

RAINBOW CLIENT...

James Summers*By Kimberly Paetzold, Editor*

Jim Summers is thoughtful and likes to analyze all the angles before he makes a decision. But that wasn't always the case; there was a time when he would act impulsively and try to escape his thoughts and feelings...

In 1995, Jim was walking down a dark road with no sidewalk when a drunk driver going home from a local bar swerved and hit him. He went through the windshield. His injuries included a TBI (frontal lobe) and many broken bones.

Jim was given his last rites in the hospital, but after a few days the medical professionals expected he might survive. His prognosis? He would never again walk independently. Jim didn't want to hear that, so he would wheel himself to a quiet area of the hospital late at night and use the wall rails for walking props. "I didn't think I was getting enough therapy during the day – a couple of hours each day wasn't going to do it" Jim stated. He later received therapy at Rainbow to help him master walking and regain balance.

After spending 100 days in the hospital, Jim was admitted to Rainbow's Residential Program. He had problems with short-term memory and, as part of his rehab, learned to use a planner. This became key to his success. According to Jim, "Writing things down combined with lots of repetition is what got me through."

After graduating from the group home setting, Jim moved on to Rainbow's Townhouse Program where he had greater independence and less supervision. Within a short period of time, Jim decided he had completely rehabilitated and discharged from Rainbow without completing all the established therapy and independent life skill goals. He moved in with family and

worked for a locksmith company where he remained employed until the shop closed.

Jim eventually purchased a trailer home and found new employment with a plastic recycling company in the shipping and receiving department. He stayed employed for three years, but as business slowed, Jim was laid-off. Discouraged, he took a year off and then began working for his brother. During that time, he pushed hard, but found he couldn't keep up. In addition to the difficulties resulting from his brain injury, Jim was diagnosed with cancer and began treatment. Life was getting quite difficult. After much struggling, Jim decided he needed more help and called Rainbow.

August 2005 - Jim readmits to Rainbow

Since admitting in August of 2005, Jim has advanced from the Townhouse Program, which offered ongoing supervision, to the Apartment Program, which is less restrictive. Jim can access help at any time, but daily ongoing supervision is no longer needed. His cancer is in remission and things are looking up. Jim continues to work on money management skills and has begun to consider a new career direction that is more suitable. Currently, he participates in outpatient therapy and has Clubhouse activities to help him reach his rehabilitation goals.

Jim's advice for others...

Anyone dealing with brain injury needs to have a strong faith. I believe there is a higher power and that there is always a way provided. Use the resources available – family, friends and rehabilitation services. When I wasn't succeeding, my doctor suggested I return to Rainbow for additional therapy and support. I did not

want to accept the fact that I hadn't completely returned to the person I was prior to the accident. That was really hard for me. After going through financial ruin and destroyed relationships, I realized I really did need some help.

My Dad and brother thought that I was basically the same person and that's why working for my brother didn't work. He didn't understand my deficits or difficulties, and that negatively affected our relationship. It's vital to become informed as a family member so you can understand your loved one.

Writing was also highly beneficial for me. Writing allowed me to examine how I was feeling and evaluate the reasons for my thoughts – it helped me determine whether they were accurate or not. Often, I have a hard time articulating what I want to say, and writing gives me the opportunity to communicate effectively.

I'm grateful for who I am now. Everyday I see people who go through similar situations and are far worse off. I am indeed very fortunate – a very lucky person. But I learned not to demand too much too quickly. I left Rainbow before I was ready because I was anxious to get on with my life. Combine that with the anger I was feeling, and you don't get a formula for success. Getting over self-pity is a big thing – it's part of the anger.

I have now learned to accept and look at the good things. Stay away from the negative thoughts. Negatives and positives surround us. We need to concentrate and embrace the positive. Negatives only tear down and lead to nothing good. It makes me always think of my blood type – B+. (Did we mention that Jim has a great sense of humor?) ♦



A New Beginning

*You ask yourself, how can I move on?
Everything I knew, now it seems gone.
You hear to be grateful, forget what you lost,
While you are alone, are paying the cost.*

*So many problems, so many fears
But the only real answer reflects in the mirror
The weak just diminish
The strong will persevere*

*You lost it all, except your last breath
This leaves you pondering
Why were you cheated from death?*

*I don't have the answer, or claim that I do.
Only God knows why
I want to expound on who dies, dies
But I respect the cheaters of death,
Those who SURVIVE!*

- James Summers

New Perspectives

Welcome to my world. I hope I can enter yours. Ten years ago, my life was drastically altered. I could take blame, place blame, and call it fate, whatever. Bottom line, over many years of inner and outward struggles, I accept what happened in my life was an accident. Nobody planned on the events, but the seeds were planted and grew to fruition. (Sorry readers, I lost my train of thought - I have a head injury).

What I want to get across in this brief writing is that our lives have been changed in so many ways, but we still retain the desire of most life forms. That is to be as independent as possible. It's fine to think of independence, but to have a meaningful life, we must be involved and accept the fact we need guidance, interaction and wisdom from others. I rejected this truth for many years while those who know me tried to convince me I needed help.

Finally, after approaching the bottom of my existence, my eyes were opened when I finally accepted the help and guidance that was there all along.

James Summers

Jim's Bio

Personal Goals: Take some journalist courses / Publish a book of poetry / Play the stock market

Hobbies: Reading, paintball, people watching and spending time with his 17-year-old son.

Family: Jim has his mother, father, a brother, sister and one son.