

Breaking Ground for New Beginning's Brain Injury Center

What would bring politicians, surgeons, wheelchair bound persons, veterans and over a hundred supporters to a wooded lot on the service road of the LIE in Medford on a Saturday afternoon? What would cause a group of Long Islanders to spend time on a sunny Saturday at this location of mere dirt, shovels and hardhats?

One family's compelling desire to show their support was so strong that they hired a private ambulance transport, to get their loved one, who is a Traumatic Brain Injury survivor to this occasion. Another family had to plan well in advance to get their loved one out of the Stony Brook Veterans nursing home, to show their support. Yet, nothing was going to stop these individuals from coming to this event to show their heartfelt support.

So, as the handicapped vans and the medical transport vehicles unloaded, and the crowd huddled in front of the mobile stage, there was energy of anticipation in the air. Everyone in attendance knew they were about to embark on a New Beginning.

As Congressman Tim Bishop, Ed Perez from the Suffolk County Executive's office, Brookhaven Town Supervisor Mark Lesko, Deputy Supervisor/Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh, County Legislator Ed Romaine, and representatives from Legislator Jack Eddington's office, former Public Administrator Anthony Mastroianni took their seats on stage. They were anchored by a group in dark suits and signature bright green accents, wearing the New Beginnings nametag. This collection of both professionals and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) caregivers, were all focused on the anticipation of the ground breaking ceremony for the New Beginnings rehabilitation facility to treat survivors of TBI.

Founder Allyson Scerri was both genuine and articulate as she stood at the podium, while her husband, Stephen Scerri and her father, Al Barone gazed at her with great pride. It was impossible not to feel the admiration in the air. Al Barone was a renowned builder here on Long Island. His legacy includes a large array of residential and commercial projects. He was a man that sought adventure, and lived a life that others dreamed of. World class hunts in Mongolia and Nepal were not unusual for Al. Speed boats, unique cars and fast motorcycles were commonplace in his life. Al Barone was anything but ordinary, and his dedication to live life to the fullest never wavered. Then one tragic day two years ago, Al was involved in a motorcycle accident which leaves him today in a wheelchair.

The journey his family became focused on was finding the most advanced medical treatments and therapy's to help Al become the vibrant man he once was. It was



Photo by WILLIAM J. NEVINS JR.

County and Town officials joined Allyson and Stephen Scerri, and the New Beginnings Family at a ground breaking ceremony this past Saturday. The Brain Injury Center was conceived in honor of Al Barone, Allyson's Dad. (seated)

through this frustrating process of transporting her father from Aqua therapy in one location, to physical and cognitive therapy in another and Hyperbaric Oxygen therapy in yet another, that Allyson developed the idea of an all-in-one rehabilitation facility. New Beginnings would be a place where the patients are not turned away from continuing therapy, because they have reached a plateau in their treatment. Plateau is a word that will NOT exist at New Beginnings.

Through a support group for families of TBI sufferers, Allyson met Kate DiMeglia, the next driving force in this project. Kate is the caregiver for her son Rob, who was victim to a horrendous auto accident on his 21st birthday. This accident left a lively young man a quadriplegic. For the past ten years, Kate has been dealing with the same frustrations in finding treatments for her son that Allyson had with her father. Kate joined Allyson's quest for this state of the art, long term rehabilitation center encompassing all therapies under one roof.

That was less than one year ago, and with the help of a core group of supporters these women along with the aforementioned politicians and friends with hard hats in place, held their shovels proudly as the dream of New Beginnings was about to become a reality. The groundbreaking is underway.

New Beginnings is expected to be operational by late spring of 2010. The facility will be a treatment center not only for civilians but also for Veterans who have suffered TBI's and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). In addition to the Hyperbaric Oxygen treatment, Aqua therapy, Physical therapy, cognitive therapy and animal therapy, New Beginnings will also offer day programs, educational classes and support groups for families.

Given the dedication of the group, we anxiously await its Grand

Opening. This not for profit organization will be holding a fundraising Gala on Veteran's Day at Leonard's of Great Neck. To find out more

about this wonderful cause, please visit www.NBLI.org. This facility will truly give survivors and families a New Beginning.

"The Network Interviews." Steven Fallon, Gordon MacKay & Frank MacKay

Each decade contains its own sense of style and flair. What is it, however, about the decade of the 80's that makes it seem so displaced? The 90's brought back the bell-bottoms and platform shoes of the 70's while completely ignoring the houndstooth stirrup pants and high-waisted tapered-leg denim shorts of the 80's. That 70's Show lasted a network lifetime more than That 80's Show. "80's movies" rarely make a box office appearance, and when they do they are subject to cinematic teasing and unconcealed snickers at the comically gaudy scenery and outfits. For young listeners, Bowling For Soup's song "1985" delivered more of a catchy tune than nostalgia for a great era. For the avid rock fans of the 80's, the time of great rock entertainment was an assembly of captivation and ephemerality. It is a phenomenon that seemed to communicate itself only directly. In other words, one has to experience the magic, for an explanation of "how it used to be" could never suffice. There is, however, a literary loophole, its title being *The Network Interviews* by Steven Fallon, Gordon MacKay, and Frank MacKay.

A compilation of interviews from the music paper *Network*, *The Network Interviews* is prefaced with personal anecdotes and observations of the 80's rock era by each

author, before delving into the anticipated meat of the book: the interviews. Perhaps in this day and age a casual reaction to this content might consist of an immediate mental flash of Guns 'N Roses or Metallica; however, there is more to this book than information on rock bands that are famous for songs that appeal to mainstream America. There is an inherent honesty that is prevalent even in the tender stages of the first few pages, drawing in the reader with

an earnest invitation to simultaneously read forward and retreat to a time of rock and roll.

Like any genre of music, rock and metal fans range from hardcore to vaguely familiar. Some are still in full rock mode, while others limit their rock experiences to Guitar Hero and MTV shows that happen to feature rock stars of our featured decade. In an empathetic effort to reach out to the spectrum, Fallon, MacKay, and MacKay include concise yet informative descriptions to lead off each interview, which soon give way to a series of inquiries and speculations that range from general to sensitive and personal. These authors have embedded heart and soul into each page of this book, as well as all the spaces in between.

Engaging and visionary, these interviews have not had light shed upon them in decades, and it is a resurrection that is well worth the read.

