

# 2014

## MEETING OF THE MINDS

### TBI COUPLES RETREAT

Williamsburg, VA

October 23-26, 2014

SemperMax Support Fund hosted a Traumatic Brain Injury couples resiliency retreat October 23-26 at Kingsmill



Resort for nine couples. This was made possible through the financial and in-kind support of the Bob Woodruff Foundation, 100 Entrepreneurs, Azalea Charities, and Hero Miles. The retreat consisted of one and a half days of workshops (reduced by one day from past retreats), with return presentations by Drs Jeff Kreutzer and Emilie Godwin, neuropsychologists from Virginia Commonwealth University, and a new segment on finding purpose after Brain Injury presented by Bob Nilsson, Amanda Weathersby, and Pat and Patty Horan from 100 Entrepreneurs. On the last half of the second day of the retreat, couples enjoyed an Azalea Charities sponsored respite activity of their choosing, which included spa treatments, hanging with Tim, Busch Gardens, 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 was one break out session separating the spouses and TBI Guys and Gal to address the unique needs of these populations. By verbal and written accounts, the retreat was a success, with positive to exceptional outcomes. Ten of eighteen participants responded to the survey.

All goals of the event were met:

- (1) 100% of the respondents reported that they meet another couple with whom they can identify and understand that they are not alone.
- (2) 100% of the respondents felt that the resiliency tools they gained from the workshops would enable them to strengthen their relationships, felt they better understood how brain injury may be impacting their relationship, and felt more hopeful.
- (3) 100% of the respondents 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, 100% of the participants reported the tools will allow them to strengthen their spiritual and emotional balance.
- (4) The workshops offered by Drs. Kreutzer and Godwin had an 90% and 100% reported rate of satisfaction respectively, and additional time for each topic was requested.
- (5) A workshop on finding purpose after TBI was added with the help of 100 Entrepreneurs with 100% reported rate of satisfaction.

When looking at lessons learned, the themes that stood out were, overall, a well received retreat model with the exception that some of the workshops were felt to be rushed and respondents would have preferred to have more time in session and to process material. Attention to timing of sessions will be needed to balance the reduced schedule with allowing sufficient time for subject matter discussion. Additionally, requests for future topics included tips and suggestions for helping kids (adolescents and teens) better understand TBI and PTSD and an expansion of stress reduction techniques (guided imagery/mindfulness).