



## *Celebrating Volunteers*

A special thanks to those who  
make smiles like this possible

### *Highlights:*

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Read about SBAIL's  
winter events  
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For more information on anything seen in this edition of *Crossroads*,  
please contact the SBAIL office at:

(773) 444-0305

or

[sbail@sbail.org](mailto:sbail@sbail.org)

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# Letter from the President, Mark Bernstein

I hope this message finds you well, and that you have made it through the Blizzard of 2011 and the bitterly cold weather. If your experience was anything like mine, these last few weeks have been trying. I was suddenly in a situation in which I could not come and go as I please. It was frustrating and difficult to understand why public transportation was not available to take me where I needed to go, and why, when it was available, it was delayed, overcrowded and, at times, inaccessible. Worse, on some days using a car simply was not an option, and walking was difficult and dangerous because of blocked and icy sidewalks and streets.

As I stood helplessly one evening on a train platform with hoards of others trying to get home, I realized that what I was experiencing is a fact of life for some in our society. On a daily basis, the disabled face a gauntlet of trains, buses, taxis, buildings, sidewalks and streets that are inaccessible, or, at best, difficult, inconvenient and dangerous when using a wheelchair or crutches. For them, the momentary frustration I felt is ever present.

I don't mean to cast blame—being a disabled person in a world in which the vast majority is able bodied is problematic. And much progress has been made in recent years through the efforts of elected officials, government agencies and organizations like the Spina Bifida Association of Illinois (SBAIL). As a society, however, we have a long way to go.

It is the mission of the SBAIL to improve the lives of those affected by Spina Bifida. The SBAIL works every day to help open a path to progress for those disabled by Spina Bifida and their families. The SBAIL does that by offering programs and services that teach skills that will allow those who are affected by the condition to lead productive and fulfilling lives by overcoming the obstacles they face every day. You can review our programs and services at [www.sbail.org](http://www.sbail.org).

Now more than ever, the role of the SBAIL and organizations like it is critical. It is a great benefit to us all if the disabled can be independent and contributing members of society. We have undoubtedly contacted you during the past year seeking your support. We thank you, and cannot overstate how important that support is to our continued success. In 2011, we will again be asking you to sacrifice to support our cause. We hope you will continue to see how our work on behalf of those affected by Spina Bifida benefits us all. As always, we look forward to hearing from in the coming year.

Best wishes for a happy and prosperous 2011.

Mark Bernstein  
Board President



## From the Desk of the Executive Director, Amy Maggio

I am pleased to present our latest edition of *Crossroads*, our online newsletter that is read by our families, friends and colleagues who are committed to and interested in the Spina Bifida Association of Illinois. Our winter edition features in-depth profiles on our volunteers as well as great features on our events and programs that took place last year and news of upcoming events. Of particular interest is a profile on Jeremy Hobbs, CEO of Discovery Toys. Discovery Toys has become a major sponsor of the Spina Bifida Association of Illinois and provided all the wonderful toys to our families this past holiday season!

As we begin a new year, there continues to be exciting news for our Spina Bifida community! Camp Independence is in its second year of operation and SBAIL has partnered with Camp Independence to provide a great camping and learning experience for children and adults with Spina Bifida. This year, there are a number of weekend programs planned for teenagers and young adults at Camp Independence and the summer camping season begins in June. Look for the camp brochure and application this month in your mailbox. If you have any questions about camp, need a brochure, etc. please call us at: 773-444-0305.

I am also pleased to announce a new partnership with the Kiwanis Clubs of greater Illinois and Anixter Village. SBAIL assumed the program operations of Anixter Village, our residential apartment building for adults with Spina Bifida in 2010, and we have worked with the Kiwanis clubs to establish a new project called, The Greening of Anixter Village, which calls for an installation of a disability-friendly garden as well as an on-site Farmer's Market. The program is designed to provide vocational training to the tenants at Anixter Village in gardening, landscaping and retail management while improving the physical and emotional well being of our tenants. In addition to the Kiwanis clubs, we have partnered with the City of Chicago, council on disabilities, 4-H clubs of Chicago, University of Illinois Agricultural extension and the Master Gardeners Association of Chicago. All of these programs are funded through the generous support of our families, corporations and foundations that believe that services are vital to the Spina Bifida community! As we continue to expand our service offerings, please consider a gift to SBAIL through a donation online at: [www.sbail.org](http://www.sbail.org), or attend one of our many events....Swing For Spina Bifida, Family Classic Picnic and Walk, Central Illinois Walk and Bowl-a-thon, Pony Up for SB and our upcoming Bowl-a-thon in Hoffman Estates.

