



BIST BEACON

APRIL 2012

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Volunteer Appreciation Night— May 28
- BIST/OBIA Mix & Mingle—June 14
- Brain Injury Awareness Month Event—June 20
- BIST Annual 5km Run Walk & Roll—September 22

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

With the mild winter behind us, we hope that everyone is looking forward to an exciting spring and summer! The countdown to Brain Injury Awareness Month (June) is on, and as always, BIST has a number of exciting initiatives and events on the horizon.

Firstly, BIST is proud to announce the hiring of our new part-time staff Social Worker, Debra Fine. Debra brings lots of experience and enthusiasm to BIST, and we are certain our members and future members will benefit from her expertise. Welcome Debra! Our survivor support group and caregiver family support groups are starting up shortly. Please check out our website at www.bist.ca for more details and information. Don't forget that our volunteer appreciation night is coming up in May.

Two signature BIST events will take place in June. The first is the annual BIST/OBIA Mix and Mingle event, which will be held Thursday, June 14th at the Steam Whistle Brewery. For tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please visit our web-

site. We thank all of our wonderful and generous sponsors who have already committed to this event, including our lead sponsor, McKellar Structured Settlements. The second June event is the Awareness Month event at Nathan Phillips Square on Wednesday, June 20th. Ben Mulroney will be our special guest at this annual event which has proven to be fun for the whole family. Great music, good friends and of course the survivor VIP tent are staples of this event, which is always a wonderful opportunity to show our passion for BIST and awareness of acquired brain injury.

Finally, the AGM (which has been held in September for the past few years) will be held during our June 2012 community meeting, which is June 25, 2012. As our fiscal year end is March 31st, the Board decided that it was necessary to hold our AGM earlier in the year. This will enable us to facilitate a cleaner transition from one year to the next, especially with respect to outgoing and incoming board members, as well as with our fiscal reporting including financial statements.



Please join us on Monday, April 23, 2012 for our next community meeting at our usual location. The theme is Nutrition – something we can always strive to improve upon.

On behalf of the BIST Board of Directors, I want to thank all of our members for their continuous dedication and support to BIST. The Board wishes you all a safe and happy spring season. See you at the community meetings and the events in June!

Jonathan M. Burton, Chair of BIST Board

BIST BLOG

Make sure you check out and subscribe to BIST's blog at: www.torontobraininjuryblog.wordpress.com

We will be posting articles on monthly themes.
 April – Self-esteem/Self-worth
 May—Vocational Rehab & Return to Work
 June—Brain Injury Awareness

Don't miss out on having these articles delivered directly to your inbox!

torontobraininjuryblog



Monthly preview: BIST takes on winter

Posted on [January 5, 2012](#)
Canadian winters.

Love them or hate them, there is no denying that winters and Canadians' struggle against the extreme conditions that they bring are part of what defines us. Look no further than a 2008 survey commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada and the Dominion Institute. With icons such as the Maple Leaf, hockey and the Canadian flag topping the list of the 100 things that best define this country, those surveyed still had winter on their minds and ranked it 89th on the list.

Recent Posts
 • Monthly preview: BIST takes on winter
 • THE OLD STORY
 • What the CBC says— Physiological health
 • Christmas Canada
 • Questions and Answers: ERB's last
 • New Interview
 • BIST Caregiver Workshop

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WHAT EVERY ABI SERVICE PROVIDER NEEDS TO KNOW: TWO PERSPECTIVES

The Survivor Perspective: What Works

-Mychal Reeves

Mychal Reeves is a 22-year-old ABI survivor who had a brain tumour removed in 2001. Today, Mychal is a college graduate who is pursuing an arts-related career. He recently reflected on how diverse the range of ABI challenges are in each individual, as well as 'what worked' during his recovery.

Processing: To help with processing, I found it helpful if the service worker would ask questions, filling in the blanks when trying to clarify or jog my memory.

Engagement: In rehabilitation efforts, simple tools such as stir sticks, spatulas and building supplies (marshmallows and toothpicks), helped improve my fine motor skills as well as my cooking and social skills. The activity-based approach helps clients engage in the rehab while practicing their skills through repetitive exercises.

Insight: I found it helpful to learn how the brain works and how it's affected by an ABI. Through peer groups and meetings, I also had a chance to meet other survivors.

