

# Advancements

## The Light After Injury

Tobias A. Cole enters each room with a commanding presence. The trial attorney, a partner at Midani Hinkle & Cole L.L.P. in Houston, is Board Certified in Personal Injury Trial Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, a distinction obtained by less than two percent of attorneys in Texas.

His appearance on ABC's 20/20 solidifies his influence with national headlines. Notably, Cole took on one of the largest insurance companies in the U.S., representing defense contractors injured in Iraq. Cole was able to win back the originally promised coverage of medical expenses, amidst a tightly sealed common practice of denying, delaying, and fighting before a payout that was indispensable to those in need.

Adding to his professional distinctions is a personal triumph that readily precedes him. After fracturing his C5 vertebrae, he was diagnosed as a C5 complete, a quadriplegic with no range of motion below the mid-chest. The injury happened at his high school graduation party, and propelled him into law.

Cole quickly used his accident as motivation. The original plan was to "major in a good time" at Stephen F. Austin University, but rerouted to a law degree and MBA in Finance from the University of Houston.

"There was never the import of 'Oh, how horrible,' or 'What am I going to do?'" he said. "I just wanted to get started with whatever the next step was and that was going to TIRR. I started college at the University of Houston the January after my accident."

Now he is able to provide unparalleled assistance to clients facing similar situations. He is an inspiration beyond the courtroom. Clients meet with him, after sustaining debilitating injuries, and quickly realize that this is just the beginning of what's possible.

"Spinal cord injuries don't happen to individuals, they happen to families. Getting past the mental paralysis is huge because we all have fear," Cole said. "Fear stops everybody from doing what it is they want to do. But when you have a spinal cord injury or a traumatic brain injury, it is so easy to let that be your control...it is possible to reintegrate and realize you have a lot to contribute."

Early in Cole's career, he took on the case of Tyson Dever. Dever, a 23-year-old college student became a paraplegic after his car was hit by a cement mixer. While Cole provided exceptional legal action, there was something indispensable that Cole could offer and that was perspective. Cole met the 23-year-old and his family at the same place he had been treated, TIRR Memorial Hermann.



*Toby visits Mission Connect scientist, Jose L. Contreras-Vidal, Ph.D. and the University of Houston Brain-Machine Interface Systems Team that works with the Exoskeleton*

"I was Toby's client, and there was work to be done, and he took care of that," Dever told Super Lawyers. "But there were also times where Toby would just pick up the phone and ask how I was doing. After living life able-bodied for 22 years...a lot of questions come up. Toby was a great resource for me. It wasn't just a client-lawyer relationship, and that just shows that Toby truly cares about his clients. He cares about what he does, and he takes it very seriously."

Today, Dever is a motivational speaker who tours the country with his desire to inspire people to live life completely, a lesson that undoubtedly sparked when Cole wheeled in to TIRR.

"I think that's why they hire me," Cole said. "They don't hire me because they want a great outcome; they want to know my experiences. They want to know there is a light at the end of the tunnel. That there is a light after injury."

Tobias A. Cole serves on the Disability Issues Committee of the State Bar of Texas and on the Board of The Institute of Rehabilitation and Research (TIRR) Foundation, where he is regularly a part of the decisions on grants awarded to researchers developing treatments and cures for spinal cord and traumatic brain injury.

"The work TIRR Foundation does is incredible," he said. "TIRR Foundation has been a huge part of my life since I was 18 and the board is full of people who have a family member with an injury."

While TIRR Foundation continues to press forward with promising research initiatives for traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries, it is essential to honor the true heroes who not only live with a sustained injury, but thrive through their injury.



