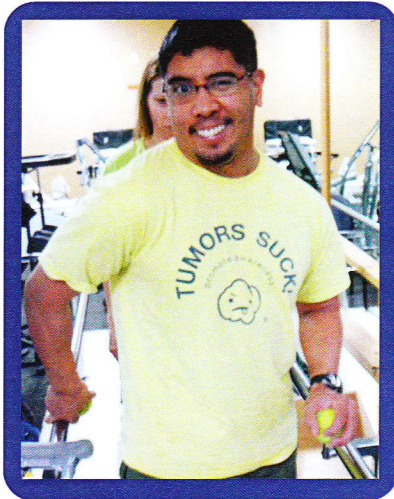


Changing Places: A Patient Profile

Eric Galvez, a doctor of physical therapy (DPT), used to start his days surfing before heading off to his job as a physical therapist at Sharp Grossmont Hospital. Taking full advantage of San Diego's mild climate, he enjoyed an active lifestyle and participated in marathons and triathlons. That was five years ago, when the roles were suddenly reversed for Eric, the physical therapist. He became the patient.

When he was 30, Eric began experiencing severe headaches, dizziness, nausea, and facial numbness that caused him to bite his lip, cheek or tongue. His physician discovered a non-malignant brain tumor *the size of a golf ball* located at the base of his brain between the brainstem and cerebellum, the brain structures that control heart rate, breathing, balance, facial/tongue movements, coordination, and fine motor skills. The tumor was operable and within a month it was removed. Eric stayed in the hospital for six weeks following his operation, underwent radiation therapy, and spent a year in rehabilitation.

These days Eric needs the assistance of two friends to surf and cannot walk without using a walker, let alone run. However, this change in his once active lifestyle has not diminished Eric's spirit, determination, or good humor.



Eric flashes a grin as he shows off the t-shirt he designed.

“My motto is ‘why not?’ There are always other ways to do things, so I will try to find a way to walk, surf, and run solo again. Challenge Center is helping me work toward these goals.”

As he began to establish a new life routine, Eric pursued new hobbies and a life's work. He began to read for pleasure, which introduced him to such topics as neuroplasticity, that our thoughts and activities can change the structure and function of our brains, even into old age. Blogging has allowed him to share his experiences and now has an impressive following on *Facebook*. Nutrition has become more important in maintaining his health and well-being, so he has learned to cook. He even self-published a book about his journey, called *Reversal*. Through his association with Lambda Phi Epsilon, the college fraternity he helped found at University of Michigan, Eric has given speeches at universities across the nation. And, he has established mAssKickers.org, a nonprofit organization that will focus on knowledge, unity and research for the newly diagnosed patient.

Continued on next page.



Changing Places *(continued)*

Eric knew he could achieve a higher level of independence and also wanted to work toward his goals of walking, running, and maybe even surfing unassisted, but his health insurance coverage for physical therapy had ended. A friend at church who had been a client at Challenge Center suggested he visit the medically-oriented gym and physical therapy clinic, which offers continuing therapy after insurance coverage has been exhausted. Several of his former physical therapy colleagues recommended Challenge Center, too, so Eric scheduled a visit. He has now been attending physical therapy sessions regularly since July 2009.

“The staff here listened to my ideas as we developed my care program. After all, I am a physical therapist,” says Eric, smiling. “I have made so much progress toward walking unaided since coming here.”

Karen Fritz, Eric’s physical therapist at Challenge Center, notes that his knowledge of normal movement gives him an insight that only a physical therapist has. “Eric’s physical and mental fortitude are that of an endurance athlete, and these qualities are evident as he continues to work steadily toward his goal of walking without assistance,” says Karen. “He is a highly positive person, an accomplished physical therapist, and now a motivator to other brain tumor survivors.”

The Michigan native has grown in so many ways since that day five years ago when he learned of the tumor. “The rest of my story isn’t written. I’m still improving and re-creating myself. I’ve learned a lot about myself already. All I know is that I’m going to fully enjoy living the rest of my story.”

Auxiliary Will Offer a Helping Hand

Under the leadership of Andy Palumbo and Josie Kirst, a group of dedicated volunteers, former clients, and staff has formed Challenge Center’s first Auxiliary, which will work to build a stronger sense of community among the center’s clients, and further awareness of our mission. Among the members are Bill Bodry, Bobbie Sessions, Rob Constantine, Ed Gerber, Mary Hardison, Jay Neal, and Dawn Adams. To join the Auxiliary, contact Andy at andypalumbo@yahoo.com.

The agenda for the first meetings have covered many topics, including ways to bring clients together for fun and support as well as different fundraising opportunities. The first event, **a client appreciation potluck**, is planned from **11 am to 2 pm** on **Wednesday, April 7** at Challenge Center.

Another event is in the planning stages and will focus on the creation of a Jeanie Booth-Rex Memorial Garden behind Challenge Center. Jeanie Booth Rex was a long-time dedicated staff member and former client at Challenge Center who died unexpectedly last December. This will offer another opportunity to honor Jeanie and her tireless devotion to Challenge Center, and also help the Auxiliary promote our mission to a wider audience, including others who knew Jeanie well.

Comedy Night 2010

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Contact Robyn Bottomley, Event Coordinator, about sponsorship opportunities at robyn@robynbottomley.com or call her at 858.245.4234.