



## Uniting for Brain Injury Awareness Month

### NASHIA Celebrates March Brain Injury Awareness Month: Spotlight on TBI and Substance Use Treatment in Minnesota

During March, the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) will feature stories about the impact of brain injury on individuals and families, as well as resources and initiatives developed to provide supports and assistance. This week, NASHIA features the story of Randall, who experienced a brain injury and is on the road to recovery in Minnesota at the Vinland National Center. Have a story to tell? Send to Susan Vaughn at [publicpolicy@nashia.org](mailto:publicpolicy@nashia.org).



### Meet Randall -- Who is on the Road to Recovery

Meet Randall from Alabama. Randall suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in 2015 while hosting his brother's birthday party, in his own home. He was randomly assaulted by two men who believed Randall was responsible for their job losses at the factory they all worked at. He was beat up very badly, losing consciousness. Next thing he remembered, was waking up in the hospital, where he received a CT scan of the brain. The diagnosis was swelling of the brain. They chose not to operate, but he received facial damage, primarily to his mouth and teeth, and torn cartilage of his left ear with a ruptured eardrum. He also suffered cognitive effects, including memory and speech issues, as well as vision impairment in his left eye. All this contributed to his balance being affected for over a year. He had extensive physical therapy for these issues.



Randall felt a surge in substance use only described as magnified since the TBI.

Previously, Randall had made his living as a carpenter, working as a framer who frequently had to be up on ladders and in situations that required good balance. Randall went from being an asset to his company to being a liability. He was unable to continue working there.

Soon afterwards, Randall began experiencing panic attacks and paranoia. He found he had a difficult time trusting people, especially males. As weeks went by, he constantly felt like he could be attacked again at any time. His energy changed. He slept for long periods at a time, anytime of the day or night. Before the brain injury, he had always been an early riser who took pride in getting to work on time and putting in a full day.

In time, Randall felt the need to change his environment. He did not have a family or children at that time, so decided to leave Alabama and move to Minnesota.

Today, Randall is working on abstinence from drugs and alcohol. He wanted to come to Vinland National Center in Minnesota specifically to work on his TBI and utilize the unique, medically supervised therapeutic exercise center. There, he works on puzzles, memory games, cardiovascular exercise and strength and balance exercises. He is eating healthier and has learned to eliminate high glycemic index foods and processed foods.

Randall is not working while he is in treatment, but he has secured a carpentry job once he graduates that will allow him to work in cabinetry and millwork - with no high ladders! He is excited to get back to work and "become a productive member of society again." He has also been hired to work part time at a detox center in Minneapolis. He says he wants to work with people struggling with addiction, saying, "I want to give back to the community that has given so much to me."

He states "they tried to take my life from me, but I wouldn't let them."

Randall feels he is in a good place right now and is encouraged about his future. His story is one of passion, perseverance and courage. He is a fighter who will do what it takes to succeed. The team at Vinland looks forward to his future with hope and encouragement, and we can't wait to hear about his future success!

Submitted by Randall and Jeff Willert, B.Sc., Exercise Physiologist, Specialist in Exercise Therapy



Vinland National Center, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, is the only chemical dependency treatment program in Minnesota that specializes in treating adults with traumatic brain injuries or other neurobehavioral disorders. Services include drug and alcohol treatment for adults with disabilities, outpatient mental health services, vocational services, and permanent supportive housing for adults with disabilities in recovery from drug and alcohol abuse. In addition, participants have access to a variety of



### Facts About TBI and Alcohol

- Recovery from brain injury continues for much longer than we used to think possible. Many people notice improvements for many years after injury.
- Alcohol slows down or stops brain injury recovery.
- Not drinking is one way to give the brain the best chance to heal.
- People's lives often continue to improve many years after brain

complementary care services.

Vinland's programs include behavioral health services with a focus on substance use and supportive housing for people with cognitive disabilities. A fully-accredited substance abuse treatment center licensed by the state of Minnesota, the program meets the complex needs of individuals with disabilities seeking treatment for drug and alcohol abuse. Vinland accepts funding from:

- Community Access for Disability Inclusion Medicaid Waiver (CADI)
- Medicaid (Medical Assistance)
- Private health insurance
- Private pay

For more information:  
Phone: 763.479.3555  
[www.vinlandcenter.org](http://www.vinlandcenter.org)

injury. Not drinking will increase the chance of improvement.

- Alcohol and brain injury have similar negative effects on mental abilities like memory and thinking flexibility.
- Alcohol magnifies some of the cognitive problems caused by brain injury.
- Alcohol may affect brain injury survivors more than it did before their injury.
- The negative mental effects of alcohol can last from days to weeks after drinking stops.
- Not drinking is one way to keep your mental abilities at their best and stay sharp and focused.

Taken from Model Systems Knowledge Exchange's Fact Sheet. Click [here](#) for more information.