Wishing you the best of the New Year and great promise for a wonderful spring....

Amy Maggio  
Executive Director



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## 2011 Scholarship Application

The application for the post-secondary scholarship for the 2011-2012 academic year is now online at [www.sbail.org/programs.html#scholar](http://www.sbail.org/programs.html#scholar). All residents of Illinois who have spina bifida and will be pursuing a post-secondary degree during the upcoming academic year are invited to apply. Applicants must fill out the application form found at the link completely, write a 250-500 word personal statement, and attach a copy of their most recent academic transcript.

The application for the Valiant Scholarship can also be found on the same form. Given in memory of Bill Valiant, the Valiant Scholarship is a \$2,500 award and is given to the applicant who displays outstanding leadership, good will towards those less fortunate, and a dedication to making a difference. Valiant Scholarship applicants must also prepare a narrative, have a minimum C average, and include three letters of recommendation with their application. **Applications are due by Friday, April 15, 2011.**

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## 2011 Family Membership Application

The Spina Bifida Association of Illinois has brought back its membership program. Families can become members of the Spina Bifida Association of Illinois for \$100 per year. Those families who join SBAIL can enjoy all of SBAIL's services like eligibility to apply for [emergency funding](#) and a [post-secondary educational scholarship](#), access to the online family directory, and receive two free tickets to the 2011 Spring Workshop and free tee-shirts for the whole family at all SBAIL events! Apply online at [www.sbail.org/programs.html](http://www.sbail.org/programs.html).

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## Updated Resources Section on [www.sbail.org](http://www.sbail.org)

Have you visited our website recently? We've made a number of updates over the past year and would encourage you to take a look around. Of note, we'd recommend taking a look at our resources section, which has links to a number of different websites that you may find interesting and helpful.

We'd also recommend that you take a look at our [Facebook page](#). There are pictures from past SBAIL events and camp. We also update our page frequently with announcements, news and event information.



# Bowl-a-Thon

Sunday, April 17, 2011

1:00pm - 3:00pm

Poplar Creek Bowl - [map](#)

2354 West Higgins Road

Hoffman Estates, IL 60169

Families and friends of SBAIL will be packing the lanes at Poplar Creek Bowl in Hoffman Estates on April 17 for the 2011 Chicagoland Bowl-a-Thon! The cost of a ticket to the event includes two free games of bowling, shoe rental, pizza, and pop or beer.

Raise \$25 in pledges and bowl for free. Great pledge incentives will be announced closer to the event! SBAIL will raffle off many excellent prizes at the event, so be sure to get your tickets at the event. To register for the Chicagoland Bowl-a-Thon, please visit [www.sbail.org/bowl.html](http://www.sbail.org/bowl.html).

## spina bifida in the news



### state

Miracle or Mystery?  
County Home Resident Gets  
Feeling in Legs after 78 Years

78-year-old Jerry Bretag of Ottawa, IL, woke up one morning with sensation in his right leg. Paralyzed his entire life, Bretag is one of the oldest people living with spina bifida:

[www.mywebtimes.com/archives/ottawa](http://www.mywebtimes.com/archives/ottawa)



### nation

'A Great Champion': Holmen Boy Doesn't Let Spina Bifida Slow Him Down

5-year-old Wyatt Peterson of Holmen, WI, has had four surgeries in the past year. But Wyatt is so strong that he was selected as a Children's Miracle Network Champion and was able to meet the president and Mickey Mouse:

[www.lacrossetribune.com](http://www.lacrossetribune.com)



