

## Shaken Baby Alliance History

January 28, 1994 – Tiffany, (Bonnie's niece at the time), 2 ½ months old and weighing just 4.5 lbs., is flown to Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth, Texas on Teddy Bear Air from Brownwood, Texas. There she is diagnosed with Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS). Doctors explain that Tiffany has been violently shaken and beaten with a baseball bat. Bonnie Armstrong is asked to prepare to sign a Do Not Resuscitate order. Bonnie promises Tiffany if she will fight and breathe, Bonnie will make something good come from something so very evil.

February 14, 1994 – Tiffany keeps her part of the promise and is released from Cooks to the care of Randall and Bonnie Armstrong who begin the process to legally adopt Tiffany. She has sustained a Traumatic Brain Injury due to SBS and doctors estimate she has lost about 40% of her brain.

February 1994 to August 1995 – Bonnie goes to the Osteopathic College of Medicine library, the Fort Worth Public Library, the UTA campus library, and UNT library to research SBS, child abuse, and available resources. She discovers there simply are no resources for SBS survivors. As she talks to professionals across the country, she learns that there is a need, but there are no specific family support programs. Brain Injury Associations are helpful, but they do not deal specifically with the myriad of issues related to inflicted child physical abuse.

April 28, 1994 – Tiffany is legally adopted by Randall and Bonnie Armstrong and she becomes Tiffany Armstrong. Due to the circumstances, the 6-month waiting period is waived and the judge states he wants Tiffany to have a forever home that day.

September 1995 – Bonnie Armstrong meets Melonie Smith (now Caster) at the Tarrant County Services for Blind Children Early Childhood Intervention program. She learns that Melonie's son, Trey, was also diagnosed with SBS after being shaken by his in-home child care provider. Melonie and Bonnie compare notes and realize both, though aggressively seeking resources for their children, have not been successful. Talking with each other about the emotional, physical, social, and financial stressors of SBS is helpful. They begin discussions about starting a local support group for mothers of shaken babies because they want to make the path easier for other moms and they both want to do something to prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome.

September 1996 – Bonnie watches the television program 20/20 that highlights Rob Parrish, then Chief Child Abuse Counsel for the Utah Attorney General's Office. Rob Parrish has successfully prosecuted a case involving a father who shook his son to death. The next day, Bonnie calls Rob at the Utah AG's office and they have a three hour plus conversation. Bonnie explains that she has been actively searching for resources and information about Shaken Baby Syndrome, but there is little information available other than medical journal articles. Bonnie expresses her frustration that perpetrators who hurt children in this way seemingly are not held accountable. Rob explains that this is true and there is an incredible amount of work that needs to be done. We must train investigative professionals in how to do a thorough forensic investigation, teach prosecutors how to handle these cases in court, and provide education to the other multi-disciplinary team members so that the needs of the child victim and family will be considered

Rob states he is working with a local child abuse prevention agency to put together a conference on SBS in Salt Lake City, Utah and invites Bonnie to attend.

November 7-9, 1996 – Bonnie and Melonie attend the conference on SBS in Salt Lake City, UT. They meet Rob Parrish at the conference. Rob makes a point to introduce Bonnie to many professionals at the conference. Rob and Bonnie continue the previous discussion of how to support families, train professionals and prevent SBS. Bonnie

uses this time to network with as many professionals and families as she can. One professional approaches Bonnie and gives her the name of a mother from Plano, Texas whose daughter had been shaken and who was looking for support and the name of Margaret Patterson, Executive Director of the Child Abuse Prevention Center in Dallas who has done some SBS Prevention programs in Dallas

November 12, 1996 – Bonnie calls the Plano mother, Kim Kang, and learns that Kim's daughter, Rachel, was transported from her child care provider's home after sustaining an inflicted head injury later diagnosed as Shaken Baby Syndrome. Melonie, Kim, and Bonnie decide to meet monthly for dinner. They see the benefits of these meetings as they can deal with the issues related to their children's abuse better simply by having this peer support. They recognize they share the same goals: to support families, prevent SBS, and train professionals on how to conduct thorough investigation and prosecutions.

November 12, 1996 – Bonnie call Margaret Patterson at the Child Abuse Prevention Center in Dallas and they agree that SBS Prevention is a priority. Margaret invites Bonnie to share Tiffany's story with her staff and a lifelong partnership is born.

December 1996 – Discussions begin about creating a formal agency to address the common goals these three moms of shaken babies share.

January 1997 – April 1998 – Kim, Melonie, and Bonnie create a strategic plan for developing The Shaken Baby Alliance. They apply for 501 (c) 3 status with the IRS. Their plan is to address the mission in 3 areas: support, prevention, and justice.

All 3 co-founders are raising children with Traumatic Brain Injuries while also working to develop The Shaken Baby Alliance. It makes sense that support for victim families be the priority goal. The first step is to develop a website (a rare thing at the time in 1997) with an online support group. They also create a model support group curriculum format that could be replicated in other cities. They develop a train the trainer curriculum for the Peer to Peer Support Program; thus, the Peer to Peer Support Program was born. The three co-founders meet with Alynn Lovins, MSW at Cook Children's. The hospital agrees to host a monthly support group for Shaken Baby victim families at the Cook Children's Hospital facility.

