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HEADWAY
OF WESTERN NEW YORK, INC.

NEWSLETTER

HEADWAYOFWNY.ORG

Join us for
**HEADWAY'S
LAWN FETE ON THE
RIVER FUNDRAISER!**

October 7, 2026
6 - 9PM
Tewksbury Lodge
Buffalo, NY

PURCHASE PRE-SALE TICKETS, BECOME A SPONSOR, OR DONATE.

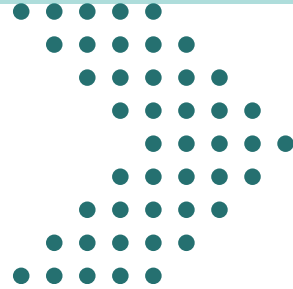
Pre-Sale Tickets: \$70
Day of: \$80

Proceeds support essential services outside of waiver-funded programs, education, and efforts that provide hope, independence, and opportunity for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and older adults.



Tewksbury Lodge, Buffalo, New York

A WORD FROM OUR **DIRECTOR, RON FERNANDEZ**



It has been a long and winding road since Covid for Headway to get back to present an event which includes food, beverages, music, and games. On October 7th starting at 6pm at the Tewksbury Lodge, 246 Ohio Street in Buffalo, we are doing just that: ***The Lawn Fete on the River Fundraiser.***

Turns out, *Lawn Fete* is only something out of the Western New York lexicon and is not used across the country. It is a combination of a social outing in the park and a carnival, which is what we will present with this event. We will bring back the popular Wine Toss game from our previous Roaring Twenties Event in 2019; add some lawn games; basket raffles, a photo booth from one of our Western New York sponsors, *Moving Music*; and more surprises. The vibe will be casual and fun.

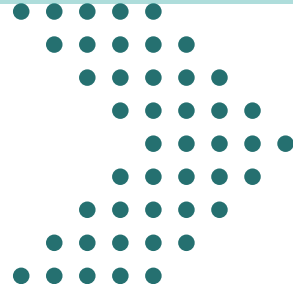


**Director of Headway of
WNY, Ron Fernandez**

Headway is best known for administration of the TBI and NHTD waiver but we also provide other services that are not funded by the waiver grants, including our free online TBI peer support group; our navigation services working with individuals and families to locate services in the area; and our educational events and presentations on TBI. All of these services are supported by donations and fundraising efforts.

It is not too late to donate, buy tickets, or become a sponsor. Please find the event page here. Headway's roots have always been an agency created and supported by volunteers. My staff and I hope to see you again on October 7th.

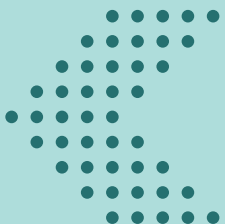
A WORD FROM OUR **DIRECTOR, RON FERNANDEZ** **CONTINUED**



TBI and NHTD Waiver Update

Headway of WNY continues its work in administering for the NY DOH the TBI and NHTD Waiver Programs for the six counties in Western New York State. Agencies can become providers of various services in the region by contacting Headway which will explain and facilitate the process with the DOH who authorize the actual contracts.

Since our last Newsletter we have added a social day program, a personal emergency response provider, a licensed homecare agency and an independent Service Coordinator to the possible providers for services in the region. The TBI Waiver is open with no Cap and continues to process referrals. The NHTD Waiver, which has been capped (not taking new referrals) since January, remains so, but has added participants to the program who referrals were before the “door” closed for the program. The Department of Health is keeping a close eye on the program reaching federal agreed upon program numbers, which are calculated for the whole state, and will announce when the program will be open again for referrals. We expect each region will have a certain number of slots. Headway will be sure to let all stakeholders in the region know when this occurs.



Follow us on social media!

www.headwayofwny.org



[@headwayofwny](https://www.instagram.com/headwayofwny)



[@headwayofwny](https://www.facebook.com/headwayofwny)

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!



Headway extends our gratitude to our current sponsors for our upcoming fundraiser on October 7th, *Lawn Fete on the River!* A complete list of all sponsors will be published in our Winter newsletter.



[Click here to become a sponsor or learn more about sponsorship opportunities.](#)

Thank you to our **Friends of Headway** for their recent donations, and helping make a difference in the lives of those we serve.

Jacob McPherson
Ms. Tina Forsythe
Ms. Cathleen Simon
Mark Davis
Matthew Faulkner

HEADWAY RECEIVED THIS YEAR'S NIAGARA PEACH FEST 5K RACE DONATION

On Thursday, September 3rd, the 46th Annual Peach Festival 5K Run took place in Lewiston. This race has been around longer than almost any race in the area. Net proceeds of \$1,500 from the 2026 race were donated to Headway of WNY on Sunday September 13th at The Peach Festival. Our director, Ron Fernandez, received the check on behalf of Headway.