## From the *Executive Director's* Desk

Cynthia Adkins



This past March, Moran Camp Xtreme held its second annual spring break session. For those unfamiliar with Moran Camp Xtreme, I can tell you it is a truly amazing camp. Campers take part in all of the tried and true activities; canoeing, biking, horseback riding, swimming, relays, team sports, and games. The only difference between Moran Camp Xtreme and other camps, is all of the kids at Moran Camp Xtreme immerse themselves in these activities despite their fulltime use of a wheelchair. For more than 16 years, Moran Camp Xtreme has met at *Camp for All* for four nights and five days of absolute fun. I've always viewed Moran Camp Xtreme from the standpoint of the camper. A few days ago, I read a letter from a parent, and saw camp from a parent's perspective. Entrusting your child to their first overnight camp can be tough. However, for parents of special needs children, it can be much more difficult. Despite her initial concern, after meeting the counselors and walking the grounds of Camp for All, this parent, a mom, felt reassured. Within an hour her son, William, was ready to ascend the zip line and pick-up a fishing pole. When she picked William up three nights later, William explained each activity, day-by-day on their return to home in the Dallas area. William already has plans to attend Moran Camp Xtreme again this summer. His mom, Wendy, wrote *"I am so thankful that William had this experience.*



*I think it helped him to become more independent, and me to trust that he is okay without me. Thank you Camp Xtreme and all of the counselors for your time and effort in the lives of these children. It really does make a difference that they can feel at home at Camp Xtreme, and not be different."* As I watch campers from years past become counselors passing on the traditions of Moran Camp Xtreme to new generations, I realize there is also a generation of parents behind each child. To all the parents, like Wendy Hardeman, I thank you for trusting us with your children and allowing us to give them time each year to have fun, become more independent, make new friends, and know they are not "different".

To read Wendy Hardeman's letter, please visit [www.facebook.com/TIRRFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/TIRRFoundation)



# Camp Xtreme at Sea

TIRR Foundation will launch a third *Moran Camp Xtreme* October 14-16 in Galveston, Texas, at Sea Scout Base. This edition "*Moran Camp Xtreme At Sea*" will focus on families in which at least one family member has a neurological or spinal disability.

"We're very excited about this new camp being added to the program," said Genny Gomez, Camp Director. "There are very few opportunities for entire families to enjoy a vacation designed for the needs of their family member while providing a great experience for everyone."

Among the many sailing and nautical activities available, Sea Scout Base Galveston includes an adaptive sailing program for sailors of all levels and variety of disabilities. Instructors are U.S. Sailing-Certified licensed captains. This will be a great opportunity to share and enrich your family's love of the ocean!

For more information about Moran Camp Xtreme, contact Genny Gomez at (210) 241-2508 or [campxtreme@TIRRFoundation.org](mailto:campxtreme@TIRRFoundation.org), or visit [TIRRFoundation.org](http://TIRRFoundation.org) for more information.



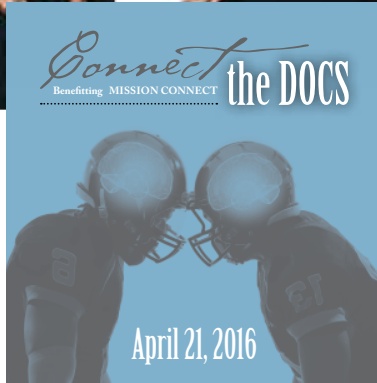
## Moran Camp Xtreme 2016 Summer Camp

Moran Camp Xtreme 2016 summer camp will be held July 10-15, 2016 at Camp For All in Burton TX. This year's camp will be centered around the 2016 Paralympic Games, with a twist towards the Star Wars theme. After a very successful spring break camp, we are excited to incorporate new activities into the 2016 agenda. We will be introducing the highly-anticipated Color Race to the summer itinerary, along with a few rodeo elements. Additionally, we are opening camp up to friends and family of TIRR Foundation for a Volunteer Day on July 14, 2016. This will be the first Volunteer Day and we are very excited to open the experience up to 25 energetic individuals. The experience is sure to be a rewarding experience for both our gracious volunteers and inspiring campers.





