



**BRAIN INJURY SOCIETY OF TORONTO**



**EDUCATION**



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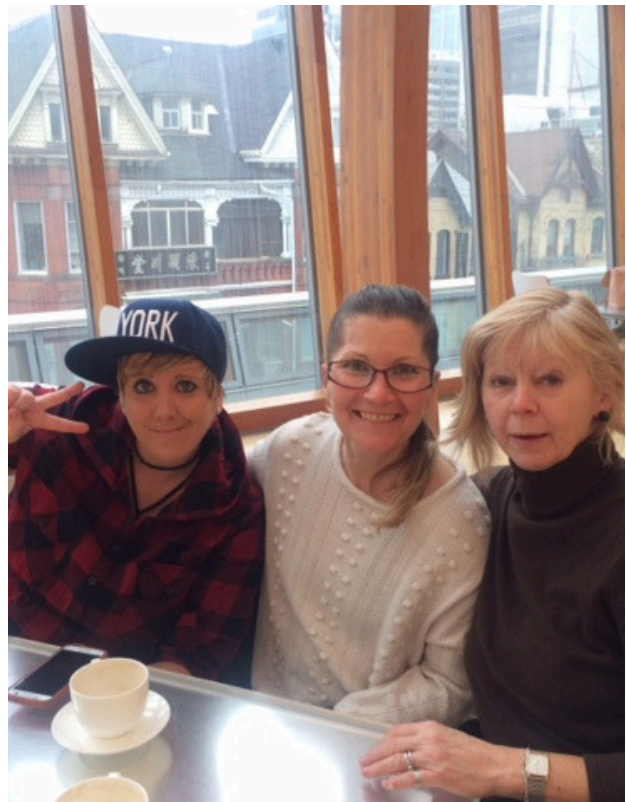
**AWARENESS**

ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ADVISORY COMMITTEES .....	4
CONFERENCES .....	5
BIST/OBIA MIX & MINGLE .....	6
5K HERO RUN, WALK & ROLL 2016 .....	8
THIRD PARY FUNDRAISING EVENTS .....	12
BIST STAFF .....	18



## ADVISORY COMMITTEES

BIST is proud to sit on two community consultative committees to bring the perspective and voices of brain injury to the table, in an effort to continue advocating for brain injury survivors and their families rights and needs.

Former BIST Board Member Cynthia Sprigings, represents BIST on Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) at the Toronto District School Board. This committee is governed by the Ministry of Education and is comprised of representatives from the community, local associations, and trustees who are all selected by the Board of Education.

SEAC meets monthly to obtain information on the special needs of exceptional students and respond to matters concerning special education programs. Representatives are also available as a resource and advocate for parents or guardians of students with exceptionalities.

### Toronto Police Service Disabilities Community Consultative Committee

BIST's Executive Director also sits on The Toronto Police Service Disabilities Community Consultative Committee's whose mandate is to assist Toronto Police Service in identifying, prioritizing and working towards solutions to issues in policing.

This committee works with the Police and Representatives from eleven social service agencies, meeting once per month at alternating locations.

Areas of consultation include:

- Officer training
- Procedure/process
- Public education/awareness
- Strategic planning

## CONFERENCES

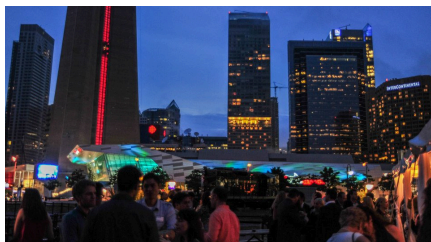
The presence of a BIST table at various conferences throughout the year help us to engage the Brain Injury Community, to learn more about what others offer and to provide information and education on BIST's supports and services. This past year, BIST was honoured to be a part of:

- Brain Injury Canada Conference, September 2016
- Toronto ABI Conference, November 2016
- UHN Conference, February 2017



## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

### BIST/OBIA MIX & MINGLE



Over the past 11 years the Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) and the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) have co-hosted the BIST/OBIA Mix & Mingle. This year's fabulous celebration of 12 incredible years of partnerships with our ABI community took place on Wednesday, June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at the Steam Whistle Brewery in Toronto, Ontario.

With more than 700 guests in attendance, this year's event was yet another huge success in raising awareness for this important cause, as well as raising funds to support the ongoing programs and services of both the Brain Injury Society of Toronto and the Ontario Brain Injury Association.