Shawniece Baillie, far left, Headway's Lead RRDS at the Niagara Peach Festival 5k Run

Thank you for all the contributions and thank you Lewiston Kiwanis Club for choosing Headway this year!





JOIN US FOR HEADWAY'S FALL FUNDRAISER!



LAWN FETE ON THE RIVER



October 7, 2026

6 - 9PM

**Tewksbury Lodge
Buffalo, NY**

Pre-Sale Tickets: \$70

Day of Event: \$80



**Your
presence
makes an
impact.**



Join us for an evening along the Buffalo River for dinner, games, raffles, auctioning, live music from Synapse, and community connection!

Proceeds support Headway's essential services outside of waiver-funded programs, education, and efforts that provide hope, independence, and opportunity for individuals with traumatic brain injuries and older adults.

Each ticket purchase comes with dinner from available food stations, two drink tickets, and one game ticket.



LAWN FETE ON THE RIVER



History of the Tewksbury



Situated in the historic First Ward of Buffalo's waterfront and seated on the banks of the Buffalo River, The Tewksbury Lodge is located within Buffalo River Fest Park, offering stunning views of the downtown skyline, massive grain elevators, and a gorgeously landscaped park.

The Lodge's name is derived from the freighter Michael K. Tewksbury which earned its place in Buffalo lore on January 21, 1959. Days before, extreme cold and heavy snow packed the Buffalo River and Cazenovia Creek with ice. However, a sudden thaw with wind-driven rain caused the ice to shift. A few miles upriver the freighter MacGilvray Shiras was tied up for the winter beside the Concrete Central Elevator at the foot of Smith Street. The building pressure from the flowing ice was too much for the Shiras' mooring lines and the freighter broke free. The MacGilvray Shiras drifted downriver, navigating three sharp turns before ramming the Tewksbury, which was tied up at the Standard Elevator near the foot of St. Clair Street. Both ships successfully passed the Ohio Street Bridge which was raised for the winter.

Unfortunately, the Michigan Street Bridge, located next to the Park, was in its lowered position and its crew taking shelter in the nearby Swannie House. The Tewksbury crashed into the bridge, demolishing the structure and wedging itself across the width of the river causing an ice dam. The flow of the frigid water and ice quickly began to spill into the neighborhood and flooded an 18 block area. The damage and fallout would dominate both news headlines and bar room conversations for weeks after the incident. The restaurant's namesake allows those conversations to continue still today.

SEPTEMBER

Suicide prevention starts long before a crisis. Open conversations, shared resources, and visible awareness make a real difference.

[Click here for Suicide Prevention Resources](#)



**SUICIDE
PREVENTION**
AWARENESS MONTH

NATIONAL CONCUSSION AWARENESS DAY SEPTEMBER 18TH, 2026

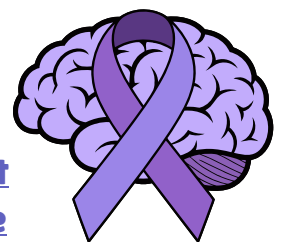


[Read more about concussions here](#)

National Concussion Awareness Day ® was founded in 2016 by Brooke Mills, who suffered a concussion as a freshman in high school. Concussions have become an epidemic in the United States, with millions of mild traumatic brain injuries happening each year. By raising awareness of the importance of recognizing a concussion, treating it appropriately and supporting the injured we can positively impact lives across the country.

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST, 2026

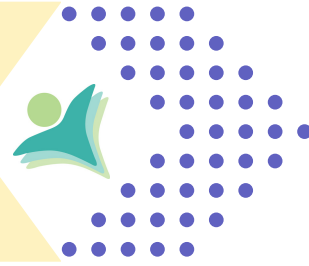
[Read more about Alzheimer's here](#)



Alzheimer's disease is a type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms eventually grow severe enough to interfere with daily tasks. here are everyday steps you can take to support your brain health. Research shows that healthy habits — including eating well, staying active and challenging your mind — may help reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

HEADWAY'S STAFF PICNIC

9



Headway staff had a picnic at Ellicott Creek Park in Tonawanda this summer!



WE PLAYED GAMES AND LAUGHED A LOT!



AND WE CELEBRATED HEADWAY'S RRDS, DIANNA'S RECENT MARRIAGE!

Dianna married Brian at the Botanical Gardens on 9/3. They've been together for 14 years, and share a home with 2 perfect bunnies, Peach & Potato!



FROM A BRAIN INJURY SURVIVOR...

Kiersten Hester, Brain Injury Association of America

Kiersten's Story

Hi, my name is Kiersten Hester. I'm 19 years old and I am an Automotive Service Tech student at Tennessee Rehabilitation Center. My favorite things include the color purple, music especially country, rock or some metal, I love western things, anything that provides sensory input and I also love horses, trucks and riding backwards and other similar things.

