

## Anniversary *continued from page 4*

lying down in the back of the classroom on pillows, with students looking at me like I was a freak. It was not easy.

In 2001, I entered my fifth college and was determined to finish. This time, this college, I was going to do it. I had almost three semesters left and I pushed through. Every day was a struggle. I cried almost daily, I complained and fought and ranted and raved. I doubted myself and wondered what I was doing. Yet deep down I knew that I had it in me somewhere to finish. I pushed on because there were doubters and I wanted to prove them wrong. I pushed on because I had people that believed in me and I wanted to make them proud. And I pushed on for those who have suffered a traumatic brain injury, to prove that it can be done.

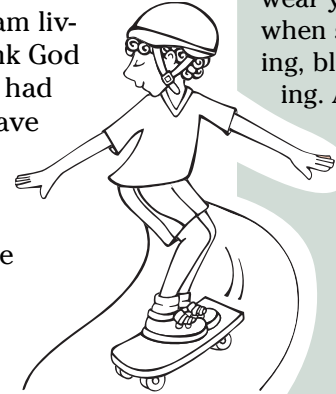
In June of 2002, I received my Bachelor of Arts degree in English. It took me 8 years to finish but it was worth every day of struggle. It was worth every sacrifice, every pain, every doubt. I hung my diploma up in the living room and I look at it every day. It is not just a piece of paper for me. Instead, it is a symbol. It is a symbol of hope. It is a trophy for a champion, a prize to be treasured. But it is not for me alone. It is for everyone that has a dream, for everyone who refuses to give up, for everyone who tries, fails, and keeps on going.

So now, I hope you join me as I celebrate my anniversary. That's right... celebrate. I am thankful for what I have

been through and I wouldn't change it for anything. It has all been worth it, every moment. I hope those who feel like giving up will read this and take heart. I hope you push on and follow your dreams. Anything is possible if you put your mind to it. I am living proof of that and I thank God for the life I lead today. If I had not been through what I have been through, I would be at a totally different place in my life. But I am where I am supposed to be. I have overcome. I have not only overcome, but I have triumphed. You must push on even when you think you are up against the impossible. Nothing is impossible.

*Author's note: When I wrote this on the morning of January 23, I had no idea that my daughter, Anisley, would be born later on this exact same day. As it turns out, she was born at 11:27 pm, and the accident in 1993 occurred around 11:30 pm. She is such a joy and truly an amazing gift. Many years ago this was a day I approached with dread, but as I look back 10 years later, I feel so blessed, by my daughter, my family, and all of the gifts I have been given. Now, on this day, I have two amazing things to celebrate.*

*Kristi recently was published in Pregnancy Magazine. She is currently working on a book and several magazine articles. She welcomes contacts at [klocosk@yahoo.com](mailto:klocosk@yahoo.com).*



## NOT ONLY FOR BIKES:

Don't forget to wear your helmet when skateboarding, blading, or biking. A helmet can protect you from a serious injury.

## SEND US YOUR STORY:

Share your story, a poem, or art in upcoming issues of Onward & Upward. We want to hear from you! Email [info@brainrecov.com](mailto:info@brainrecov.com) or call (970) 493-6667 to find out how.

## THANKS:

Thanks to all of you folks at the center, I am able to manage my fatigue by going to my safe place and trying to forget my troubles by relaxing. That helps to keep the batteries charged up and in the positive zone. Have faith in your God, and in yourself.

*May God bless,  
John Rudd*



## OURS *continued from page 3*

group gives me understanding. No one else really understood the feelings and experiences that I have been through today." **Pete Sanchez**, the youngest member of the group said that he "gets a sense of belonging and this group is a way to reach out to others with similar disabilities."

**John Kindsfather** feels that gaining a friend like Sharon Bottoms has been the most rewarding aspect of the OURS group. He states, "Sharon is my best friend. We just understand each other. Other people who haven't been through

an injury don't understand. They look at you like everything is fine and everything is not what it used to be and Sharon understands that and so do I. Because of that, we have grown to be great friends."

Each member came to this group for a different reason. However, each member can leave this group saying that they have gained a sense of belonging, a better understanding of one's self and others, and most importantly gained friendships that will last a lifetime.