

By Ivana Srsen, Service Coordinator
and Vicky Spreiter

Upon thinking about the upcoming Brain Injury Awareness Week and the topic “**Realizing the Impact with a Smile,**” I immediately thought of a very special person I work with – Vicky Spreiter. Vicky is a brain injury survivor who embraces challenges and opportunities. In the time that I have known Vicky, I have been thoroughly inspired by her passion for people and determination to fulfill her life goals. Below is Vicky’s story and an example of her work.



Vicky’s Story

The cause of my brain injury was a car accident. I myself do not remember any of it. The following is what I have been told.

On May 25, 2003, I was driving a Suzuki Sidekick with a soft top. The back windows were out and it was quite windy. Apparently, the wind caught the soft top and treated it like a parachute. The car flipped in the air few times before landing and then bounced three or four times down the road before stopping. The vehicle ended up on its roof; I was cut out and flown to the **Royal Alex Hospital**.

I was in a coma for approximately three weeks. After spending time in the Royal Alex Hospital and the **Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital**, I was released home in a wheelchair in August 2003. The first few months were quite a challenge because day-to-day activities (eating, walking, writing, reading, talking, etc.), were either difficult to accomplish or completely unknown to me.

Looking back at all that has happened; I have come a long way. In my personal circumstance, I believe that more good has come out of my accident than bad. I had fairly bad depression for the majority my life before the brain injury. I never felt comfortable making friends because I thought very little of myself. As a result, books became my best friends and occupied most of my time. A

very different Vicky is alive today.

It has been five years since the accident, and my depression is *nearly* gone. I actually want to do things and am willing to try. I continue to experience problems with memory, balance, fatigue, and speech. However, I am much more of a people person, and I enjoy life much more than before my brain injury.

I did not do this entirely by myself; I had a lot of help. My mother and husband are fabulous and have always been there for me no matter what I needed. There have been other individuals who I have met since the accident, who have been a phenomenal help and have been an influence in my recovery. Some of these individuals are supporting me in achieving many of my goals, such as beginning to start my own business.

Different organizations have also played an important part in my life. The **Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital** was instrumental in the beginning because they helped me to re-learn all the things I needed for my independence. I took many out-patient classes such as **Memory, Art, and Humor for Healing**, etc.

Then came **Networks**. At first it was a place to meet other survivors, but after I started volunteering, it became my third home (after mine and my mom’s). I go to Networks when I am feeling