### world

Corniche Hospital and Sheikh Khalifa Medical City Launch Fetal Neuro Clinic

The Sheikh Khalifa Medical City in Abu Dhabi recently opened a Fetal Neuro Clinic, specifically to help parents prepare for their new baby emotionally and medically and schedule neurosurgical procedures well in advanced:

[www.zawya.com](http://www.zawya.com)

## Fall Family Classic

The 2010 Fall Family Classic was held on Sunday, September 26 at The Center in Palos Park. Over 300 people attended the Walk-And-Roll-A-Thon and picnic, which offered families the opportunity to roam the grounds at the center, visit a petting zoo, and go hayrides. The event raised over \$22,000. SBAIL would like to thank all those who attended the Fall Family Classic as well as the event sponsors, [Windy City Corvettes](#) and [Mobility Works](#), for making the afternoon a success! For more pictures, see our [Facebook page](#).



## Program Director Update: Jami Gryll

The past few months at [Anixter Village](#) have been devoted to implementing a program called Achieving Independent Milestones (A.I.M.). The overall goal of A.I.M. is for the tenants at Anixter Village to acquire skills necessary to lead an independent and quality life. A.I.M. provides the tenants of Anixter Village with the steps necessary to achieve these goals and the motivation to reach them.

As the program director, I have been assisting [tenants](#) in developing their goals and breaking them down into achievable steps. "Weekly meetings with the tenants encourage them to stay on track towards reaching their goals. The tenants have been setting goals in multiple life domains. The tenants have varying goals like living a healthy lifestyle, finding volunteer/job opportunities, looking into school programs and many others. The tenants involved in A.I.M. are responding well to the program and making strides towards reaching their goals. This program has allowed each individual to start working on goals he/she may have been thinking about and just did not know how to begin achieving their goals.

Exercise and being active are both key components to leading a healthy lifestyle. Here at Anixter Village, we have been working with the [Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association \(GLASA\)](#) to provide recreation opportunities for the tenants to partake in once per month. After the tenants are exposed to these recreation activities, we provide them with information on how they can be more involved with this sport on a regular basis. Over the past few months, tenants have enjoyed hand cycling, aerobics and sled hockey. In the months ahead, we are looking forward to skiing, tennis, floor hockey, football and basketball.



## Letter from Anixter Village: Lilly Lopez

The A.I.M. program is a really good program; it has allowed me to be organized with my everyday priorities. Also, with the help and motivation of

Jami Gryll, the Program Director, everyday tasks and life goals are

much easier to accomplish. Meeting with

Jami on a weekly basis has helped me with

my academic goals such as setting time

for my studying aside and completing my

homework. With Jami's motivation and

her help in prioritizing my assignments,

school was less overwhelming for me and I

was able to complete my assignments on time. For example, I had to

write a ten page paper this semester. That assignment scared me. I

didn't think I could do it and had no confidence in myself. Jami and

I met and broke down this large assignment into sections that seemed

more achievable. I completed the assignment on time and even got

an A!

Meetings with Jami have helped me become more confident in myself because I know that she cares and will take the time to help me reach my goals towards becoming more academically successful. The A.I.M. Program was a great idea, especially for people with spina bifida who sometimes lack memory and organizational skills. The program has helped me to stay focused on accomplishing my goals and also boosted my self esteem and pride in knowing that I can accomplish short-term and long-term goals to lead a good life, despite having spina bifida.

*“ Meetings with Jami have helped me become more confident.”*

## Memorial Walk-And-Roll-A-Thon

The 13th Annual Memorial Walk-And-Roll-A-Thon was held at Tipton Park in Bloomington on Sunday, September 21, 2010. The event, which featured a memorial walk honoring the lives of Emma Kenny, Shannon Kolodzieski, Kaylin Rood, and Sarah Whitted, attracted over 200 attendees and raised over \$12,000 for SBAIL! A special thanks to all the [event sponsors](#) and walk-and-rollers who helped make the afternoon possible. For more pictures, visit our [Facebook page](#).