Above:  
 Pramod Dash,  
 Cheryl Duff,  
 Argy Stampas,  
 Becky Crane



Saleri Family and Dr. Bennet Omalu

## TIRR Foundation welcomes *Dr. Bennet Omalu* to annual Connect the Docs Dinner

### Proceeds fund neurotrauma research program Mission Connect

TIRR Foundation held its annual Connect the Docs dinner on Thursday, April 21 at River Oaks Country Club, hosted by chairs, Kay and Ned Holmes. Guest speaker, Dr. Bennet Omalu, a forensic pathologist who led the discovery of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), gave an inspirational presentation on the future of neurotrauma research.

Dr. Brent Masel led the evening that benefitted the neurotrauma research program, Mission Connect.

“Traumatic brain injury takes your soul, it takes away the essence of who you are,” Dr. Masel said before introducing the evening’s keynote speaker, Dr. Bennet Omalu.

Dr. Bennet Omalu is a pioneer in the world of traumatic brain injury research. As chronicled in the film *Concussion* (starring Will Smith), Dr. Bennet Omalu somewhat unknowingly took on the NFL when he published his findings of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) in American football players, following his autopsy of Steelers player Mike Webster. Dr. Omalu examined tissue from Webster’s brain, discovering the degenerative disease, CTE, and identifying the first piece of hard evidence revealing the correlation between sub-concussions and concussions sustained on the football field and the devastating development of CTE. Today, CTE has become widely accepted and Dr. Omalu’s findings have revolutionized neuroscience, sports medicine, and safety.



TIRR Foundation  
 Executive Director  
 Cynthia Adkins and  
 Dr. Bennet Omalu

With no apologies for his exuberance and convictions, Dr. Omalu aptly observed, “the best way for me to contribute to mankind is to be myself.”

The evening also featured Mission Connect scientists at designated tables to share their insight, expertise and the promising updates from the research in regards to advances in brain trauma and spinal cord injury.

“TIRR Foundation is committed to supporting programs and research that foster unparalleled medical advances in brain trauma and spinal cord injury,” said Cynthia Adkins, Executive Director of TIRR Foundation. “This is an unbelievable year for advances in research, and the Mission Connect scientists are instrumental to our work at TIRR Foundation.”



*Jackie and Jay Martin*



*Drs. Ellin and Robert Grossman*



*Becky Crane and Kay and Ned Holmes*



*Julie and Larry Phillips*



*Dr. Bennet Omalu and Robert Sale*



*Pramod Dash, Ping Zhou, Becky Crane*



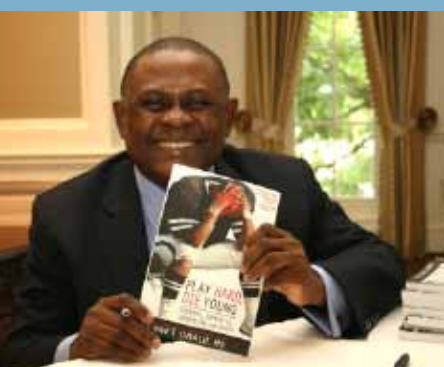
*Penny Gregg and Kay Holmes*



*Emily and Peter Hempel and Dorina Papageorgiou*



*Claire Hulsebosch and Anne Conner*



*Dr. Bennet Omalu*



*Dr. Bennet Omalu, Carel Stith, Bonnie Hellums,  
Becky Crane*



*Flo Crady, Kay MacIntyre, Will Conner*

# Camp Xtreme *Spices Up* Spring Break



TIRR Foundation's second annual Moran Camp Xtreme spring break edition was the scene of accomplishment mixed with fun, on March 10-13 at Camp For All in Burton, Tex.

Designed specifically for children to young adults with disabilities, Moran Camp Xtreme, supported through funding provided by the W. T. and Louise Moran Foundation, is a wheelchair sports camp that not only includes those who have experienced a spinal cord injury, but also those affected by cerebral palsy, spina bifida, multiple sclerosis and other neurological or paralytic conditions.

Approximately 20 campers, ages 9 through 21, attended Moran Camp Xtreme Spring Break, which offered the opportunity for campers with disabilities to be joined by their able-bodied siblings.