June 1997 – The Shaken Baby Alliance website goes live, and the email support group begins. The major search engine at the time is Alta Vista. The three co-founders are stunned at the amount of traffic the website is generating. The online support group began with a goal of 12 family members. Within a few weeks, it grows to over 100 members with more joining every week. The numbers are astonishing (over 2,000 people joined the support email list within two months). Most surprising are the number of professionals who joined the support group looking for their own investigative and/or legal resources to assist them on specific SBS cases. Calls come from law enforcement, prosecutors, and hospital personnel asking if the Alliance provides resources. The main needs include support for families and technical support on specific cases for investigative and legal professionals. The co-founders realize they will need to broaden the "support" goal to include professionals to provide the assistance needed on cases.

April 16, 1998 – The Shaken Baby Alliance is granted 501 (c) 3 status by the IRS.

July 1998 – Bonnie and Rob routinely call each other to discuss issues related to SBS, the newly formed Shaken Baby Alliance, and other topics related to child physical abuse. Bonnie shares with Rob that the SBA website has far exceeded expectations with the upsurge in traffic volume. The Alliance receives multiple calls each day from both professionals asking for resources and technical support for specific cases and victim family members needing

support in a myriad of areas including basic physical needs, emotional support, education, financial assistance, and referrals for therapy for their children.

Rob explains there is a tremendous need to replicate the progress made in child sexual abuse cases since the early 1980's by applying the basic format to child physical abuse cases. Rob states he has been in discussion with those in the child abuse field for years (medical doctors doing the research and writing journal articles, law enforcement investigating crimes against children, and prosecutors with the American Prosecutors Research Institute). These professional's collective consensus was four things needed to be done:

1. Bring the "best of the best" of the child abuse world together and create a group of multi-disciplinary team (MDT) professionals to serve as a "think tank".
2. Develop multi-disciplinary training for professionals. Allow them to come together in a joint training format, so individual MDT members will understand the other profession's roles and get solid forensic investigative training.
3. Develop Case Consultation Services using the "think tank" personnel for law enforcement and legal professionals to get assistance on the more complicated child physical abuse cases.
4. Develop support systems for families involved in child physical abuse cases. A family that is supported will be better equipped to handle the life-long demands of the brain injured child with multiple disabilities and a myriad of needs.

Bonnie asks why this had not been done before. Rob states simply "time and money". He notes that professionals are so busy doing their jobs, researching, writing journal articles, investigating and prosecuting cases that they lack the time to do what needs to be done. He says that it will take someone with strong organizational skills and the time and perseverance to see it through. Bonnie thinks about this and realizes this is what she must do to keep her promise to Tiffany.

The three co-founders meet. They decide to follow Rob's advice and revise the goals of The Shaken Baby Alliance to include: Support for Families and Professionals, Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome, and Justice for the innocent victims which is our core mission today.

July 1998 to January 1999 – The "think tank" of professionals come together via conference calls to develop the first ever training on SBS hosted by The Shaken Baby Alliance in February 2000. We continue to grow the online support group and started a database of resources across the country to assist families. We continue to attend conferences and research brain injury and child physical abuse to become educated ourselves.

January 1999 – Bonnie is invited to serve on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice Advisory Council where she serves until 2003.

March 1999 – Kim Kang and Bonnie Armstrong both get certified as National Brain Injury Association – Brain Injury and Violence Prevention Regional Trainers.

April 1999 – Bonnie is invited to be a part of the Tarrant County Child Fatality Review Team

September 1999 - We begin hosting monthly and then bi-weekly conference calls to bring together the best in the multi-disciplinary field of child physical abuse to plan the first two-day training for multidisciplinary professionals entitled Shaken Baby Syndrome: Medical, Investigative, Legal & Victim Impact Aspects.

October 1999- Bonnie reaches out to Margaret Patterson, the Executive Director of the Child Abuse Center of Dallas. She agrees to help. Their Center will partner with Bonnie to develop a public campaign, the high school curriculum and saturate the Dallas Independent School System. The CAP Center adopts "Shaken Baby Syndrome" as a program and receives funding from the Dallas Stars for an SBS prevention educator. Together they advocate for Senate Bill 558, which mandates that employees of licensed child-care providers or group day care homes who care for children under 24 months of age receive one hour of special training including how to recognize and prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome. The bill took effect in January 2000. In partnership with SBA, the CAP Center holds its first conference for 140 child-care providers in May 2000 to meet that requirement. Annual conferences continue.

February 2000 – The first Shaken Baby Syndrome multi-disciplinary training is hosted in Fort Worth, Texas on February 9-10, 2000 to an audience of over 300 professionals and in Houston, Texas on February 10-11, 2000 to an audience of over 200 professionals.

