

# 2013

## Meeting of the Minds TBI Couples Retreat, Williamsburg, VA

### September 12-16, 2012

SemperMax Support Fund, supported in large part by the Bob Woodruff Foundation, hosted its second Traumatic Brain Injury couples resiliency retreat from September 12-16 at Kingsmill Resort. The retreat consisted of two days of workshops, presented by Drs Jeff Kreutzer and Emilie Godwin, neuropsychologists from Virginia Commonwealth University, and their Doctoral Fellow, Dr. Herman Lukow. Dr. Lukow was a new addition to the retreat and workshop offerings, who had more direct military experience and related well to the population. On the third day of the retreat, couples enjoyed couples massages and a respite activity that they chose from a menu, which included golf, fishing, kayaking, Segway tours, and Colonial Williamsburg. Combined, the retreat activities addressed emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical needs of the participants. While much of the retreat was large group oriented, there were break out sessions separating the spouses and TBI Guys to address the unique needs of these populations. By all accounts, the retreat was a success, with positive to exceptional outcomes.

All five goals of the event were met:



(1) 100% of the participants reported that they meet another couple with whom they can identify and all but one individual understand that they are not alone.

(2) 87.5% of spouse and TBI Guy participants felt that the resiliency tools they gained from the workshops would enable them to strengthen their relationships and 100% felt they better understood how brain injury may be impacting their relationship.

(3) 100% of the spouses and TBI Guys

participated in two respite activities and reported that the respite activities (addressing physical needs through touch or activity) allowed them to relax, with 100% satisfied with the respite activity in which they engaged. Additionally, 87.5% of the participants reported

the tools will allow them to strengthen their spiritual and emotional balance.

- (4) Lessons learned from the first couples' retreat, to include more activities and interaction, were successfully integrated into the workshops offered by Drs. Kreutzer and Godwin with a 100% reported rate of satisfaction.
- (5) A trained staff member of the sexual health and intimacy clinic attended the retreat on Saturday, introducing clinic offerings, and through her observation and interaction with the couples, has begun to develop scenarios for inclusion.

When looking at lessons learned, the themes that stood out were, overall, a well received retreat model with a request for more down time, interaction, and role play; a need for anger and intense emotion management training for both the TBI Guy and the spouse; and a need for tips and suggestions for helping kids better understand TBI and PTSD and for successful transition back to workforce.