



# Spinal Connection

## Spinal Connection

Spinal Connection is published quarterly by the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission.

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Spinal Connection is an official publication of the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission. The Commission was established by Act 311 of 1975. On July 1, 2019, the Commission became a public health program under the Arkansas Department of Health as initiated by the Transformation and Efficiencies Act of 2019 (Act 910).

## 2022 CONFERENCE

### Arkansas Spinal Cord Injury/Disability Conference

Friday, October 21, 2022

Benton Event Center



The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission is pleased to announce that it will hold its biennial spinal cord injury/disability conference on Friday, October 21, 2022. The conference will be held at the Benton Event Center located at 17322 I-30, Benton, AR 72019.

The 2022 Arkansas Spinal Cord Injury/Disability Conference is hosted by the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission, a division of the Arkansas Department of Health.

This year's conference features informative presentations by regional and model system experts, and exhibits from national, regional, and local exhibitors.

This conference will offer exciting presenters speaking on topics relevant to those living with a spinal cord injury or disability as well as every level of healthcare professional.

Registration will open this Summer. There is **no cost to attend for ASCC clients and one family member or caretaker**. However, clients, family members, or caretakers who wish to receive continuing education credit must pay to register as a healthcare professional.

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## Contact Information

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## Donations

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The Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission accepts tax-deductible donations to support ASCC.

Send your donation to:

AR Spinal Cord Commission  
5800 W 10th St.  
Suite 108  
Little Rock, AR 72204

## TRIUMPH Help Line

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1-855-767-6983  
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Help & Information  
for Arkansans with Spinal  
Cord Injury & Healthcare  
Providers

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## From the Director ~ Terra Patrom

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### Wheelchairs - Why NOT?!?!?

Contrary to popular belief, one size does not fit all! If you have a spinal cord disability, you should be evaluated for a proper fitting wheelchair that includes a team approach including an Occupational and/or Physical Therapist, a physician, and an ATP representative from a durable medical equipment company/vendor. You, your family/support network, and a caregiver (if you have one) are also an important part of the team.

Contrary to what a vendor says, "what your insurance will pay for" might be different from what a vendor can bill to your insurance (including Medicare and Medicaid). If the vendor you chose to use does not have an ATP on staff, you cannot get a custom wheelchair. The hard part is you are pretty much "STUCK" with that wheelchair for a MINIMUM of 5 years. The old 5-year rule does not apply any longer and it could be 7, 8, or 9 years before you would qualify for a new wheelchair, once it is billed to your insurance, regardless of your situation.

A team evaluation, including an OT/PT, a vendor ATP, and a physician will assess your level of need for a wheelchair based on your functional ability, your home environment, and your current/future medical needs. They will consider different brands and models of wheelchairs to meet those needs. An ATP is not there to sell you one of their "standard wheelchairs from their warehouse." The ATP will order a custom wheelchair designed and built to fit your unique needs; NOT make you fit into a wheelchair they have in stock. There will be a wait for the custom wheelchair to be built and delivered, but it will be *your* wheelchair.

By using a team approach when you are evaluated for a new

wheelchair, you will receive input that looks at your medical needs from a long term basis. The old saying, "the more the merrier" comes to mind here. The team approach will look at why you need (there is a difference between want and need) the equipment, how you will transport the equipment (this is ALSO KEY in determining selection), the pros and cons of power versus manual, as well as, what you qualify for medically. There is a lot to know about wheelchairs in general. Ensuring you select a vendor that will serve and stand by the product they provided to you is also key. Keep in mind, you do have a choice in vendor!

You also need to keep in mind that a majority of insurances (including Medicare and Medicaid) will only pay for a power or a manual wheelchair - NOT both. If you get a power wheelchair, it is EXTREMELY difficult to go back to a manual wheelchair later. If you order and medically qualify for a power wheelchair thinking you will use it for long distances or outdoors, you may never be able to get another 'everyday' lightweight manual chair again through your insurance.

Keep in mind, Medicare rules require you to have a 'face-to-face' with your PCP which specifies you are being seen during that visit for a wheelchair evaluation. For additional details on Power Mobility Requirements under a Medicare plan, please visit: [https://www.cgsmedicare.com/jb/claims/pmd/pmd\\_doc\\_req.html](https://www.cgsmedicare.com/jb/claims/pmd/pmd_doc_req.html)

If in doubt, always discuss your need for a new wheelchair with your ASCC Case Manager. They can be a crucial member of the wheelchair evaluation team. They see and hear things from you that others do not. Seeing and hearing things from that perspective can make all the difference in that custom fit wheelchair.