I have multiple different conditions and disabilities such as Pierre Robin Syndrome, autism, Complex PTSD, asthma, and recently diagnosed Binocular Vision Dysfunction as well as other conditions and due to differences associated with Pierre Robin Syndrome and asthma I have had a complex medical history, yet despite that and my disabilities I have always done what I could to keep myself determined and keep my trust in the Lord and I do not let my shortcomings or struggles stop me from enjoying life to the fullest.



FROM A BRAIN INJURY SURVIVOR (CONTINUED)

**Kiersten Hester, Brain Injury
Association of America**

Kiersten's Story

Here is my story of my brain injury:

When I was 15 years old, in March, I fell from a swing and I landed hard on my chin first thing before the rest of me hit the ground, I hit hard enough that I lost all of my hearing and 98% vision & I could not breathe for 60 to 90 seconds, the only visible damage was a cut on my chin & my gums were torn quite a bit and there was a lot of bleeding, they treated that part when I was at the ER & on my way to the ER I also hyperventilated we're still quite dizzy & had a high adrenaline rush when I got there, but they did not check for a brain injury or do any form of neurological evaluation, and all doctors I've seen since have not picked up on it or blamed some aspects I've dealt with since on being either a deficiency of some vitamin or it just not being my dominant hand (etc).

After the fall, my body was different. My left hand lost a bit of function, such as gripping, controlling & releasing as well as holding weight. My left foot drops when I walk, and I have weakness on my left side as well as low muscle tone & variable spasticity (which is triggered by things like startle, emotion, temperature, vibration, music bass, effort, doing some tasks, exercise, etc) that can cause my left hands function to fluctuate from 0 to 30 percent as well as cause my left foot to plantar-flex further down more than it does at baseline or relaxed. And overall I have had less sensation to pain, textures or temperature. My left side also has dealt with numbness or pins & needles sensation either out of the blue or while sitting or laying in certain positions, there are even times where I am unable to voluntarily open, close or use my hand in hardly if at all in any way which again matches why I say my left hand function is dynamic rather than static.



FROM A BRAIN INJURY SURVIVOR (CONTINUED)

*Kiersten Hester, Brain Injury
Association of America*

Kiersten's Story

Due to the changes or the ultimate change in function since the fall I have had to adapt to doing most tasks one-handed anywhere from a oil change to simply some chores around the house or daily living task like even driving. I didn't know or understand why all of this started until I recently started making the connection & doing some research as I'd like to know what could've potentially happened when I landed because no one else was there so I'm the only one that could remember any of it especially knowing that these symptoms highly match some cases of things like cerebral palsy, part of why I've been doing research so I don't feel so alone with my symptoms and don't feel like I'm just "imagining it" and stuff like that and have validation for my experience.

Myths vs Facts I've Learned:

Myth 1: "You're just making excuses or being lazy."

Fact: My symptoms have medical triggers like startle, temperature, and vibration. That's neurological, not a choice, neither is me adapting to doing most tasks one handed to accommodate low hand function or altering my gait to accommodate foot drop

Myth 2: "If you were really hurt, you wouldn't remember the fall."

Fact: I remember losing air and senses. Clear memory doesn't mean no injury. Anoxia can happen while you're conscious.

Myth 3: "Your fall wasn't severe enough for you to still have problems."

Fact: 60 to 90 seconds without air changes the brain. Severity isn't just blood or broken bones. Function or sensory related changes is the proof.



BILLY JOEL REVEALS HE HAD A BRAIN SHUNT PLACED

[Full story on People.com](#)

Billy Joel is feeling better — and revealing the surgery that helped him get there.

Over a year after the “Piano Man” singer revealed he was diagnosed with normal pressure hydrocephalus (NPH), he appeared on SiriusXM’s The Billy Joel Channel and provided a health update for fans.



Joel said that first, he noticed his “balance was not good” and he went to see a doctor after falling during a concert. He was diagnosed with NPH, a condition where excess cerebrospinal fluid builds up in the brain ventricles, and began physical therapy before doctors recommended he undergo a shunt procedure.

“I said, ‘Well, what does that entail?’ ‘Well, we drill a hole through your skull and we stick a shunt inside your brain.’ I said, ‘Nah, I think I’ll pass on that.’ I didn’t want to do that, but then I read up on it and I realized it can help improve your balance and can help your memory. You know, I don’t want to lose my marbles,” Joel, now 77, said.

He continued, “It’s hard to tell what’s age and what’s a condition, so I agreed to do the shunt. I had a surgery and they implanted a shunt in my brain — and it actually improved things.”

BILLY JOEL REVEALS HE HAD A BRAIN SHUNT PLACED

[Full story on People.com](#)

Over time, Joel realized his memory, balance and ability to function improved — but he had to cut back a bit on work.