BIST's amazing Mix & Mingle Committee includes: Greg Neinstein (Chair), Nick Gurevich, Ruth Fernandes, Ellie Lapowich, Aaron Stiller, Joanne Driscoll, Terry Wilcox, Darcy Merkur, Deena Ginsberg, Erik Joffe, Jennifer Norquay, Jordan Assaraf.

A huge thank you to all our sponsors for your generous donations and continued support.

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- Will Davidson, LLP
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- Wright Rehab

## 5K HERO RUN, WALK & ROLL 2016

On October 1, 2016 we had a hero-filled, 5K extravaganza! Even though it was wet & rainy everyone was full of smiles and excitement. This year we had almost 400 participants out, SNAP Toronto News Coverage, our signature band & bouncy castle, and tons of super hero fun.

### Top Male Finishers

1. Garvin Moses
2. David Wesseling
3. Zach Fiore

### Top Female Finishers

1. Kathleen Lawrence
2. Sierra Butler
3. Kate Mazzucco

### Top Individual Fundraisers

1. David Luder
2. Ellie Lapowich
3. Ryan Murray

### Top Team Fundraisers

1. Innovative Case Management
2. Tanya's Team
3. Oatley Vigmond LLP

**Almost \$55,000 was raised to support BIST.**

Many thanks to our run committee members who volunteered their time, resources and one very early morning to help us. Run committee members: Judy Moir (chair), Michelle McDonald, Mark Lapowich, Michelle Diamond, Kate Mazzucco, Rohit Tamhane and Lindsay Charles.

A special thanks to all the runners, walkers & rollers who came out that day, our swag bag donors & **Hero 5K sponsors - we are ever so grateful for your support!**

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PERSONAL INJURY LAW



## BIRDIES FOR BRAIN INJURY 2016

On June 23, 2016 BIST held its 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Birdies for Brain Injury Tournament. It was a glorious day on the course with 100 golfers who helped us raise over \$37,000 to fund BIST's programs and services.

Special thanks to our Golf Committee who volunteered many hours to put this together: Jordan Assaraf (chair), Ryan Murray, Jeff Nunn, Rick Menessa, Colleen Worseley, Diana Rockbrune, Kat Powell

We also would like to thank our silent auction donors, participants and our sponsors – we couldn't have done this without you!



SILVER SPONSOR



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- Roar Engineering
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- Wright Rehab

### Hole –In – 1 Sponsors

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- Oatley Vigmond



### THIRD PARY FUNDRAISING EVENTS

BIST is honoured to have community members who donate their time and resources to hold third party events that raise funds for BIST. Last year, Colleen Worsely organized Beach Blast, a fun, competitive volleyball tournament with all proceeds coming to BIST. Sal Guzzo LLP also held a Rocking night at the Rock Pile with numerous bands coming out to bring awareness and funds to BIST. Both events raised approximately \$2000 and we are very grateful to everyone for their support.

## **BIST BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **Ryan Murray, Chair**

Ryan is a lawyer, mediator and arbitrator with Murray Mediation Services. Ryan spent over a decade working as a personal injury lawyer representing people who had suffered brain injuries. That experience taught Ryan that a brain injury often has a lifelong impact on both the injured person and their family.

Raising awareness about brain injury and promoting injury prevention are two of the reasons that Ryan volunteers with BIST. Ryan holds a Bachelor of Laws degree (LL.B.) and a Master of Laws degree (LL.M. – Civil Litigation and Dispute Resolution) from Osgoode Hall Law School. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from York University. Ryan is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute of Ontario.

### **Kerry MacLean, Vice Chair**

Kerry MacLean has been working with adults with Acquired Brain Injury for over 17 years. She is a Service Coordinator at Community Head Injury Resource Services (CHIRS), managing an outreach team that provides home and community support to adults living with ABI. In addition to her role at CHIRS, Kerry is the ABI System Navigator in the Central LHIN, and a member of the Central ABI Collaborative. In this role, she works to improve system access for individuals with ABI and their families. Kerry has a Bachelor's Degree in Social Welfare and has a background in addictions and mental health.

Outside of her work with ABI, Kerry is a busy mom of two boys, actively involved in her local community and enjoys pursuing her two other passions: painting and running.

### **Michelle Diamond, Past Chair**

Michelle Diamond currently works with Functionability Rehabilitation Services as the Director of Case Management and Client Services. She has worked in the field of Brain Injury for over 12 years. She graduated with her Master's Degree of Social Work, from the University of Toronto, in 2000 and began working at Toronto Rehab on the ABI service in 2001. Michelle was with Toronto Rehab for over 10 years in the capacity of Social worker, Service Coordinator and was seconded for one year to the Toronto ABI Network as Project and Referral Coordinator.