Finally, remember that old adage, **if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!**

## New Staff - Christina Clausen

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We are pleased to introduce Christina as our new Case Manager covering Madison and Washington Counties in NW Arkansas. She came on board in January. Get to know Christina a little better below!

1. **What is your background (school, career)?** I was a high school dropout who had my first daughter when I was 17. I later went back and got my GED and in 2012 got my Bachelors in Rehab. Science from ATU, 2014 Masters in Rehabilitation Counseling from University of Arkansas. Previous work experience includes doing Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling with ARS and DVR in Colorado.



2. **What led you to this field of work?** A desire to help others and a passion for caring. I was in an Introduction to Disability class in my sophomore year at ATU working on a degree to become an elementary teacher and loved the topic and subject. I asked the professor what jobs are available in this area, and he introduced me to Rehabilitation Science. I changed my major and have loved being in the helping profession since.
3. **What is your experience as it relates to this position?** I have been working with individuals who have a disability since 2009, as a job coach, as a rehabilitation counselor, as a Pre-employment transitions counselor and a statewide manager of the Pre-ETS programs. I have always been an advocate!
4. **Where did you grow up?** I was born and raised in Rancho Cucamonga, California. I moved to Russellville, Arkansas in 1994.
5. **Favorite place(s) you have visited?** I love any place that has water. My favorite places for vacationing are Nassau, Bahamas and Devils Den in Wyoming.
6. **What are your interests and/or hobbies outside of work?** Kayaking and Camping - I love being on the water. I also enjoy painting, and doing arts and crafts.
7. **Do you have any favorite books/movies/plays?** Not really, only thing that comes to mind is 'Chicago' the musical.
8. **What do you feel passionate about? What are some causes you care about?** I am passionate about the well-being and civil rights of others.
9. **Do you have any pets/animals?** I have 2 cats and 3 dogs, the dogs include a mutt named Lulu, a Vizsla named Jacks, and a beagle named Bones.
10. **What is something you still have left to check off your bucket list?** I want to go skydiving and bungee jumping. I also would love to do a multiple day float on the Buffalo River.

## Margin of Safety

Medically Speaking

Thomas Kiser, MD

I often see pressure sores in my spinal cord injury clinic and on the rehabilitation floor. They occur when the blood supply to the skin and soft tissue is decreased long enough to cause the tissue to die or become seriously unhealthy. When you sit in a chair, or your feet are in contact with the footrest, or your back is pushing against a backrest, you are shutting off blood supply to these

areas via pressure between bony prominences and the hard surface. If you lose blood supply to the skin and soft tissue for longer than 20 minutes, it starts to become unhealthy and sick. The sooner you restore blood supply the better. It is almost like a “heart attack” or a “stroke” to the skin and muscle.

In theory these sores are preventable, yet they keep happening.

Here are some of the common causes of pressure sores that I see in my clinic:

1. Equipment failure: Such as a low air loss mattress going flat, a ROHO air wheelchair cushion losing air, or power tilt failing in a power wheelchair.
2. Misused equipment or use of non-protective equipment: Sitting on other surfaces than the appropriate wheelchair cushion, transferring to a chair in the home, sitting in a standard car or truck seat, or putting the wheelchair cushion in the wheelchair upside down or backwards (I see this far too often in my clinic).
3. Hospitalization: Unfortunately, sometimes hospitalized patients are not being turned in the bed every 2 hours as recommended or doing proper pressure relief when up in the wheelchair or in a hospital chair. Family and friends can help make sure this doesn't happen by working with hospital staff.

In all cases, the sores might have been prevented or could have been much less severe if there were a “margin of safety.” In the investment world, the term “margin of safety” is used to describe investments that have multiple layers of financial protection or an economic moat to help them prosper and improve even when the rest of the business world is suffering. In the spinal cord world, I use the term “margin of safety” to describe multiple layers of protection that decrease the chance of developing a pressure sore when poor health or hard times develop.

So, how can you build a series of habits, multiple reminders, sufficient backup equipment and a support group to help prevent or at least mitigate the risk of getting a pressure sore?

