

## Easter Seal Society

# Brooklyn plays a part in Shock Trauma process

By NANCY MENEFEE  
Staff Writer

Shock trauma. Baltimore. The two names are linked in the medical world, and in the community response. Health care professionals, who refer to it as the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Service Systems (MIEMSS) and residents who know it as Shock Trauma are equally proud of the facility.

Few residents know, however, that Brooklyn plays an integral part in the MIEMSS process, the process of healing.

Brooklyn is the home of the Easter Seal Society, 3700 Fourth Street. Five months ago, the Easter Seal Society began developing a Center for Living, a counseling program aimed at helping accident victims heal themselves emotionally after MIEMSS has healed them physically.

"If Shock Trauma is the front door," said Ruof, director of Easter Seal Society for Central Maryland said, "then Easter Seals is the back door—not just to save their lives but to put their lives back together."

Ruof said that he had been asked to reorganize the Easter Seal Society in central Maryland, which included Baltimore and five surrounding counties.

"The society, like the city, is in the midst of its own rebirth," Ruof said. "I took a look around to see what kind of services were needed by disabled people. I went to Shock Trauma, which had already put Baltimore on the map. Dr. R. Adam

Cowley and his contributions to emergency medicine, setting up Shock Trauma in 1968, revolutionized emergency medicine. And he did it here in Baltimore. Baltimore is the world leader in caring for accidents, burns. The whole world has been watching Baltimore."

MIEMSS receives only the most critically ill or injured patients. Severe multiple injuries, head and spinal cord injuries, cardiac and major vessel injuries, drug overdoses, attempted suicides and drownings are only a few of the cases handled at MIEMSS. The Shock Trauma center receives over 1200 patients annually.

Sixty percent are transported directly from the scene of a car accident. Forty percent are victims of violence, industrial accidents, or have developed complications while in other hospitals. Facilities include a round-the-clock operating room and clinical laboratory, a 12-bed critical care unit with continuous patient monitoring, a 14-bed intensive care unit, and a 22-bed recovery unit. Shock Trauma is equipped to admit and resuscitate up to eight major trauma victims simultaneously.

However, Ruof felt there was a gap between medical care, and complete readjustment to society.

"Shock Trauma does the finest job in the world of saving lives from traumatic accidents, but we discovered once a person is put back together physically, they don't

get all the rehabilitation they need. They get good physical and occupational therapy, and good initial counseling, but the long-term psycho/social need are not being met." Ruof said that the excellent work of Shock Trauma, in fact, often made it hard to recognize there even was a problem.

"Cowley's team does such a good job, the victims look whole and normal, and that makes it harder," he said.

Lisa Reeves, director of the Easter Seals program in Brooklyn, said that very few victims of serious accidents had the initial stamina to get up out of their home. She said they often become suicidal, or turn to pills and alcohol. Families break up.

"They've had a near-death experience," she said. "They don't perceive themselves as the same person when they wake up."

Elaine Rifkin, director of Psycho/Social Service for the Center of Living, said,

"They've been through a very traumatic experience, a life-threatening experience. They have a post-traumatic stress disorder. It makes people very different. We're discovering that people, once they've gone through something like this, they seem to need some period of time to sort through feeling and decide and realize what their problems are. They're not ready to participate in any kind of extensive effort to get back on their feet or function in any kind of social system."

Reeves said a pattern of Shock Trauma victims often includes four to six months of

brutal depression.

"You can't hurry the process, you have to go through four to six months of denial and depression," she said.

Tony Dean was 23 years old, one August evening two years ago. He was riding his motorcycle on 95. He had just graduated with from Towson with a degree in business. He was working at a job that summer, and deciding what he wanted to do with his life.

It wasn't until the very last minute that Dean heard the car, drag racing at 80 m.p.h., come up behind him. The car hit him, and kept on going.

Dean was taken to Shock Trauma. In the course of the next few days, both of his legs had to be amputated above the knee.

In an interview on WBAL on July 19, Dean shared with Ruof some of his feelings about coping with the aftermath of his accident.

"The months following the accident were horrible," he said. I was devastated. The anger and depression lasted several months. I was in the hospital for a month-and-a-half, and then home all the time. I thought my life was over, and I could never do anything. That was partly because I was very dependent, I couldn't do things, because nobody taught me how to do them without legs."

Bob Johnson, director of fundraising and operations for Easter Seals in Brooklyn, said, "How do you shake hands with everybody if you have no hands? There are 8,000 problems like that. You have to learn to like yourself again. It's also how do you relate to the guy next door, or the office

Christmas party."

Ruof told Dean about the Easter Seals Center for Living Program.

"It sounds really good, Dean said. "Exactly what I would have needed."

Ruof points out that in the past, Shock Trauma victims would have died. Now they are saved, but find themselves like infants, learning the basic skills all over again.

Ruof's dream of a Center for Living crystallized when he met Margaret Epperson-Sebour, the Director of Family Services for Shock Trauma. Ruof said that when he met her, he had an unformed vision of what needed to be done. She pulled out a concept paper, which outlined all the specific details for the Center for Living, and asked Easter Seals to get involved.

Currently, the Center for Living operates on Thursday evenings from 5 to 8 p.m. It provides individual, couple and family counseling. In September, the Center hopes to provide a place for people and families to come and meet other people with similar problems. Currently, four counselors are working in the program, and Ruof said they already have a waiting list of Shock Trauma victims.

Ruof said he has a dream of taking the program from a one night counseling program and turning it into Center for Living, complete with residential facilities. He hopes in a few years, to be able to build a larger facility in Brooklyn. The facility would include appropriating money for a new library, which would be

the finest of its kind in the field of psycho/social needs of trauma victims.

Ruof said the national organization of the Easter Seals Society has recognized the importance of the work they're doing in Brooklyn, and all the money he raises goes directly to the Center for Living facility.

"If we get our money, we get our dream," Ruof said. "If we had another \$60,000, we could take in a whole lot more people."

Ruof hopes that the people of Brooklyn will play help Brooklyn become the home of the final, healing step for Shock Trauma victims.

"I would like to make all clubs, small business organizations, the Kiwanis, the Lions, know what we're doing," he said. "We want them to know who we are. We want this community to jump on this thing, to get behind us."

Ruof said he hopes that every club and organization will organize one event in the next few months, and donate the proceeds to the Center for Living.

"If it's \$50 bucks from one, and \$100 from another," he said, "we can do a whole lot of good. We can make Brooklyn proud of the Easter Seal Society."

"The whole world is looking to Baltimore," Ruof said. He hopes to see his dream realized, the world looking with awe at Baltimore's medical techniques, and Baltimore looking to Brooklyn to provide the psycho/social services needed to turn medical miracles into human triumphs.