The training is wildly successful. Additional calls come in requesting technical assistance on cases around the state and nation. Bonnie puts together a formal group of multi-disciplinary professionals to serve as the Case Consultation Team. They start to develop "The Twelve Elements of the Successful Child Physical Abuse Case" as guidelines for investigative professionals and prosecutors to use in child physical abuse cases. These elements become the core of the training program.

March 2000 to January 2001 – Requests for SBA continue to grow in numbers and new locations. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services learns about the training from their staff who attended. They send a team to evaluate the curriculum and training program. Thereafter, these representatives ask The Shaken Baby Alliance to host one-day Regional Training Institutes in 10 locations throughout Texas. In addition, they ask the SBA to host a more advanced two-day training in 14 locations.

May 2000 to 2005 – Bonnie is chosen to serve on the International Advisory Board on Shaken Baby Syndrome (hosted by the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome in Salt Lake City, Utah).

May 2001 – SB 328 extends the statute of limitations in cases involving injury to a child, an elderly person or a disabled person from three years to ten years. Prior to this ruling, the statute was 10 years for sexual abuse and 2 years for physical abuse. Bonnie and Margaret advocated as individuals for this bill.

September 2003 to August 2009 – The Children's Justice Act and the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services fund the Advanced Techniques in Joint Child Abuse Investigations Training Program and Case Consultation Program.

May 2005 – Senate Bill 316, passed on May 23, 2005, provides that a resource pamphlet covering definitions and help for post-partum depression, coping mechanisms for a crying baby, shaken baby syndrome, and required immunizations be made available to hospital, birthing centers and other arenas for new mothers, fathers, and other select groups. The Shaken Baby Alliance and the Child Abuse Prevention Center produce a joint pamphlet for distribution. Bonnie and Margaret advocated as individuals for this bill.

April 2007 – The Prevention Program is strengthened when the State Bar of Texas Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect fund a prevention DVD written by Randell Alexander, M.D. PhD, FAAP and Bonnie Armstrong in partnership with medical reporter John Hammerly (KDFW Fox 4), and Cook Children's (Jamyie Coffman, MD, FAAP) entitled When Babies Cry. This 13-minute DVD is used to develop the High School Prevention Program and a free copy along with other printed materials is provided to every listed and registered child care provider in Tarrant County.

Over 1,000 high school students hear the message “Babies Cry...Our Job Is to Cope” within a year and this DVD continues to educate high school students to the current date.

September 2003 to August 2009 – The Shaken Baby Alliance is asked to develop and produce the Infant Mortality Prevention Education Program to reduce infant mortality in the State of Texas.

September 2003 to August 2009 – The Shaken Baby Alliance is asked to coordinate the Drug Endangered Children’s Initiative for the State of Texas.

February 2010 to Present - The Shaken Baby Alliance is contracted to provide multi-disciplinary mandated training to Child Protective Services, Child Care Licensing, and law enforcement and training to APS for Advanced Forensic Investigations regarding crimes against the elderly and persons with disabilities.

April 2010 – The State Bar of Texas Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect and the State Bar Foundation fund a Spanish version of When Babies Cry to meet a broader population

June 2011 – Based on the success of the APS forensics training, the SBA is asked to develop and produce training on the APS: Mental Health and Physical Conditions of the Elderly.

July 2016 – SBA is notified that they will receive funding from the Department of Justice, Forensic Science Technology Center of Excellence ([www.forensiccoe.org](http://www.forensiccoe.org)) for co-producing a conference in Savannah, GA this fall. This group, a part of the National Institute of Justice offers the Shaken Baby Alliance nationwide exposure to forensic scientists previously unknown. The Alliance will partner with ForensX, LLC to produce the conference. The conference will be recorded and shared with others on both the Center of Excellence’s website and our own. We are in discussions to take this pilot format we have developed and share the training in various locations across the United States.

The Present –. Since 1998, we have provided support to over 250 victim family members per year, trained over 5000 high schoolers in how to deal with a crying baby and SIDS risk reduction, and provided advanced forensic investigation training and child abuse prevention training to over 1,500 professionals each year. Additionally, we provided over 150 case consultations in 2015, with numbers increasing daily.

There are no other agencies besides the Alliance providing the three-pronged service focus on child physical abuse. The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome in Utah is committed to prevent shaken baby syndrome and promote the well-being of infants generally through the development and implementation of programs, policy and research. Their support services are limited, and they do not provide training or case consultation. Shaken Baby Syndrome resource groups are scattered nationwide, but no one provides the allied core services of Family Support, Training and Case Consultation as does the Shaken Baby Alliance.

Bonnie and Tiffany have kept their promises Today, Tiffany is a 24-year-old young woman with multiple disabilities who continues to fight and live. Tiffany has volunteered at various animal shelters, attends a community college, and is in Special Olympics and Super Kids basketball.

Bonnie is the Executive Director of the Alliance who dreams of the day that all requests for support can be accommodated by the agency. The Shaken Baby Alliance continues to develop outstanding multidisciplinary forensic training programs on serious forms of child physical abuse and elder abuse to meet our mission: to provide support

for victim families and professionals, to provide education for prevention of child abuse and elder abuse, and to provide justice for the innocent victims of child abuse.