

Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society (PATs) Member Steven Hicks' Concussion Support Group Reaches Five Year Milestone

November 2015 will mark the five year anniversary of the Concussion Support Group that Steven Hicks conceptualized after dealing with several patients with concussions, including his own brother, and watching the movie Castaway. The Guthrie Sports Medicine/Twin Tiers Sports Post-Concussion Support Group started in 2010 and is held monthly in Sayre, PA for student athletes, their families, and anyone in the community affected by Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS) and who needs help avoiding the "Deserted Island Effect".

Harrisburg, PA ([PRWEB](#)) October 09, 2015 -- The Guthrie Sports Medicine/Twin Tiers Sports Post-Concussion Support Group will celebrate its five year anniversary this November. The support post-concussion group was started by Steven Hicks, a Licensed Athletic Trainer, with Guthrie Sports Medicine, and a Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society (PATs) member. The group was started in November 2010 to help support student athletes, their families, and anyone in the community affected by Post-Concussion Syndrome (PCS).

The inspiration for this group came from Steven's brother who had sustained multiple concussions from both high school football and car accidents. These concussions were not treated properly and led to depression, anger issues, and drug addiction. This caused a big strain on Steven's family. Over the years, Steven treated many sports related concussions. While treating these athletes he listened to athletes and parents, alike, who described feelings that coaches, teammates, and others simply didn't seem to understand or believe the severity of their concussion symptoms. Furthermore, there were also academic issues related to limited school academic accommodations. Often, removal from school and sports would lead to depression and very limited places for the players and family to turn. This was the impetus for Steven to start developing a support group that offers help and support to families dealing with PCS throughout their prolonged recovery and beyond.

Steven's own personal life was challenged when he had to cope with multiple family health issues, including the death of his mother. Realizing the power of support, he got the idea of bringing people together with PCS to discuss their issues and to offer others guidance and advice. He wasn't quite sure how to do this until one night, on a long bus ride home with the Athens Area High School Football team, the head coach put on the Tom Hanks movie Castaway. Tom Hanks' character was stuck on the deserted island all by himself. Steven recognized the similarity of Tom Hanks' character in relation to what his brother, family, and others went through following their concussions. Steven stated "they were all stuck on our own proverbial deserted island", thus it seemed appropriate to the term the first post-concussion support group "The Deserted Island Effect".

On Sunday, November 14, 2010, the very first Guthrie Sports Medicine/Twin Tiers Sports Post-Concussion Support Group meeting was conducted. There were over 20 individuals in attendance, including 6 students that were currently going through their concussion recovery process. Steven discussed the "The Deserted Island Effect" and all individuals in attendance let out a big sigh of relief. As Steven states, "Up to this point, many in attendance reported that they felt alone in this healing process and didn't have anybody to turn to or talk to but the post-concussion support group changed that." Further, the group openly discusses concussions, what they are and aren't, as well as goals and what can be done to make these injuries better identified and managed in the future.

All in all, there have been approximately 200 individuals who have participated in the support group. Following each guest speaker an open discussion period follows where members from the group can talk about how things are doing with their own and/or their loved ones concussion/MTBI. Any individual or family member dealing with this debilitating injury called PCS that wants to just come sit and listen to the discussion are more than welcome to attend the meetings. The support group meetings normally last about an hour and a half.

Steven has a dedicated email address for the support group called [twintierspcsg\(at\)gamil\(dot\)com](mailto:twintierspcsg(at)gamil(dot)com). He has been contacted by individuals and/or family members of individuals dealing with PCS and Athletic Trainers all over the country. Steven also has a Facebook page called Twin Tiers Sports Post-Concussion Support Group and currently have over 160 members from all over the country. The link to the support group page is: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TwinTiersSportsPostConcussionSupportGroup/>.

Annie Wainwright, a current member of the support group and previous guest speaker, stated, "...the sport concussion support group was where I fully realized that I couldn't just turn the switch back on. I needed time to heal." Further, Annie states, "Sometimes you just need to sit in a room full of people going through what you are, to realize you aren't alone."

Since 2010, the Guthrie Sports Medicine/Twin Tiers Sports Post-Concussion Support Group meetings have been held once a month throughout the school year on a non-specific Sunday. A wide variety of presenters have been used to try to include all those involved in the handling of concussions.

Other specific past speakers have included Dr. Donald Phykitt, Family Medicine Physician and Director of Guthrie Sports Medicine, Brent Smith, member of the Athletic Training Program faculty at Pennsylvania State University, Naomi Parker the author of *When Libby Lost Her Smile*, and Mike Miller, Vice-President of the Brain Injury Association of Pennsylvania. Jason Erlandson, PATS North central representative and Greg Janik, former President of PATS presented on the "Safety in Youth Sports Act" law passed on concussions in secondary schools throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

For more information regarding this topic or to schedule an interview with PATS President John Moyer LAT, ATC, please contact Linda Mazzoli MS, LAT, ATC, PATS Executive Director at [patsexecutivedirector\(at\)gopats\(dot\)org](mailto:patsexecutivedirector(at)gopats(dot)org)

The Pennsylvania Athletic Trainers' Society, Inc. is a progressive organization of licensed health care professionals who work under the direction of a licensed physician. Our society continues to increase public awareness and education regarding Athletic Trainers and the Athletic Training profession while serving as the premier source of information for public safety, injury and illness prevention, early intervention, patient care, and healthcare delivery for the physically active in the Commonwealth.

"The Keystone to a Healthy and Physically Active Life"



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