## 2010 Swing for Spina Bifida Golf Outing

The 2010 Fall Swing for Spina Bifida was held on Thursday, September 16, 2010 at [Stonewall Orchard Golf Club](#) in Grayslake. The sold-out event raised over \$53,000 for SBAIL! In addition to a day of golf, the 144 attending golfers also enjoyed lunch, dinner and drinks and participated in silent auctions and raffles for amazing prizes. The event would not have been possible without the generosity of our [event sponsors](#). Funds raised will be used for direct services to people with Spina Bifida and their families.

## Peter Billmeyer, SBAIL Board Member

*Focused on prevention and transition*



Peter (in blue) at *Swing for Spina Bifida*



Peter (right) at *First Look for Charity*

Peter Billmeyer became involved with the Spina Bifida Association of Illinois because he couldn't help himself. After he met Executive Director, Amy Maggio, Pete took an immediate liking to the association because it is well-organized and enjoyed the company of the others involved. But it was the cause that really attracted Pete to SBAIL.

Pete had little awareness of spina bifida before hearing about SBAIL. After realizing how devastating the disease can be, Pete wanted to become more involved with SBAIL to help increase the quality of life for those affected by the disease. He took a particular interest in the transition period for young adults: "I realized that how important it is to tackle the issue of succession planning, to aid the transition from living at home with parents to becoming independent adults."

*“SBAIL means that people in Illinois aren't alone, that they have an advocate.”*

Shortly after realizing how important the cause was, Peter joined the board of directors. "[Joining the board] was an opportunity to get involved and directly make a difference in the lives of people with spina bifida and their families." Since joining the board, he has found an additional cause to champion. "I see being a board member as a leadership role that enables me to reach out to the younger community, in hopes of educating them on prevention and increase awareness of spina bifida." Pete has been instrumental in organizing events targeted at this population, like [SBAIL's Summer Sendoff](#).

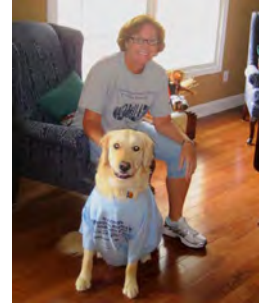
SBAIL has come to mean a great deal to him. He knows that the organization plays a big role in providing Illinoisans affected by spina bifida with a place to turn in times of trouble: "It means that people in Illinois and the surrounding areas aren't alone, that they have an advocate and a resource to help them with their daily struggles."



# Lynn Bradtke, SBAIL Board Member

## *A parent and proponent*

When Lynn Grabher Bradtke first heard about SBAIL nineteen years ago, her daughter, **Jennifer**, was a baby with spina bifida and SBAIL only had a base two and half hours away in Chicago. So she eventually started the Central Illinois group.



When her daughter was young, she met another mother of a child with spina bifida who had moved from Chicago to Central Illinois and, together, the pair recognized that there was a need for SBAIL events in their area. Within a few years, they had established the **Annual Memorial Walk-And-Roll-A-Thon** and **Candlelight Bowl** and then set up a **local support group**, still under the SBAIL umbrella.

Later Lynn became an SBAIL board member, too. She recognized she could bring valuable views to the table as a mother of a child with spina bifida, a physician, and a resident of Central Illinois. “I might have some insights into different things than other members of the organization because I’m a parent and in the medical profession. I tend to look at things from a programming standpoint rather than a fundraising standpoint [and] I value the importance of local support groups.” She would like to see more local support groups throughout the state and to have a statewide Walk-A-Thon event in the future.

“ *I value the importance of local support groups.* ”

### Video

To see Lynn’s interview with the local media about the Memorial Walk-And-Roll-A-Thon, visit [www.sbail.org](http://www.sbail.org).

She has dedicated so much of herself to SBAIL because she sees the positive effect that her efforts have on families outside the Chicagoland area: “It gives all of us an opportunity to network with other families and, being a board member, I know what resources SBAIL has to offer them and I can help them with that, too.”

