Stuart Sahl** joined this group looking for different perspectives. He said, "I was looking to see how other people handle the medical situations and the social situations that were similar to the situations that I was in." Others like **Dawn Scott** feel that this group has reconnected them with the community. She states, "The group has helped me break my isolation. Because you don't feel normal anymore so you are afraid to go out and socialize with other people who haven't experienced a brain injury. You always feel a step behind. Here I feel like I am surrounded by my peers or class-

mates." **Chucks Abrams**, who is a member from Greeley adds, "I can relate to the people here because of our similar backgrounds. People will always be different and this gives us a place to be and share. This gives us more of a life."

Besides the socializing and laughter, members also feel like they found their niche. **Aimee Pursley** made the comment that "this



OURS group at local restaurant

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