

A Journey of Resilience

David Turner, Tomah

David has been on a difficult journey that so many families face nationwide, as they brave a discussion of diagnosis. Beginning in 2011 he was having memory issues and tremors, which were initially attributed to stress at work. Shortly after, he retired, and was diagnosed with lewy-body dementia. The subsequent years were trying, as he and his wife Mary (who David calls his rock) struggled with his diagnosis. Their journey took a dramatic turn in 2019, when David got a new doctor. Based on his memory testing from the last seven years, his doctor re-diagnosed David with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and not lewy-body dementia. TBI results from an impact to the head that disrupts normal brain function. Traumatic brain injury may affect a person's cognitive abilities, including learning and thinking skills.



"I have had many major concussions in my life (work-related and car accidents)," David shared. "So, this made sense to me. But I was in such shock, I didn't know what my next steps should be." His doctor suggested he visit The Vision Therapy Academy in La Crosse. After rigorous testing, they determined that due to David's TBI, his eyes and brain were not working together. They developed a weekly training plan for David, and after 4 ½ months he graduated from The Vision Therapy Academy. He now returns monthly for check ins.

David still struggles with TBI and essential tremors, but his therapy has made a major impact on his life. "I can actually sit down and read a book or watch an entire TV show and my eyes aren't fighting me so much."

"One thing I would tell people is don't be afraid to speak up and ask questions," David said. "If you don't advocate for yourself, no one else will."

Finding your Community

From the very beginning of David's journey, he has sought out resources to support him. He has been a part of the Alzheimer's Association's phone support group for four years. "You learn so much, but also can share so much in support groups," David said. "People are so incredibly honest in these groups and that's what you need. From caregivers, I learned about some of the things I was doing that was probably hard on my wife. And, as someone living with TBI, I could help caregivers understand that their loved one is changing and can't help the way they are acting."

David is also active in Memory Café's, which is where he met a social worker who helped him sign up for the program at The Vision Therapy Academy.

During Alzheimer's and Brain Awareness Month we salute David for his resilience on his journey.