Being so involved in SBAIL has also helped Lynn and her family. Lynn often gets her daughter Jennifer involved with the planning of many of SBAIL’s Central Illinois events which has had a positive effect on Jennifer. But her involvement also gives Lynn a “way to give back to the spina bifida community and help and thank families that have helped” her and, she’s noticed, has affected her professional career. Despite being a physician, Lynn joined SBAIL as a mother, not as a professional. Lynn does not specialize in care for patients with spina bifida, but being part of SBAIL and caring for her own daughter have given her more insights into the medical details of some disabilities and has even led to her involvement in caring for people with disabilities at the University of Illinois where she practices.



## Jeremy Hobbs, CEO of Discovery Toys

After talking to him for thirty seconds, it is clear that Jeremy Hobbs has a sharp business sense. But if his philanthropic tendencies weren't apparent by his donation of nearly \$7,000 worth in toys to SBAIL's Holiday Party, it certainly is by the end of a conversation with him. Jeremy is, at heart, a business owner who believes business and philanthropy work best together.

Jeremy Hobbs, CEO of Discovery Toys, first became aware of the company in 2002 when he made a small investment in their holding company.

After researching Discovery Toys, he was taken with their goals. "I liked that Discovery Toys has tremendous products that value play aimed at sharing between parents and children and learning of all kinds, be it mental, emotional, or physical." In 2008, he purchased Discovery Toys with the intention of expanding it so that its mission would reach more families.

Jeremy also feels that Discovery Toys's objective is consistent with philanthropic work in situations "where [Discovery Toys's products] can actually make a difference and change the life of parents and children, which seems to be amplified in cases where a child has a disability." He has donated toys to national and local Toys for Tots charities, autism groups, and mother and children shelters. "Donating toys is such an important part of what we do."

When SBAIL needed toys for the Holiday Party, Jeremy chose to donate \$6,848.00 worth in toys after speaking with Amy Maggio, SBAIL's executive director and Jeremy's old friend. During their conversation, Jeremy realized that Discovery Toys and SBAIL have overlapping missions and he wanted to help SBAIL fill its role: "Organizations like SBAIL should provide parents of children with disabilities who have this wonderful child with all the resources they can to help make their child's life better, to help the family cope with the disability and thrive in spite of it." Since Jeremy believes that his company's products have the power to help families thrive as they are targeted at the "healthiest level of play" possible and encourage learning and parent-child relationships, Jeremy felt that partnering with SBAIL would be a good fit for both organizations.

Growing up with a childhood friend whose brother had spina bifida, Jeremy was well-acquainted with the challenges that spina bifida presents children and families even before talking with Amy.

### Holiday Party

To read more about the Holiday Party, see page 14.



## Rebecca Boudos, LCSW Transition Coordinator, Children's Memorial Hospital

Working with people with disabilities has been part of Rebecca Boudos's life since she was a teenager. And for the past four years, her life has been centered on helping teenagers with spina bifida. As the transition coordinator and a social worker at [Children's Memorial Hospital's Spina Bifida Clinic](#), Rebecca spends her days sitting down with families and teens affected by spina bifida to make sure they have all the resources and services they need to reach their goals and has even helped SBAIL establish an [adult support group](#) and serves on the advisory committee at [Anixter Village](#).

For her entire four-year tenure at the clinic, Rebecca has worked closely with teens and young adults and discussed their self-care, health, independence, and community participation. She helps

*“I'm here to provide teens with the tools they need to... become as independent as they choose.”*

teenagers identify their interests and set goals accordingly. But her job doesn't end there; Rebecca also follows-up with the teenagers diligently to help them on the road towards achieving their larger goals. “Adolescence is a difficult time. Teenagers are trying to plan who they want to be and what their future plans are. But for teens with spina bifida, these goals may take extra planning as they balance having a medical condition with the demands of adolescence and adulthood. I'm here to provide teens with the tools they need to overcome these barriers so that they can become as independent as they choose.”

Within the past year, though, Rebecca has begun working with all kids in the Spina Bifida Clinics at Children's Memorial Hospital, assisting patients aged from infancy to adulthood. With younger patients, Rebecca has noticed that she is of most help when she ensures that the parents are coping with their child's diagnosis and that they are connected with all the services and resources that can be to help their child prosper. Since she's begun working with people with spina bifida of all ages, she's come to recognize a cycle. “When I work with younger children, I want to make sure the parents are equipped with the resources they need to make the best decisions for their child so that the child can, in turn, grow up and make the best decisions he can for himself.”