"This year, Moran Camp Xtreme Spring Break provided brothers and sisters an opportunity to see how well their sibling with a disability handled challenges that they might not normally experience at home," said Camp Director Genny Gomez. "Being together in this environment cultivates a new level of respect, not just for the one with disabilities, but for those able-bodied family members who learn to be supportive without affecting the level of independence their brother or sister might be looking to reach."

Friends, who feel like family, also reunited, as testified by campers Danielle "Danny" Cain of Cedar Park and Andres Perez of Dayton, Texas.

"This was the first time I have come to Spring Break camp and we made the decision to come together," said Danielle. "He's like a little brother to me."

Even though they live miles apart, from Austin to Beaumont, the friends keep in touch regularly.

"Yeah, she gets me," said Andres. "I'm kind of serious and she is one of the people who can make me smile."

Campers took part in a plethora of activities that challenged them physically and socially. From the start, campers developed friendships that they could build upon throughout camp, allowing them to get outside of their emotional comfort zones. Their physical comfort zones were challenged through wheelchair soccer and basketball,

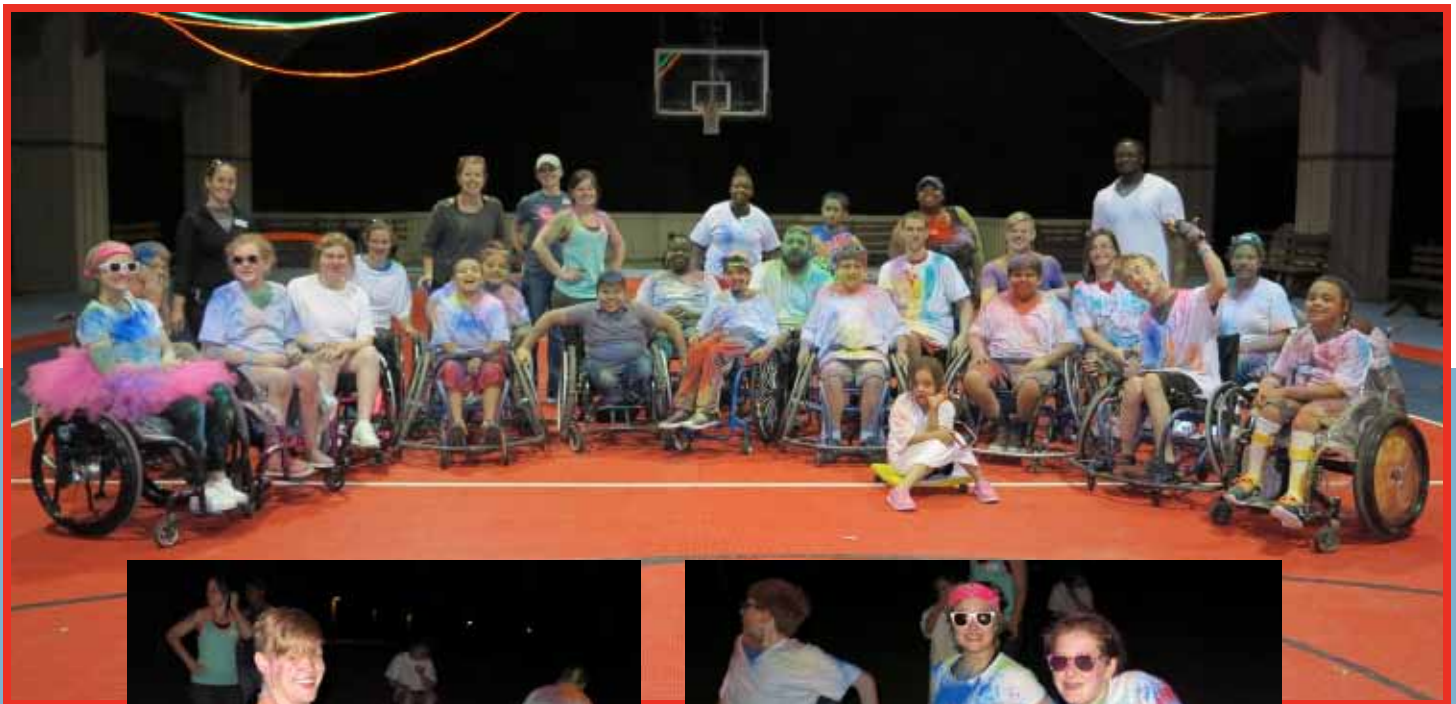


kayaking and canoeing, and an intimidating ropes and swings course that many conquered with the encouragement of their new friends.

