Social & Recreational Opportunities

In and Around CT

The following are suggestions for getting more out of life following a brain injury. Even if you are very motivated however, it is suggested that you check with your rehabilitation specialists or family to get a realistic idea of your capabilities and limitations at this stage of your recovery. A common problem after an acquired brain injury is feeling you have recovered more than you actually have. These options are for Connecticut (CT) residents.

SPORT AND RECREATION

The following are resources throughout CT for people with varying levels of disability. It is a good idea to call a few and learn more about what they offer, locations of the programs (they may differ from the main location), what type of support is available, if there is a cost and, if so, what it is, and any other questions you might have. Make a list of questions in advance to prepare for the call.

In addition to the resources listed below, you may also want to look into sports and recreational opportunities in your town and surrounding towns, along with your local parks and park/recreation offices. There may be opportunities that are specifically for people with disabilities, or programs that can be made accessible for individuals with disabilities. Other resources include your local YMCA, and sports and recreation programs in the community. Don't assume that you or your loved one can't participate in the local yoga, karate, softball, etc. programs.

- **Hospital for Special Care:** New Britain - 860-832-6220.
  Community Health and Fitness Services including Spokesbender's Wheelchair basketball, Cruisers Track and Field, Wave Swim Team, Chargers Wheelchair Soccer Team.

- **Manes and Motions Therapeutic Horseback Riding Center-HSC**: Middletown. 860-685-0008.

- **Sports Association of Gaylord Hospital:** Wallingford - 203-284-2772.
  CT Jammers Quad Rugby Team, Tennis Team, Alpine Ski Club, Handcycling Club, Discovery Nights, Road Race, Gaylord Golf Hospital Open.

- **Mount Sinai Rehabilitation Hospital:** Hartford - 860-714-2421.
  Golfers in Motion, CT Adaptive Rowing Program.

- **Chapter 126 Sports & Fitness, an Oak Hill Center:** Bristol - 860-769-7047
  Named after the U.S. Code, Title 42, Chapter 126; giving people with disabilities equal opportunities, is an adaptive recreational sports and fitness center, open to youth, adults, veterans and seniors with physical disabilities.

- **SAIL Connecticut Access Program:** Westbrook - 860-304-6588. Volunteer recreational group provides adapted sailing opportunities for people with disabilities.

- **Leap Of Faith (LOF) Adaptive Skiers:** Lake Zoar in Sandy Hook - 203-426-0666. LOF Adaptive Skiers is a place where children, adults, and wounded veterans come to adaptive sports experiences such as waterskiing, wakeboarding, tubing, snow skiing, snowboarding.

- **Accessible Fishing:**
    - **Platforms-Freshwater Fishing**
        - Bigelow Pond and Mashapaug Lake Boat Launch - Bigelow Hollow State Park, Union
        - Connecticut River - Haddam Meadows State Park, Haddam
        - Day Pond State Park, Colchester
        - Devils Hopyard State Park, East Haddam
        - Pataconk Lake - Pataconk Recreation Area, Cockaponset State Forest, Haddam
        - Schreeder Pond - Chatfield Hollow State Park, Killingworth
        - Squantz Pond State Park near the boat launch, New Fairfield
        - Stratton Brook State Park, Simsbury
    - **Accessible Fishing-Saltwater Fishing**
        - Fort Trumbull State Park, New London

The Connecticut Angler's Guide lists additional accessible fishing sites.

- **Accessible Trails:** The Saugatuck Universal Access Trail in Redding is wheelchair accessible. Visitors will be rewarded with views of the Saugatuck Reservoir from the trail's overlook platform.

- **Accessible Camping:** Hammonasset Beach has six campsites that are designated for use by individuals with disabilities. The sites are in close proximity to restroom facilities, have electrical outlets and can be reserved. To make reservations call Reserve America toll free 1-877-668-CAMP (2267).

