



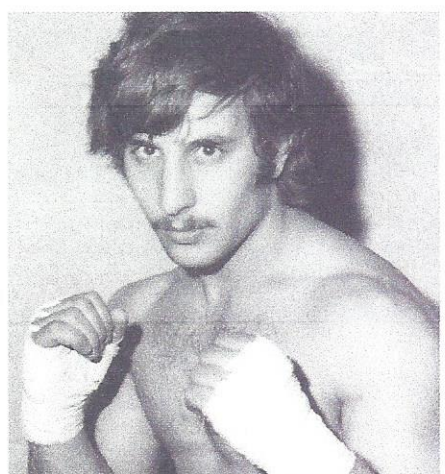
# Rural Futures

NYS Legislative Commission on Rural Resources

WINTER | 2018 ISSUE

## Fighting the Second Impact

Ray Ciancaglini Promotes Concussion Education for Athletes



Ray was a professional middleweight boxer from 1966 to 1974.  
Photo Courtesy of Ray Ciancaglini

Ray Ciancaglini had all of the potential for a successful boxing career and a normal life. Ray's career as a professional middleweight boxer began in 1966 and lasted until 1974. Throughout his career, he won the Golden Glove Heart award and later the Jerry Flynn Courage Award. These awards gave Ray a sense of invincibility. The Geneva native, however, suffered a second impact injury early in his career, changing his life forever. Ray would not know the full extent of his injury until later in his adult life. Fourteen years into a job at Eastman Kodak in Rochester, Ray noticed his memory weakening and started developing hand tremors. Ray was then diagnosed with Dementia Pugilistica and Parkinson's syndrome (Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy or CTE).

Second impact injuries occur when an initial concussion is not diagnosed or treated properly, and is then followed by a second concussion. The resulting brain damage often does not show symptoms until later in life. When Ray was boxing in the 1960s and 1970s, it was commonly believed that a concussion only occurred when a boxer was knocked unconscious. Further, headaches were considered a normal part of a boxer's life. Unfortunately, for Ray, neither of these misconceptions are true. In fact, most concussions do not cause unconsciousness. All those years ago, when Ray suffered a first concussion followed by a constant headache, he still entered the ring less than a week later, where he suffered his second impact injury. In 1971, a test of his brain activity, called an electroencephalogram, made him ineligible to fight in New York State. But like many young athletes, Ray refused to let this stop him, and he continued to fight in other states under different names. "The two things that did me in were lack of concussion education and peer pressure," said Ray. Now Ray spends a lot of his time as an advocate for concussion awareness, visiting schools and educating young athletes about the importance of proper care after an injury.

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## Winter 2018 Rural Futures

### NEWS OF INTEREST ABOUT RURAL NEW YORK STATE

A Publication of the NYS Legislative  
Commission on Rural Resources

The NYS Legislative Commission on  
Rural Resources is a joint bipartisan  
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The Geneva native visits schools  
to educate young athletes  
about the dangers of second  
impact concussions.

*Photo Courtesy of Ray Giancaglini*

During his visits, Ray talks to young athletes, teachers, coaches, and parents about the risks of second impact injuries. He stresses the importance of correctly treating a concussion by taking a break for as long as the doctor says is necessary. When treated properly, these injuries are as treatable as any other injury that could be sustained in a game or a match. Problems arise when athletes are allowed back into sports before the first concussion has healed, Ray says, since that is when they are at risk for a second impact injury.

“We have anywhere from 6 to 10 deaths nationally every year from brain injuries in high school football. The brain is still developing, so the swelling is much more dangerous and exhaustive. We have to be a little bit more diligent and strict with our youth when it comes to concussions,” said Ray. He recognizes that young athletes tend to have a stubborn mentality, often convincing their coaches to put them back in the game before they are ready. Ray urges coaches and parents to be aware of the dangers associated with second impact injuries and remain steadfast with doctor’s orders.