Rebecca has noticed that “the best thing SBAIL can do to help people affected by spina bifida is be a hub for information and networking, being the glue that holds the community together.” She also commented on SBAIL's programming, particularly the educational scholarship and emergency assistance fund, which can help remove an additional financial barrier for families. Because she enjoys working with SBAIL and sees existing needs, she has approached SBAIL about beginning an adult support group, served on the advisory committee for Anixter Village since it opened in 2008,

*continued on page 14*

## Jeremy Hobbs

*Continued from page 12*

His understanding of spina bifida enabled him to see yet another way in which Discovery Toys' and SBAIL's missions complemented one another: "it's important to ensure that people who are facing [disabilities like those caused by spina bifida] are not moved out of the mainstream, that it becomes viewed as something that affects everyone."



Jeremy's desire to help those who need it most is reflected in his statements about why he values Discovery Toys. "I say this a lot and people sometimes think I'm being corny, but it's how I really feel: I'm lucky enough to have a company that does good on every level."

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## Rebecca Boudos

*Continued from page 13*

and volunteered at any number of SBAIL events. Rebecca loves her job because she can watch the families she works with develop: "I just want to add that I really enjoy the kids, teenagers, and families I work with. I just see so much progress."

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## 2010 Family Holiday Party

250 friends of SBAIL attended the free 2010 Family Holiday Party on Saturday, December 4, 2010, at the John G. Conyers Learning Center in Rolling Meadows. An SBAIL tradition for over ten years, presents were distributed for adults and children with Spina Bifida and their siblings age 12 and under. The toys were generously donated by [Discovery Toys](#).



SBAIL would like to thank the event volunteers and sponsors, Discovery Toys, [AmVets Post 66](#), and [Benefit Express](#), for all their generosity and help. To see more photos, please visit our [Facebook page](#).



## Adam Kramer, Adaptive Sports Coordinator, NEDSRA

Adam Kramer loves his job as an Adaptive Sports Coordinator at [Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association](#) so much that he sometimes struggles to put it into words. He worried that he was rambling periodically throughout the interview, but Adam wasn't rambling. He was electrifying. Answers to difficult questions about career objectives and program missions came pouring out. It would have been difficult to not feel the same passion for Adam's vocation that it's clear he feels every day.

During college, Adam was first exposed to adaptive sports through the University of Wisconsin—Whitewater's (and American national team's) wheelchair basketball coach who was able-bodied. Through the coach's example, Adam came to realize that he, too, could become accepted into a community of persons with disabilities. Shortly thereafter, Adam interned at Milwaukee Recreation and realized that coaching adaptive sports "was fun, active, instructive, challenging, and everything [he] loves to get out of life."

But Adam's main goal by working with people with disabilities—including many who have spina bifida—is to "have someone come out of the program more aware of their interpersonal and worldly value while making the community more aware that people with disabilities can be driven, goal-oriented community members with so much to offer." Adam tries to bring this objective to life by creating a familial relationship among athletes and their parents and by "instilling the exact same values and goals in terms of sports participation that [he] does when working with able-bodied individuals." He hopes that by the end of a NEDSRA program, his athletes have pushed themselves and learned more about their capabilities and gained invaluable teamwork skills and confidence.

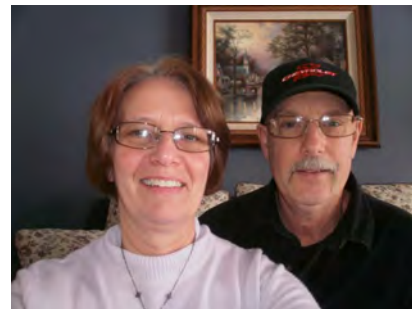
*“ [SBAIL] offers a place where people with disabilities can be themselves. ”*

Adam first became familiar with SBAIL when he began working at NEDSRA and wanted to reach out and establish bonds between NEDSRA and possible communities (like SBAIL's) that he could help serve. Since then, he's become more involved. For example, last year Adam helped out with the [Chicagoland Bowl-A-Thon](#) and, this year, he is on the event's planning committee. Adam enjoys partnering with SBAIL because he realizes the benefit of support networks: "NEDSRA and SBAIL each have their own unique ways to provide support, but they both offer a place where people with disabilities can relax and be themselves and provide people with consensus answers for how to best overcome certain obstacles prevalent in their communities."