“The doctors told me this: because of my job, which is playing rock and roll music very loud, that it was giving me something like a concussion every time I did a show. It was causing damage to my brain nerves and I could be losing more brain cells the more shows I did and I realized that means I shouldn’t be doing this right now. I got to improve,” he said.



Joel concluded, “They don’t want me to stress too much, so I’m doing physical therapy. I’m doing whatever it is they tell me to do because I don’t want to lose it, you know? So, I’m always testing myself. I know people have heard, ‘Oh, he’s got a brain disorder,’ and I’m okay. I just want people to know, don’t worry about me. I’m not going anywhere. I’m here. I’m still here.”

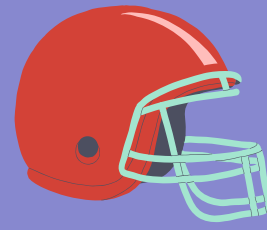
The “Vienna” singer disclosed his condition in May 2025, when he canceled scheduled concerts. At the time, he said that NPH was made worse by performances, leading to problems with hearing, vision and balance.

Speaking with PEOPLE in a July 2025 interview, the singer opened up about his health and said he was simply rolling with the punches.

“I know a lot of people are worried about me and my health, but I’m okay,” he said. “What I have is something very few people know about, including me, no matter how much you try to research it. I’m doing my best to work with it and to recover from it.”

“It was scary, but I’m okay,” he continued. “I just wanted to let people know, don’t worry about me being deathly ill or anything.”

AT LEAST ONE IN FOUR NFL PLAYERS MAY HAVE CTE



[Full story on Time.com](https://www.time.com/full-story-on-cte)

An alarming number of professional football players in the U.S. may someday have chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), the neurodegenerative disease associated with repeated concussions and sub-concussive hits to the head, a new study suggests.

The research, published in the *BMJ*, studied the brains of NFL players who died from 2016 to 2021 and found that one in four had CTE—a figure that is almost certainly an undercount, the researchers say. Depending on how they crunched the numbers, the CTE incidence rose as high as 91%.



“The one in four figure is intentionally the most conservative estimate possible,” says lead author Dr. Daniel Daneshvar, chair of the department of physical medicine and rehabilitation at Mass General Brigham and associate professor at Harvard Medical School. “We know the true prevalence is higher than that.”

It was in 1928 that pathologist Harrison Martland first described the condition now known as CTE in boxers experiencing what he called “punch drunk” syndrome. It was not until 2002 that the disease was first diagnosed in an NFL player, when neuropathologist Bennet I. Omalu examined the brain of Mike Webster, a former player for the Pittsburgh Steelers, and found the buildup of tau proteins around blood vessels, thinning of tissue, and overall brain atrophy that characterize the disease. CTE is only firmly diagnosable by autopsy, but the range of symptoms that point to the disease—including memory loss, confusion, aggression, depression, apathy, tremors, and slurred speech—can be pronounced during a person’s life.

“Many of these former players had dementia,” says Daneshvar, “meaning their cognitive symptoms were severe enough to interfere with their ability to function independently. These are not just microscopic changes that we happen to find when someone dies. We are talking about a disease that can profoundly affect people’s ability to think, work, maintain relationships, and live independently.”



BRAIN INJURY PEER SUPPORT GROUP (VIRTUAL)

**First & Third Wednesday of the
month from 2 to 3pm**

Free to the public!

Apply to join by emailing support@headwayofwny.org
with your name and phone number or call 716-408-3110.

Headway offers a Brain Injury Peer Support Group through our telehealth online platform. The support group is a space for individuals navigating the challenges of brain injury to connect, share experiences, and find strength in community. Through shared stories, members can gain valuable insights, reassurance, and encouragement to persevere through the ups and downs of their recovery process. Within this safe environment, participants find community in knowing they are not alone in their journey.

**Support Headway.
Make a donation today.**

Donations that are \$50 or
more receive a Headway mug!

[Click here to make online donation](#)

**Or mail a check to Headway of WNY at
2495 Main Street, Buffalo, NY, Suite 446**



HELP MAKE OUR FUNDRAISER A SUCCESS!

Lawn Fete on the River October 7th, 2026 Tewksbury Lodge, Buffalo, NY

As we look forward to our fundraiser, we're seeking donations for our basket raffle and silent auction. Your generosity helps make this event a success and supports our mission.

Basket Raffle Donations

We are accepting new and unused items to create themed raffle baskets. Popular items include gift cards, specialty foods, home decor, family activities, self-care products, and seasonal gifts.



Silent Auction Donations

We are also seeking new items, experiences, services, of gift certificates valued at \$100 or more for our silent auction.



If you would like to donate a basket, please email
Support@headwayofwny.org



Thank you for helping create a memorable event while supporting the important work of our agency!