Ray provides advice for all types of athletes, even scholarship recipients that are planning on pursuing their sport at the collegiate level. Often times, these athletes feel that they are under a higher level of pressure to perform, regardless of possible injury. Ray encourages them to take the proper break in order to protect their future, instead of acting on the adrenaline rush in the moment and risk a potential second injury. Most college scholarship recipients have already been evaluated by coaches, and by sitting out of a game because of an injury, student athletes are not hurting their chances at playing at a higher level. In fact, when playing injured, young athletes are not at their full capacity and are not actually helping the team, Ray argues.

“If you have a scholarship, and you step back and take a break for a concussion, you get rewarded for that—not penalized. They’ve already evaluated your talent, this isn’t going to hurt you,” Ray explained.

Ray heartily believes in the importance of youth athletics. He believes that sports build character and work ethic, both important lessons kids might not find elsewhere.

After 20 years of advocacy, Ray has had several accomplishments of which he is very proud, including raising awareness of the issue among game officials and referees. The New York State Association of Certified Football Officials has enacted two verified laws within its organization that grant member officials the right to use their discretion in two particular instances. First, an official can remove a player for a concussion evaluation. Second, an official can now also remove a player who is behaving in a manner that endangers other players on the field, and puts them at higher risk of a concussion. Ray helped tremendously in getting these rules put into place.

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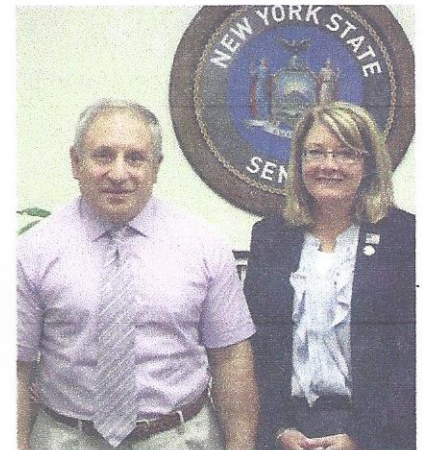


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Ray is also proud of his work in passing The Concussion Management Awareness Act in 2011. This law directs the State Health and Education departments to identify and adopt regulations for treating and monitoring students with mild traumatic brain injuries and establishing minimum guidelines in the event of a brain injury. He has received several awards recognizing his role in passing this important legislation, including the Rochester Hickok Center Community Hero Award, the Public Policy Award from the Annual Brain Injury Association of NYS, the Geneva High School Class of 1969 Positive Impact Award, and the Camp Good Days Courage Award, among others. Furthermore, the City of Geneva proclaimed December 8, 2011, to be “Ray Ciancaglini Day.”

“If I had known that I would have CTE, I would still have competed with the same dedication and tenacity. But I would have immediately addressed any symptoms of injury,” said Ray. “We’ve come a long way. Young athletes just have to be smart about it.”

For more information about second impact concussions and concussion awareness, please visit [www.thesecondimpact.com](http://www.thesecondimpact.com).



Ray and Senator Helming met in Geneva to discuss his work and concussion awareness.

## Taking a Look at Upstate Healthcare

*Attracting Medical Professionals to Rural Areas*

It is no secret that the most rural areas of New York suffer from physician shortages. As of 2016, the Healthcare Association of New York State determined that hospitals have a very difficult time recruiting primary care physicians, and often do not have enough primary care providers to meet the current needs of the population. While recently enacted telehealth laws provide critical access to medical services in our more remote communities, there is always a need for attracting more physicians to rural practice. Iroquois Healthcare Association (“IHA”), a regional trade organization and advocate for hospitals and health organizations, has taken their own steps to achieve this.

IHA’s “Take a Look” program provides an opportunity for healthcare professionals training in New York to consider practicing in upstate communities. On “Take a Look Tours,” medical residents, fellows, and students embark on three-day tours, to get to know a specific community in upstate New York and to get an idea of what it would be like to live and work there. They have just finished their fifth such tour, amidst rave reviews from the participants.

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The Spring 2017 participants visited the Finger Lakes and Central New York regions.  
Photo Courtesy of Iroquois Healthcare Association.