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Arun Nair of Springfield, left, has worked with Sergei Sivolobov, Kelly Radford and Eric Ramlow — all brain injury survivors he refers to as "my boys." Together, they go out for coffee, food and just spend time together.



Del. David Bulova (D-37) announced outgoing BIS executive director Karen Brown as the 2017 Alan Mayer award recipient, saying that she's well-respected and trusted by leaders of many kinds and levels of government, while building BIS into a special organization.

PHOTOS BY TIM PETERSON/THE CONNECTION

# All the Essential Pieces

BY TIM PETERSON  
 THE CONNECTION

Sergei Sivolobov of Arlington said it's hard to describe how isolating living with the effects of a traumatic brain injury is. Sivolobov said he was just out riding his bike to lunch when he was sandwiched between two cars and suffered the injury. That was three years ago, before he was referred to Springfield-based Brain Injury Services.

BIS is a non-profit assisting young people and adults from around Northern Virginia with finding recovery and rehabilitation resources from brain injury, stroke and concussion, as well as managing the effects of the injuries and getting back into their communities.

In Sivolobov's case, BIS was able to send people to help cook for him, and connected him with Arun Nair of Springfield. Nair has worked with Sivolobov, Kelly Radford and Eric Ramlow — all brain injury survivors he refers to as "my boys." Together, they go out for coffee, food and just spend time together.

"Thanks to this program," Sivolobov said, he has a "new lease of life."

"It gives us some reflection," he said. "To stop giving up on yourself. Getting referred to Brain Injury Services and meeting Nair," Sivolobov continued, "changed my life."

Nair, his boys and dozens of not only brain injury survivors, but also those who have gone back into their communities to volunteer and work, were recognized Wednesday evening, March 29 at the Brain Injury

Services Annual Reception. The event took place at the Waterford Hall in Springfield.

**NAIR AND COMPANY** were recognized as part of the PALS partnering program, along with 27 other matches from the program. He said the three men teach him that hard things will happen to you in life, and that you have to take on all those new challenges.

"They teach me every day is a new day," Nair said.

The first recognition of the night was the Alan Mayer service award, given in honor of a former BIS executive director and representative to the Virginia General Assembly, where he established a The Virginia Disabilities Commission.

Del. David Bulova (D-37), who has sat on the BIS board for two decades, called Mayer "a fierce advocate for the brain injury community."

Bulova announced outgoing BIS executive director Karen Brown of Alexandria as the 2017 Alan Mayer award recipient, saying that she's well-respected and trusted by leaders of many kinds and levels of government, while building BIS into a special organization.

"She's empowered and inspired people around her to do great things," Bulova said. Brown, on accepting the award, thanked all the volunteers, saying retiring this year it would be "difficult to walk away from all of you."

Donnie Garner of Manassas represented the BIS person-centered volunteer program

## Springfield-based Brain Injury Services honors volunteers, survivors.

along with his volunteer Amanda Hall. Garner was an accomplished musician, his wife Marilyn said, before he suffered a stroke in 2013.

"It changed the course of his life plans," she said. But when BIS connected her husband with Hall, it got him "back on track, pursuing the music he loves so much."

With Hall standing beside him, Garner slowly but surely strummed and sang through "Amazing Grace," and drew a standing ovation from the audience.

**BRAIN INJURY SERVICES** also recognized the professional partners supporting its work and the individuals receiving services — also known as the BIS Supported Employee Program.

Tim Spadafore, chief financial officer for Dominion Consulting in Reston, said they didn't think twice about bringing back a young developer who suffered a brain injury.

Spadafore said, however, it's important when hiring someone with an injury to be patient and not force someone into a role.

Every company has different needs, he said, and it's important to "find the right fit" with the employee. Spadafore then recognized the employee as he entered the Waterford, assuring him he's part of the family, and that he does belong.

For more information about Brain Injury Services, visit [braininjurysvcs.org](http://braininjurysvcs.org).

## BULLETIN BOARD

Send notes to the Connection at [connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/](http://connectionnewspapers.com/Calendar/) or call 703-778-9416. The deadline for submissions is the Friday prior to publication. Dated announcements should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event.

### APRIL

**Coffee for Campers.** April is the Month of the Military Child, and to honor our nation's littlest heroes, the National Military Family Association is asking if you'll give up your coffee shop coffee and donate that extra \$5 a day to send a military kid to Operation Purple Camp. Visit [www.militaryfamily.org/get-involved/donate/coffee-for-campers.html](http://www.militaryfamily.org/get-involved/donate/coffee-for-campers.html) for more.

Starting to think about how to pay for a child's college education? Join an interactive workshop on college savings choices with the Virginia529 programs as the focus. Free pizza dinner at 6:30 p.m. with the program starting at 7. See you at the Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce Street, Springfield. Call 703-451-8055 for more.

Employees Association Coach Ed Linz will be the speaker at the Springfield Chapter 893 meeting. Call 571-422-0451 for more.

### THURSDAY/APRIL 20

**Public Hearing.** 7 p.m. at Key Middle School Cafeteria, 6402 Franconia Road, Springfield. The Fairfax County Department of Transportation and Department of Public Works and Environmental Services are conducting a design public hearing for the Springfield CBC Computer Parking Garage. Visit [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/)

### WEDNESDAY/APRIL 12

**NARFE Chapter Meeting.** 12:30-3 p.m. at Kirkwood Presbyterian Church, 8336 Carleigh Parkway. National Active and Retired Federal

### THURSDAY/APRIL 6

**Saving for College.** 6:30 p.m. at Richard Byrd Library, 7250 Commerce St., Springfield.