- **Accessible Swimming/Beach Chairs:** Five parks - Hammonasset Beach, Rocky Neck, Sherwood Island, Silver Sands and Squantz Pond - have beach wheelchairs available for visitors. The chairs are free of charge and are on a 'first come/first served' basis. Beach wheelchairs allow those in a wheelchair, or with limited mobility, to still go in the water utilizing a waterproof, plastic wheelchair designed for the beach use.

- **State Parks and Accessibility:** The majority of state parks provide accessible restroom facilities. Additionally, many of the bathhouse facilities at state campgrounds have an individual, unisex bath addition on the buildings. The unisex bathroom enables a child or an adult to get assistance from any parent or partner. Campgrounds with this amenity include:
    - American Legion State Forest, Pleasant Valley
    - Black Rock State Park, Thomaston
    - Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison

- Housatonic Meadows State Park, Cornwall Bridge
- Kettletown State Park, Southbury
- Lake Waramaug State Park, New Preston
- Rocky Neck State Park, Niantic

ARTS

For those individuals not interested in sports or recreational activities they may be interested in getting involved in something that channels their creativity. In addition to the resources listed below, you may also want to look into other opportunities for art in your town or surrounding towns. Again, there might be local art programs for people with disabilities, or programs that could be adapted for people with disabilities. Check with local programs in your town and surrounding towns, which could include knitting/crochet/weaving classes, one on one music instructors, art classes at your local community college or adult education program, theater programs, etc.

- **Music Therapy:** The American Music Therapy Association.
  http://www.musictherapy.org/about/find/
  An established health profession in which music is used within a therapeutic relationship to address physical, emotional, cognitive, and social needs of individuals.

- **Art Therapy:** The American Art Therapy Association
  https://www.arttherapy.org/upload/Locator/Locator.pdf
  A national association which provides a listing of qualified art therapists in CT. Art therapy uses art media, the creative process and the resulting artwork as a therapeutic and healing process.

- **Whispering Brook Farm & Art Studio, Art for Persons with Traumatic Brain Injury:**
  Tolland – 860-794-5650. www.whisperingbrook.org
  Provides a creative outlet through art therapy for kids, teens and adults with traumatic brain injuries. Opportunities for combination with Farm Animal Therapy.

VOLUNTEER WORK

For many, work is an integral part of self-esteem and being unable to work can be challenging after brain injury. Volunteer work, particularly something that is important to that individual, can give an individual something to look forward to every day, can establish structure/consistency/repetition that will aid in rehabilitation, can reduce social isolation, and could be a pathway to returning to work, even if it is just part-time work. Check with local non-profit agencies and United Way offices in your area, or contact 211 for volunteer opportunities. Start with something that you know you will enjoy – for example, if you like animals consider volunteering your time at the local animal shelter.

TRAINING

For some, returning to schooling during their rehabilitation may be very constructive. This can be particularly useful if you won't be able to return to your previous occupation after brain injury. Once again, you will need an accurate assessment of your abilities to make sure you can cope with the cognitive demands of study. Most universities, colleges and community colleges should have a

Disabilities Office that can help provide you with support. The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services could be a source of support in helping to determine return to work goals, and could possibly support you in your effort to return to schooling.

SOCIALIZING

An unfortunate aspect of acquired brain injury may be that you find old friends are lost and you need to make new ones when you may feel least able to. There are a few support groups in Connecticut for people with brain injury and there is room for many more. These groups are an ideal situation to meet up with others who know how much an acquired brain injury can affect your life. Contact BIAC to see if there is a group in your area.

BIAC hosts a few social events throughout the year – including a Valentine's Dance, Healthy Living Retreat and Fun in the Sun Cookout and Picnic.

If you can't find a group in your local area but you know your way around a computer you can link up with others around the world and share experiences over the internet. There are online support groups, including Facebook groups, which have chat rooms, message boards, and personal stories.

Additional Opportunities

Keep in mind... What does the person want to do – even if they have never done it before? Knitting, wood working, yoga, reading, bird watching, etc. People with disabilities do NOT always have to participate in disability specific activities. People with disabilities are people first. Everyone has their own preferences. Explore.