Michelle continues to work directly with clients and families living with the effects of brain injury. Michelle has been involved with BIST for two years as a volunteer on two committees; the BIAM Committee, and was a founding member of the Run Committee.

**Colleen Worsley, Secretary**

Colleen is dedicated to raising awareness and building support systems for individuals living with acquired brain injury. (ABI) Colleen is currently working with Delisle Youth Services as a Community Resource Consultant as well as continuing to work on fund raising projects in the ABI community.

She has more than 15 years of experience in the social services field. She graduated from York University with a Specialized Honours Degree in Psychology, has a certificate in Nutrition and training in Behaviour Therapy techniques. Her continuing education involves conferences, seminars, and courses focusing on advances in the understanding and treatment of ABI and spinal cord injury.

**Jordan Assaraf**

Jordan Assaraf is a lawyer at Gluckstein Personal Injury Lawyers. By being involved in contact sports his entire life, Jordan has seen how traumatic brain injuries can occur and affect not only the person who acquired the injury, but their whole family. This has led Jordan to become the personal injury lawyer he is today, and has also led him to volunteer his time and raise awareness about brain injuries by joining BIST.

Jordan's other volunteer experience includes leading his law firm's team in the annual Wheelchair Relay Race and supporting the charitable organization THREE TO BE in their efforts to assist children with neurological disorders. Jordan is committed to raising public awareness about the effects of brain injuries on victims, their families and the broader public.

**Asad Hussain**

Asad is a family member of an individual who has an Acquired Brain Injury. He has been a member of BIST for a number of years and has volunteered and spoken at previous BIST Family Retreats and other Brain Injury Conferences.

He is currently employed at the Department of Justice as a Regional Director of Finance and holds an accounting designation (CMA-CPA) and MBA (Schulich School of Business).

Asad is looking forward to bringing both his personal and professional experience to the board and the members of BIST.

In his spare time he is the proud father of a 2-year-old and an avid sports enthusiast.

**Rick Menassa**

Rick brings 27 years of business development experience working for global and Canadian technology companies in Canada and across Europe. He is the President and co-founder of, iCare Home Health, a boutique home health care co. serving Halton, Peel and the GTA region; and iCare Navigator providing Patient Advocacy and Expert Opinion regarding standard of care for persons who suffered injury, serving Ontario.

Rick is also the VP, Marketing, Pharmaceutical Innovation Ltd., a start up and creator of the InteleChip. A device that will revolutionize medicine dispensing to patients with accessibility challenges.

Making a difference is an integral part of his DNA, Rick fundraised for several organizations and continues to participate in the annual Heart & Stroke Ride for Heart, the Healing Cycle Ride in support of Palliative care, and the annual Alzheimer Society fundraising campaigns in Halton and Peel.

Serving on the BIST Board compliments Rick's passion to empower injured and aged to live with dignity and maintain the quality of life they deserve.

### **Celia Missios**

Celia Missios is the founder and author of the internationally read lifestyle blog High Heeled Life. Since 2010 she has been inspiring women worldwide with her journey of surviving what should have been a fatal accident, finding her "Joie de vivre" and creating a new life that fits the person she is today.

Celia has been a brain injury survivor for almost 9 years, and has volunteered with BIST as Peer Mentor; spoken at community meetings and is a regular editorial contributor to the blog. She is also a regular speaker for Canadian Blood Service's – Speakers Bureau. Prior to her accident Celia had a successful corporate career as Business and Market Development for a local communications firm. And volunteered her time as Chair of Fundraising Committee for an East York homeless youth shelter.

Celia believes it's not what happens to you that determines your future its how you chose to react to it. When she is not volunteering her time in the community and helping others create a healthy lifestyle that fits who they are today– she enjoys traveling; meditating; afternoon tea; self-care; yoga; writing; gardening; photography; and playing with her Yorkies, Dolce & Gabbana.

### **Josh Himmel, Treasurer**

Josh is a Senior Accountant at Lipton LLP, a mid-sized accounting firm. He has had extensive experience working with clients in the not-for-profit sector and has a strong background in the Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations (ASNPO).

Josh is hoping to apply his knowledge and expertise gained through his practices in the accounting field to the Treasurer role at BIST.

