

Accident brings new perspective

SCOTT TREVELYAN WAS halfway through a Visual Arts Degree at Southern Cross University, studying printmaking, when he crashed his Ducati motorbike in a high speed accident behind Byron Bay. He was left with eight broken vertebrae, broken ribs, a punctured lung, a dislocated femur, a broken shoulder and a traumatic brain injury.

But Scott sees his accident almost as a gift.

“To experience near death and be able to view life from a new, positive perspective is something that I have found many Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) survivors have in common,” he said.

A man with a strong determination and a big heart, Scott’s accident in 2002 changed his life. It took a year of hard work to teach himself to walk again properly and he formulated strategies to overcome severe fatigue before he could find the stamina to return to printmaking in the university studios.

“In that time, I found the repetitive nature of printmaking very cathartic and almost meditative. I also developed a strong desire to share the benefits I had encountered whilst making art with other survivors of an ABI. As part of my course, I worked with staff from SCU and the North Coast Brain Injury Rehabilitation Service to design and build a wheelchair friendly art space, Willowbank Studio, on my property at Alstonvale,” he said.

Scott also joined a Ballina

based organisation known as BISSI (Brain Injury Support Service Incorporated), where he was later elected as President and have held the position for the past three years. Scott explained that BISSI was run by people with brain injuries for people with brain injuries.

Willowbank Studio was officially opened in November 2006 and has held fortnightly workshops for members of BISSI ever since.

Scott runs these workshops himself, with the occasional help of a qualified Art Therapist. Their aim is to bring together people who live with an ABI in a safe, creative environment, to participate in activities designed to nurture self-expression, self-awareness and healing targeted to their specific needs.

“A further aim is to support participants to make connection with others who may understand and share the very great impact of ABI on daily lives and functioning, thereby decreasing isolation and increasing a sense of empathy and relatedness,” Scott told GPSpeak.

Several exhibitions have been held to display work undertaken at Willowbank and a couple of artworks have been exhibited in Europe. Scott’s workshops are currently privately funded, but if there is a potential benefactor looking for a worthy project to support, call Scott on 0422 584 496. To find out more about BISSI, go to: www.bissi.org.au



Art workshop participant Mark with coordinator Scott Trevelyan.

Mark's story: Reclaiming a life

“I WAS A VERY KEEN fisherman and I was standing in the back of a utility as it was going along a beach. What I assume happened, because I have no memory of the accident, is that I fell out of the back of the ute onto the beach.

When they got to me I wasn't breathing and I had to be given mouth to mouth. It was a virtual death, the helicopter took me to Lismore and I was then transferred to Brisbane. I died twice, I wasn't breathing and I had no brain waves. I've lost between 60 and 80 per cent of my brain capacity. But there's a quote that I love. Einstein said: 'For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction'. And it's up to me to draw something positive out of something negative.

I find life very positive. I've realised is if you are going to get better it's up to you. If I'd paid attention to medical

people – I was in hospital with no control of bladder or bowels, in a wheelchair and couldn't talk - things were pretty grim. I didn't want to go on like that, so it was my choice to either get better or end it. I wanted to be out of pain, because the pain was phenomenal. It was horrific. It took years for me not to be in pain and I still feel discomfort. I wasn't healthy before the accident but I was really fit and that's how I survived the accident.

I was told I'd never walk again but I'm a stubborn bugger. I get into a lot of yoga these days, a very important part of my healing. So I'm going to carve a lot of yoga shapes into this piece of driftwood.

I really love natural timber and I find it speaks to me. I really enjoy the art classes, Scott's done a fantastic job. All the people here get a lot out of these classes.”

One aim is to decrease isolation & increase empathy and relatedness