## Teresa Kocanda, Windy City Corvettes

Teresa Kocanda of the [Windy City Corvettes](#) makes it seem like cars and charity go hand-in-hand.

Teresa and her husband, Bill, have been actively involved with the Windy City Corvettes since 1994 when they were dissatisfied with their current corvette club and got hooked on the Windy City Corvettes's twofold mission of "promoting corvette automobile club activities and events and to support the Illinois Spina Bifida Association and any other charitable organizations." The Windy City Corvettes have done just that, donating over \$580,000 since 1992. But Teresa has taken her involvement with SBAIL even further and serves as the Windy City Corvettes's charity chairperson and, with Bill's help, has even set up committees that help organize and host the [Fall Family Classic](#).



Teresa and her husband, Bill

Teresa increased her level of involvement with the club's charity work because volunteerism is something she felt passionate about her whole life. "I have been volunteering since I was around 10 years old. It is just something that I like to do and feel good about. I have volunteered at church, at school, work, through my kid's activities like girl scouts and boy scouts, and through the corvette club." She and Bill have also been attending the Fall Family Classic for years, but hope to attend more SBAIL events in the future and bring some fellow WCC members, too.

*"We were very impressed by the [Anixter Village] facility and tenants."*

Both Teresa and Bill have been looking to increase WCC and their own involvement in SBAIL for a few reasons. Teresa enjoys working with SBAIL's staff: "Working with executive director, [Amy Maggio](#), and director of development, Chris Byrne, has been wonderful. They are so committed to SBAIL and I just want to do our part." They also both lauded [Anixter Village](#) and the programming that SBAIL has established for its [tenants](#): "We were both impressed with Anixter Village. We had the opportunity to tour the building and have meetings there. We were very impressed with the facility and tenants."

Most importantly, they both believe that SBAIL does a lot to help people affected by spina bifida—and ensure that the number of people affected by it continues to drop through prevention education and awareness: "We both think SBAIL does a great job in trying to educate people about spina bifida and how to prevent it. They also do a great job in trying to help those who have spina bifida. We are just also trying to get that word out to others through our annual corvette raffle and make people aware."

## SBAIL Scholarship Program

Every year, the Spina Bifida Association of Illinois offers a financial scholarship award to persons with spina bifida who are pursuing post-secondary education. Applicants must reside in Illinois, have spina bifida, and show a desire to help others. SBAIL also offers the [Valiant Scholarship](#), a \$2,500 scholarship given to the applicant who best displays outstanding leadership, good will toward those less fortunate, a dedication to making a difference in their communities, and the best demonstrated ability to help others with spina bifida.

The 2010-2011 scholarship recipients each accomplished impressive things last semester. *Crossroads* developed in-depth updates on several scholarship recipients to highlight their achievements in the fall 2010 semester.

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### Patrick Juris, University of Illinois at Chicago



A sociology major and psychology minor who hopes to one day become an occupational therapist, Patrick Juris, the Valiant Scholarship winner, had an engaging semester at UIC. He most enjoyed his courses related to medical sociology and health disparities because he felt that they best prepared him for his future in the healthcare field. He also continued to serve as the Vice President of the Sociology Club and was active on the Chancellor's Committee of the Status of Persons with Disabilities. He is also working toward creating more social opportunities for students with disabilities. SBAIL has enabled Patrick to focus on school and not worry about finances. His participation in SBAIL events and First Saturday groups has given him the opportunity to continue socializing and networking with others with spina bifida.