“We have a wide variety of individuals who come to camp and Moran Camp Xtreme supports individuals with spina bifida to spinal cord injury,” said Gomez. “We really work to fulfill the Moran Camp Xtreme name, so if a camper, for example, is not quite comfortable with pushing up a hill, we have events like the Color Run that encourages them to not only try, but excel at trying.”

For counselor Daniel Curtis of Austin, who was rendered a quadriplegic after slipping while diving into his backyard pool, shattering his sixth cervical vertebrae, coming to camp as a counselor has been part of his ongoing journey to challenge himself and help others with the same issues.

“I do have some feeling in my arms and shoulders, so I am able to take care of myself,” said Daniel. “But it wasn’t until after I came to camp and figured out I was able to be more independent that I was able to return home and, happily, fire several of my caregivers who had been with me since my accident.”



# Stayin' Alive

with TIRR

An enthusiastic crowd of wig wearin' and funky flared pant stylin' 20-somethings joined TIRR Foundation for a night of "Stayin' Alive with TIRR" on January 30 at House of Blues.

Featuring the greatest disco band in the world, "Le Freak," the event was hosted by Catherine Bradley, Helen McLaughlin, Kimberly Niehaus, and Alixe Ryan, "Stayin' Alive with TIRR," was well-attended.

"Our chairs went above and beyond to recruit people for the event," said TIRR Director of Special Events Maudie Werlin. "There were a number of people who were unfamiliar with TIRR Foundation and who are now more engaged in the Foundation's mission."

The event benefitted Moran Camp Xtreme, a camp for those with disabilities.



*TIRR Foundation Staff and Volunteers*



*LeFreak with event chairs, Helen Hemingway and Catherine Bradley*



*Erin McCabe and Whitney Rape*



*Going all out to support Moran Camp Xtreme*

January 30, 2016



*Charlie Mouton, Sarah DeWalch, Scott Cummings, Elizabeth Adkins*



January 30, 2016

Feelin' the Groove  
with a collection  
of 70's Attire



Elizabeth Adkins and Cynthia Adkins

# stayin' Alive

with TIRR



Riley Mundinger

January 30, 2016



VolunTIRRs  
in Action



TIRR Foundation formed a unique community of researchers when it was determined if scientists in related areas of neurobiology were given a collaborative environment in which to interact, pose questions, and share information, the pace of discovery would accelerate. Joining this exclusive initiative is:

Join the Mission Connect  
Facebook page at  
[facebook.com/  
tirrsmissionconnect](https://facebook.com/tirrsmissionconnect)

**Radha Korupolu, M.D.**, is an Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at UT Health Science Center at Houston and attending physician, TIRR Memorial Herman  
**Curtis Merring, OTR, MOT**, Seton Brain and Spine Recovery Center (Adults)  
**Eric Lantz, OT**, Seton Brain and Spine Recovery Center (Adults)  
**Charles E. Wade, Ph.D.**, is a Professor, Department of Surgery at UT Health Science Center at Houston  
**Trent Watkins, Ph. D.**, is an Assistant Professor, Department of Neurosurgery at Baylor College of Medicine

## Symposium Names 2015 Research Winners

TIRR Foundation's Mission Connect recognized outstanding students for their work in spinal cord and traumatic brain injury research. During the December Mission Connect 2015 Annual Scientific Symposium, held at the Cooley Life Center, 48 students made poster and podium presentations to an audience of more than 140.

"This is an important event for students and post doctoral fellows conducting this type of research," said Mission Connect Director Pramod Dash, Ph.D. "Through this judged competition, students are given valuable feedback regarding the direction and value of their research when it comes to the future treatment and understanding of traumatic brain and spinal cord injury."