Additionally, as Josh has had a close relative suffer from ABI, he has seen the effect it has on the individual and their family members. Josh is looking forward to both raise awareness for brain injury and broaden the reach of BIST while using his professional experience in accounting to help ensure long-term growth from a financial perspective.

### **Erik Joffe**

Erik Joffe was motivated to join BIST as a result of his experience growing up working at Camp Awakening, and later on in life, as a result of his experience working with clients suffering from traumatic brain injury.

Erik has been an Associate with Neinstein LLP since joining as a summer student in 2011. He completed his Bachelor of Arts at McGill University, where he obtained a double major in Political Science and

Sociology and graduated with Distinction. He went on to graduate with a J.D. from Queen's University Law School. While at Queen's University, Erik was an active member of the Queen's Law Journal, Clinical Correctional Program, and an Executive Producer of Queen's Pro Bono Radio.

Erik is an avid traveler and spent half of his final year of law school on exchange in South Africa. He has backpacked through Nepal, Israel, South East Asia, South America and Europe. During his free time Erik also enjoys running, playing hockey and golfing.

Erik's practice is devoted to all areas of Personal Injury litigation on behalf of plaintiffs, including motor vehicle accident claims, disability claims and Canadian Pension Plan, occupier's liability claims, product liability claims, medical malpractice and accident benefit claims.

### **Alexandra Piotti**

Alexandra Piotti is a private Case Manager/ Rehabilitation Consultant working with the catastrophically injured. Her areas of expertise include working with individuals who have sustained an acquired brain injury, have complex medical needs, mental health issues, dual diagnosis and the behaviourally challenged. Alex is an advocate for her clients, dedicated to helping to ensure the best environment for maximal recovery.

Alex has been a member of BIST since 2012 and currently is the Chair of the Awareness Committee. As a member of the BIST Board, Alex hopes to bring her passion for people and service and hopes to find new ways cast a wider net to increase the presence of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto in our city.

## BIST STAFF

Melissa Vigar

### **Executive Director**

Melissa is a Registered Social Worker who has been actively working in the field of Acquired Brain Injury since 2001. Throughout her career she has provided support to survivors and the individuals who support them both in the non-profit and private sector. With collaboration and compassion being her focus, she has supervised teams and implemented trainings and programs in both community and residential settings. She is passionate about improving the quality of life for anyone who has suffered an ABI as well as ensuring that the individuals who support them are equipped with resources, education and strategies for self-care.

Outside of work, you can find Melissa in the kitchen cooking and baking with her two girls. She uses the fuel from these treats to power her other passions of hot yoga and rock climbing.

Carrie MacKinnon

### **Group Facilitator and Peer Support Coordinator**

Carrie has many years of experience providing case management, assessment and support to adults living with the effects of an acquired brain injury. She recently attained her Master of Social Work degree and is a Registered Social Worker. Through a client and family focused approach, Carrie works to promote independence, engagement, and an improved quality of life for those suffering from an ABI. Outside of work, Carrie is a busy mom of 3. She enjoys the outdoors spending time walking her Boxer, Indie, hiking and camping in the summer with her family. She also enjoys spending time in the kitchen with her daughters.

Julie Notto

### **Programs and Services Coordinator**

Julie has a post graduate certificate in adult mental health and over 10 years experience in the non-profit sector developing health and education programs for youth, adults and their families. Julie channels her passion for education and advocacy into developing programs that support individuals, and their families, dealing with physical and mental health issues to improve their quality of and zest for life. Outside of the office you can find Julie cycling through the city, playing basketball and making short films with her two boys and walking their sweet Labrador retriever Starr.

Meri Perra

### **Communications and Support Coordinator**

Meri Perra has several years of experience connecting people to resources, through her former position at Find Help Information Services. Since leaving Findhelp, she earned a diploma in journalism, worked as a contributor and assistant editor for an online parenting magazine, and held a position as a news and sports editor for a digital media company.

You can often spot Meri riding around town in her massive cargo bike with her two daughters (wearing helmets of course!). She enjoys volunteering at her kids' school and housing cooperative, and fits in power yoga in her spare time. Her new favourite past time is playing Crazy 8s with her family – a game she (re)-learned at the BIST Social Drop –In!

# BIST

**Brain Injury Society of Toronto**



**40 St. Clair Avenue East**

**Suite 205**

**Toronto, Ontario**

**M4T 1M9**

**416-830-1485**

**info@bist.ca**

**www.bist.ca**