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### Bridget Evans, University of Illinois



Bridget Evans, who studies hospital administration so she can help provide others with the same quality health care she's received and become a chief administrator in a pediatric hospital, enjoyed her courses and extracurricular activities last semester. Her favorite course was Community Health 457, an interactive and valuable course that taught her about strategic planning. Extracurricularly, Bridget is the external service chair for the College of Applied Health Sciences Student Council, a position that has enabled her to pioneer a program that enables students to foster and train service dogs on campus. She attributes a great deal of her collegiate success to her supportive relationships with friends, staff and professors. Financially, SBAIL has given her the opportunity to pursue her degree, but it has also helped provide her with the peace of mind and confidence she needs to excel and live a fulfilling and independent life.

## Jennifer Bradtke, Illinois State University



Jennifer Bradtke's semester at Illinois State University reinforced her passion for her major, special education. Jennifer chose to major in special education because she wanted to help change the lives of others with disabilities to give back because so many people have helped her overcome her physical disability throughout her life. Her favorite course of the semester was Introduction to Special Education because it gave her a broad base of knowledge about her major and career choice. She also did volunteer work with a kindergarten girl with special needs, participated in several clubs at ISU, and worked with the Newman Center, a Catholic group for university students.

## Jenny Nilsen, Bradley University

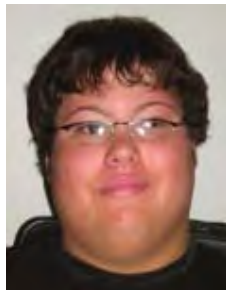


Jenny Nilsen of Lake Zurich, Illinois, enjoyed her semester at Bradley University. Jenny, a psychology major because of her love for working with and listening to people, her favorite course of the semester was Personality Psychology because it enabled her to delve further into her interest in people's personalities. As a final project for her course, she was able to design her own personality theory by combining the various ideas she had learned throughout the semester. Jenny also works a Resident Assistant at the University, which is her favorite part of her college experience. She was just promoted to be a Hall Director of a residential building. After college, Jenny plans to attend graduate school to pursue a career in Marriage and Family Counseling. SBAIL has enabled her to pursue a fulfilling college experience and provided her will the ability to choose any career she wants by financially supporting her through college.

## Additional Scholarship Recipients



Kendall Gretsche,  
*Washington University  
in St. Louis (MO)*



Scott Nyquist,  
*Elmhurst College,  
Elmhurst, IL*



Elizabeth Conroy,  
*St. Ambrose University,  
Davenport, IA*

*Not pictured:*

Guadalupe Solorio,  
*South Suburban College,  
South Holland, IL*

## News from SBAL friends

### GLASA

#### Adaptive Tennis

Instruction is provided for beginners and tournament players who are ambulatory or use a manual or power chair.

Saturdays from 3:00-5:00pm

Jan 15 – Mar 12 (session I)

Mar 19 – May 21 (session II)

To register for the team or find out more information, please call the **Great Lakes Adaptive Sports Association** at (847) 283-0908.



### NEDSRA

#### Paralympic Track and Field

Sundays from March 27th to May 15th, 2:30-4:00pm

Addison Trail High School

You will have a chance to learn a range of field events or fine tune your old skills with discus, club throw, precision throw, and shot, while testing your true speed at various distances around the track. Athletes with physical disabilities (aged 6+) are invited to join the team, regardless of if they are ambulatory or use a wheelchair. Don't miss this opportunity to increase your muscle tone, strength, and endurance. All athletes that register for this program are eligible to compete in the **Great Lakes Games** on Sunday, May 22. For more information, contact **Adam Kramer** at 630-620-4500, ext. 137



## 2011 Ms. Wheelchair Illinois America Pageant

[mswheelchairillinois.webs.com](http://mswheelchairillinois.webs.com)

Orland Park on Saturday, March 19th

If you are a woman, a U.S. citizen between the ages of 21 and 60, use a wheelchair 100% of the time for community mobility, and have been a resident of Illinois for at least 6 months, you could be eligible to enter the competition. For applications and further information contact Pamela LaPorte at [mswheelchairillinois@hotmail.com](mailto:mswheelchairillinois@hotmail.com).



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