"In the eight years that the Symposium has been held, I have never seen such quality of work from students, which is a great precursor for the future of research into these debilitating conditions," said Dr. Dash.

Named as the overall winner of the poster competition in Traumatic Brain Injury research was Tara Fischer of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston whose thesis focused

on mitochondrial dynamics in traumatic brain injury. The overall winner of the poster competition in Spinal Cord Injury research was Georgene Hergenroeder, also of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Her presentation focused on the clinical and translational studies related to brain and spinal cord trauma with an emphasis on protein biomarker discovery.

The Institute For Rehabilitation and Research (TIRR) Foundation created and directs Mission Connect, one of the nation's only collaborative research programs where scientists, physicians, researchers, and engineers from multiple institutions work together to develop solutions addressing traumatic brain and spinal cord injury.

Dr. Linda Noble-Haeusslein, the Alvera L. Kan Endowed Chair of Neurological Surgery at the University of California at San Francisco, served as the keynote speaker. She is co-director and principal investigator for the Brain and Spinal Injury Center (BASIC) as well as co-director of the Neurobehavioral Core for Rehabilitation Research.

### Other winners included:

- SCI Postdoc Award, 1st Place – **Atilla Kilicarslan**, *University of Houston and Houston Methodist*
- SCI Postdoc Award, 2nd Place – **Thomas Wilems**, *The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston*
- SCI Graduate Student Award, 1st Place – **Sung Yul Shin**, *The University of Texas at Austin*
- SCI Graduate Student Award, 2nd Place – **Joel Turtle**, *Texas A&M University*
- TBI Graduate Student Award, 1st Place – **Jonathan Huynh**, *The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston*
- TBI Graduate Student Award, 2nd Place – **Ilirjana Hyseni**, *Baylor College of Medicine*
- Other Category Award, 1st Place – **Yumei Huang**, *Baylor College of Medicine*
- Other Category Award, 2nd Place – **Hyun Lim**, *The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston*



*Gregg Raymond, Cynthia Adkins, Anne Conner, and Bill Hanna at the dedication ceremony at TIRR Foundation*

## TIRR Presented with *Honorary Painting* from Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo

Lifetime Vice President of the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo and Director Emeritus of TIRR Foundation.

The painting was donated to TIRR Foundation by Special Hearts, a group from the HLSR - Special Children's Committee. Every year, Special Hearts purchases a painting at the HLSR Student Art Auction to donate. The painting was created by Memorial High School student, Amy Truong, and sold at the 2013 HLSR Student Art Auction for \$37,000. Bill Hanna, Past Chairman of the Special Children's Committee presented the painting to TIRR Foundation Chairman-Elect Tom Conner in recognition of the foundation's work on behalf of children with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries.

In January, TIRR Foundation was honored to attend a Houston Rodeo Special Children's Committee meeting at NRG Park. The painting "Warmth Before Dawn" was presented to TIRR Foundation in honor of the late Jerry Johnston Andrew, a

Please  
join us at  
our new venue  
on a new day!

# Save the Date

Monday, October 24, 2016

BraeBurn Country Club

801 Bissonnet, Houston TX 77074



For more information, contact Maudie Werlin  
713-877-0502 or [werlinm@tirrfoundation.org](mailto:werlinm@tirrfoundation.org)



4605 Post Oak Place  
 Suite 222  
 Houston, Texas 77027

# Upcoming Events:

## Moran Camp Xtreme

- Summer Camp July 10-16, 2016
- Volunteer Day July 14, 2016
- Moran Camp Xtreme at Sea October 14-16, 2016

## Two Steppin' with TIRR

- The Astorian September 24, 2016 featuring Pat Green and Tracy Lawrence

## Tee It Up with TIRR

- Braeburn Country Club October 24, 2016

## Symposium

- Cooley Life Center December 2, 2016

Keep up to date on all our happenings on Facebook!

[facebook.com/TIRRFoundation](http://facebook.com/TIRRFoundation)



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