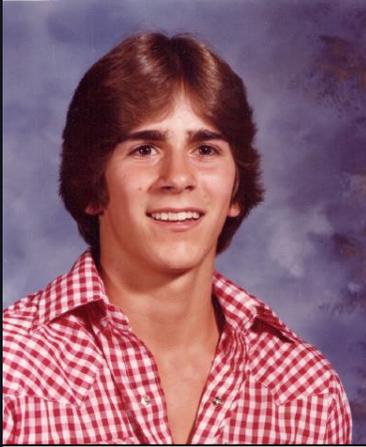


June Waiting List Story: Meet Brian!

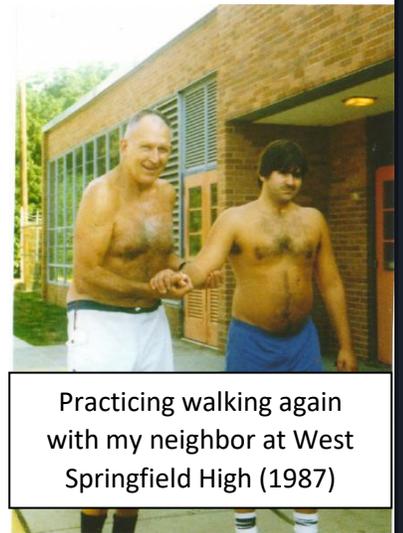


Me, age 17, before my accident (1982)

My name is Brian and I've lived in Northern Virginia most of my life, but I was born in Hawaii and we lived in Belgium in the early 70's. I grew up with my three brothers and one sister in Springfield. I had completed two years at Longwood College and was planning to transfer to Virginia Tech in September 1985. One July night, after drinking a lot of beer, a friend and I decided to drive to the beach. I fell asleep at the wheel and we crashed. I had a traumatic brain injury and spent months in a coma, followed by a year of rehab, re-learning things I'd done my whole life, like walking, talking, and eating. My family stood by me.

I went back to live with my Mom and Dad and my younger siblings. I didn't want other kids to make the same mistakes I did, so I put together a presentation and with help and encouragement, I was able to visit a lot of local high schools and talk about my accident, so they would understand how important it was to wear their seatbelts and never drink and drive. I know I saved lives – I have a stack of thank-you notes from students and teachers. It gave me a lot of satisfaction to do this work.

When my little brother, 11 years younger than me, left for college, I was really depressed. I didn't want to live at home any more, but couldn't figure out how to move. My Mom and Dad helped with the paperwork and I got a Section 8 housing voucher and an apartment. In the beginning I was able to be semi-independent, with only part-time help in the apartment. But then I had a big setback, more brain surgery, and I spent about six months in a nursing home, really the worst place for me to be. My Mom applied for a Medicaid Waiver and when it came through, I was able to get back into an apartment. Medicaid has been life changing. It has paid for staff to live in my apartment with me. I have one man live with me Monday through Friday, then he goes home on the weekends and someone else comes on Saturday and Sunday. They help me make meals, do exercises with me, get out for walks, take me to the grocery store and to visits with my family. I am a volunteer at the Treasure Trove thrift store and they know me well. My live-in caregivers know me well, since they are with me so much. They help me when I have really sad, tough days and have trouble getting up. They support me and when I'm feeling good again, I'm ready to go out.



Practicing walking again with my neighbor at West Springfield High (1987)

People with brain injuries age faster than other people. I am not able to do many of the things I could do in the past, but my Waiver has meant that I could have more staff support as my needs changed. It is the difference between me having a life of my own, or going back to a nursing home, where I'd be unhappy and my care would be much more expensive.

The other key to my success is my housing voucher. It pays part of my rent, and for a room for my helpers. That way I can afford to live on my own. My neighbors know me. I like to go to the gym in my neighborhood and on walks around Lake Accotink. I am a good tenant and I love my apartment.

My life isn't perfect, but my Waiver makes it a pretty good life. It gives me staff, support from case manager, and freedom. I wish everyone who needed a Waiver could have one without waiting.

To see more of my story, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=se2_-mAtYwg&t=3s



Me at camp with my live-in aide (2015)