Here are some ideas:

1. When sleeping, get into a routine of turning in bed. Start on your side and then go to your back by removing the wedge or pillow, and then go to your other side if a family member or aide can reposition you at a set time each night. Sleeping or lying on your belly when in bed can be very helpful. It will ensure a good supply of blood to the areas most at risk of pressure



sores (sacrum, buttocks, and heels) while you're sleeping. You can also do other activities, such as reading or computer work, in the same prone position during the day in the bed as a way of pressure relief to your bottom and feet.

2. Do routine exercises to improve aerobic activity. This will increase body movement and improve blood supply to the at-risk areas. Some of these exercises can be done at a wheelchair level or in your bed at home.
3. Routine use of a standing frame at home while reading, doing computer work, or watching TV relieves pressure and stretches you out. You may need an abdominal binder or compression hose on to prevent light-headedness due to a drop in blood pressure with standing.
4. Use a low profile ROHO cushion or a gel pad from a gel cushion when you are in a motor vehicle on a standard car or truck seat. Better yet, if possible drive from your wheelchair and stay on your wheelchair cushion when driving.
5. Do your pressure reliefs with forward and side leans and wheel chair pushups, but most importantly move around in your wheelchair a lot. Getting a more expensive alternating pressure relief wheelchair cushion can help, but it makes the wheelchair heavier and also is prone to equipment and battery failure.
6. Good nutrition is also important. It is important to increase your intake of protein, fruits and vegetables, and to stay at a stable and healthy weight.
7. Avoid smoking or chewing tobacco because they impair blood supply.
8. Avoid sedating medications like benzodiazepines (valium, Xanax, etc), narcotics, and marijuana that make you more sedentary and tend to decrease your activity level.
9. Clean and check your skin, especially your buttocks area and feet daily and wear appropriate footwear to protect your feet from bangs and scrapes. Ensure there is plenty of breathing room in your shoes.
10. Finally, develop a good social support system to get help quickly if your equipment fails, you get sick, or if you develop a pressure sore.

### **Our sincere condolences to the friends and family of...**

Jere T. Walker II 01/29/21  
Joe T. Adams 03/23/21  
John A. Riggs 04/06/21  
William C. West Jr. 04/26/21  
Jon Michael Adcox 08/30/21  
Darlene K. Latham 10/01/21  
Shirley Miller 12/04/21  
Belinda Sue Chandler 12/21/21  
Darrell G. Loveless 12/27/21  
Johnnie L. Evatt 01/06/22  
Anise L. Baskette 01/08/22  
Kim A. Williams 01/18/22  
Crystal D Weseman 01/28/22  
Debra L. Stevens 01/29/22  
John D. Hudman 02/07/22  
Heather Dunivan 02/08/22  
Quinton Shane Grant 02/09/22  
Steven D. Oliver 02/11/22  
Matthew S. Brooks 02/13/22  
Darrell Sutton 02/20/22  
Edward D. Milburn 03/13/22

## Donations

We would like to thank Frances & Donald Hillman for their donation to the Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission in memory of Edward "Eddie" Dean Milburn.

*Thank You*

If you would like to make a donation in memoriam, please address it to:

Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission  
5800 W 10th St.  
Suite 108  
Little Rock, AR 72204

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## 2022 Conference (continued from Page 1)

Meet one of our keynote speakers for the ASCC 2022 Conference! Mike Schlappi will take the stage Friday, October 21st at the Benton Event Center.

When motivational speaker Mike Schlappi takes the floor, a dazzling smile greets you. Then you notice the wheelchair. If ever a man was defined by what he can do instead of what he can't do, it's Gold Medalist and Author Mike Schlappi. At the age of 14, Mike had expectations of a career in sports as a top notch athlete. A gunshot

to the chest at point blank range challenged his dreams. He would never walk again. After months of rigorous physical therapy, he began playing basketball from his wheelchair and went on to become a standout athlete.



Mike Schlappi's thought-provoking keynote presentation challenges individuals of all ages that despite difficult circumstances, you can take response-ability and be empowered. His engaging presentations have entertained and inspired audiences worldwide. From students to chief executive officers, from the classroom to the board room, from rookies to Olympic athletes, from small gatherings to large corporate events, Mike shows audiences "If You Can't Stand Up, Stand Out!"



**Spinal Connection (Spring 2022)**  
**Arkansas Spinal Cord Commission**  
**5800 W 10th St, Suite 108**  
**Little Rock, AR 72204**

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- ▶ Job Openings
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- ▶ Information Shared from Vendors
- ▶ Accessible Parking Laws
- ▶ Spinal Disorders Camp
- ▶ Grants, Scholarships, & Fundraisers
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