



For Immediate Release  
July 10, 2012

### **ODVS Sponsors TBI Awareness Day Panel Discussion**

COLUMBUS – The Ohio Department of Veterans Services sponsored a panel discussion on the causes, effects and treatment of Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBI) among both veterans and the public on Monday, July 9. The panel featured both TBI survivors and medical professionals.

The survivors were united in their positive outlooks and their desire to both help others with similar injuries while raising awareness public awareness about TBI. Medical professionals on the panel commented on the need for additional funding and research to effectively treat those who've suffered these injuries, as well as calling for passage in the Ohio Senate of House Bill 143, to more effectively treat possible occurrences of TBI in youth sports.

Video of the event is available on the Ohio Channel at:

<http://www.ohiochannel.org/MediaLibrary/Media.aspx?fileId=136432>

Members of the panel were:

- Charlie Morris, of Kent, Vietnam War veteran, TBI combat survivor, retired high school teacher and public speaker.
- Matthew Drake, of Sylvania, Iraq War veteran, TBI combat survivor, recent participant in Dancing with the Military Stars.
- Pam Hays, of Maumee, TBI survivor from a motorcycle accident, Founder and President of The Arms Forces support group for TBI Wounded Warriors.
- Samantha “Sam” Nesser, of Hilliard, TBI survivor from a basketball injury, survivor advocate before Ohio General Assembly.
- Dr. Jennifer Bogner, Associate Professor and Vice-Chair for Research in the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at Ohio State.
- Dr. Mehr Siddiqui, Chief Neurologist at Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center, medical instructor, provided over 30 years of care to veterans.
- Stephanie Ramsey, of Dublin, Chair of the Ohio Brain Injury Advisory Committee and Trustee of the Brain Injury Association of Ohio, trained nurse.

TBI affects not just the person who is injured, but the entire family. The survivors spoke eloquently of how it changed their lives and their plans as well as the dynamics of their families, but they are all committed to continuing to move forward. Their discussion was moving and occasionally humorous.

"Once you're shot in the head," said Charlie Morris, who also survived a bout with cancer, "everything else is incidental."

Matthew Drake commented that, as he's relearned many basic life skills, he's found that some things are beyond his capability for now, but he keeps working. "I can say I can't...yet."

Dr. Bogner called for an improved, integrated and fully-funded system of medical support. "When folks leave the hospital environment, they're faced with a fragmented maze of service provision where they can't really get the services that they need," she said. "We need to have that."

The event was held to mark the first Traumatic Brain Injury Awareness Day, designated as July 9 every year by Senate Bill 247. This condition affects nearly 119,000 Ohio residents, including over 10,000 Ohio veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Awareness Day is intended to draw attention to this condition and the efforts of survivors and medical professionals to recover from it.

-30-

For more information, contact - Mike McKinney at 614-728-0235, [Michael.mckinney@dvs.ohio.gov](mailto:Michael.mckinney@dvs.ohio.gov) , or Karen Kish, 614-752-8941, [karen.kish@dvs.ohio.gov](mailto:karen.kish@dvs.ohio.gov).