

Contact: Wayne Connell
720-223-5553

Spotlight Shines on Invisible Disabilities Champions

Colorado-based Invisible Disabilities Association honors Jason Graham at third annual awards banquet in Lone Tree, Colo., October 10, 2010.

PARKER, Colo.—October 01, 2010—The Invisible Disabilities Association (IDA) will present Jason Graham of The Daniel Graham Foundation with its Inspiration Award. This award recognizes volunteerism while living each day with the personal struggle of chronic illness. Jason is the brother of Denver Bronco Daniel Graham and volunteers with his foundation. Jason is also employed full-time at Douglas County-based business internet and data provider **tw telecom**.

“It is an honor to be recognized and appreciated by the Invisible Disabilities Association,” said Jason Graham, who underwent brain surgery for a pituitary tumor in 2003 and a kidney transplant in 2006. He is now searching for a donor to receive a second kidney transplant. “By telling my own story, I hope to bring greater awareness to those with chronic medical conditions and encourage others who find themselves in similar situations.”

Millions of Americans have unseen, life-altering and often painful medical conditions, such as diabetes, cancer, lupus, and fibromyalgia. In addition to enduring chronic pain and facing the physical challenges of their diseases, many people with “invisible disabilities” also face misunderstanding, critical judgments, and discrimination from people who don’t understand their medical conditions.

“One of the most common things my wife hears is, ‘But you look good!’ ”said Wayne Connell, founder and president of the Invisible Disabilities Association. “Even people who knew and loved Sherri just didn’t understand what she was going through.”

Sherri Connell led an active life as a singer, dancer, model and actor who enjoyed riding her horse. However, due to multiple sclerosis, Lyme disease and multiple chemical sensitivities, she now struggles to take a shower, get a meal, or go to a doctor's appointment.

“There is a tremendous need to raise awareness about diseases and chronic conditions that have significant impacts on people’s lives, but are not physically apparent,” said Connell. “Even people close to you may not understand what you are going through if you have a debilitating condition, because on the outside, you look the same.”

IDA works closely with disease support organizations, medical professionals, and businesses to help encourage, educate, and connect tens of thousands of people each month who live with debilitating conditions, as well as their loved ones.

The annual awards banquet is an opportunity to raise awareness and funds, and honor individuals and organizations making positive contributions to understanding and treating invisible disabilities. This year’s keynote speaker is former professional baseball player Ed Hearn, who is receiving IDA’s Perseverance Award in recognition of his battle with multiple life-threatening health conditions. Additional 2010 award recipients include:

Advocacy Award - Doug Ulman, President and CEO of the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

Medical Award - Michael Salem MD, President and CEO of National Jewish Health

Healthcare Award - Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, President and CEO of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Corporate Award - JW Roth, founder of Accredited Members, AspenBIO Pharma and Disaboom.

Impact Award - Larry Hausner, CEO of the American Diabetes Association

Research Award - Laura Hewitson , PhD, Director of Research for Thoughtful House Center for Children in Austin, TX.

Founders Award- Gary Tedder, Senior VP, Accredited Members

Volunteer Award – Lisa Madsen, LCSW, volunteer with the Arc of Jefferson County, CO.

Banquet details:

Date: Sunday October 10, 2010

Place: Marriott Denver South 10345 Park Meadows Drive Lone Tree, CO

Time: 5:30 Registration & Silent Auction - 6:15 Dinner & Program

Tickets \$50 per person. Corporate sponsorships available.

Live and silent auction items needed.

Business or dressy attire.

RSVP at www.InvisibleDisabilities.org

ABOUT IDA

The Invisible Disabilities Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Parker, CO which encourages, educates and connects people and organizations touched by illness, pain and injury around the globe through its website, online social network, literature, projects and seminars. For more information, visit www.invisibledisabilities.org.

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