The Provider Perspective: Life After Brain Injury

-Valerie Lusted, MSW, RSW

Valerie Lusted is a Social Worker for Family Support Service, Brain Injury Rehab Team (BIRT), Holland-Bloorveiw Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Her current, community-based practice is serving adolescents and young adults living with ABI and their families. Her team offers individual, family and community resource counseling as well as various groups and workshops. Contact Valerie at her email: vlusted@hollandbloorview.ca

When I was younger and more naïve and just near the beginning of my career, I met my very first ABI survivor. His name was Leo and he was married, had a couple of kids and a wife named Bonny. He had sustained a very severe Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) and was undergoing extensive rehabilitation at a nearby inpatient unit. I wondered what the future held for him and his family as I'd

watch him work with his therapists. I wondered how he'd ever be able to return to "Life After [In patient] Rehab". What I didn't really know then, (but what I've come to appreciate many years later), is that 'real rehab' starts when the client leaves the institution.

Eager to learn, I remember latching on to the "Whatever it Takes" (WIT) model for community-based services for people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). Although it was first presented as a new concept in 1994, I believe even with the ever-changing health care environmental demands, that its principles are still relevant to this day.

For me, the WIT model incorporates "what every ABI service provider needs to know" when embarking on a new case.

The model proposed that most persons living with ABI want to be able to determine their own goals and make informed choices about their ongoing rehabilitation. The WIT model also emphasized that true community integration and participation in Life [after brain injury] requires the development of programs and interventions that are both practical and innovative. In this regard, the Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST), with the help of its members, staff, Board Members, volunteers and as a member-driven, 'grass roots' organization, appears to be 'on the right track'!

WIT's principles include:

- *No two individuals with Acquired Brain Injury are alike.*
- *Skills are more likely to generalize when taught in the environment where they are to be used.*
- *Environments are easier to change than people.*
- *Community integration should be holistic.*
- *Life is a place-and-train venture.*
- *Natural supports last longer than professionals.*
- *Interventions must not do more harm than good.*
- *The service system presents many of the barriers to community integration.*
- *Respect for the individual is paramount.*

Needs of the individual last a lifetime...so should their resources.

Over the past several decades since I first met Leo, the services and resources available to people living with ABI have evolved and changed.

WHAT EVERY ABI SERVICE PROVIDER NEEDS TO KNOW: TWO PERSPECTIVES—CONTINUED

As a BIST member, I'd invite you to reflect on these emerging questions:

- How does BIST measure up against WIT's principles?
- Do you know frontline providers who demonstrate an ongoing commitment to WIT's principles?
- If you are an ABI survivor, are you involved in supporting advocacy efforts to enhance the knowledge and services for people living with ABI and their families?
- What do you think needs to change in terms of the 'political will' in order to have WIT's principles more closely realized?
- If you are an ABI service provider, how do you integrate WIT's principles into your practice?

As a service provider, I wish I had a crystal ball so that I could see how Leo and his family are doing today. I feel privileged to be working as a community-based provider serving ABI clients and their families. My ability to honour WIT's principles in my practice has not always been

perfect, but they certainly keep me grounded. They help anxious families know that what they see in their own coping and their loved ones' strengths and challenges the day of discharge, does not mean that 'rehab is over'.

Life evolves. Life can present new opportunities for learning and growing. Most of us learn from our past mistakes. Why should ABI survivors and their families be any different? The day we become too complacent, too passive, too uninvolved, too isolated is the real day of discharge. Strive to keep growing as a service provider. If something is working, do more of it. If something (or someone) is not working, try something (or someone) different.

Talk to other ABI survivors. Listen for the wisdom of other family members. Never stop believing in yourself, your clients and their families and what you can accomplish together. You may just need to take a detoured route on your Life After ABI journey.

FACEBOOK AND TWITTER



Check it out by searching for
Brain Injury Society of
Toronto



You can also follow BIST on
Twitter at @BrainInjuryTO

Feel free to send submissions to info@bist.ca

Have you had a Stroke or Brain Injury?

Get Free Therapy by participating in our research study!

We are comparing the benefits of two forms of rehabilitation

Eligible people will be tested before and after the therapy and financial compensation will be provided for study participation

For more information, call the
Rehabilitation Study: 416-785-2500 ext 3377

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3560 Bathurst Street Toronto M6A2E1

BIST/OBIA ANNUAL MIX & MINGLE

Join us on Thursday June 14th, 2012 for a very special evening.

For the past seven years, the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA) and the Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) have co-hosted a special gathering to celebrate the members who work alongside us in our very important cause: to support those in our community who are living with the effects of acquired brain injury (ABI), along with their families, friends and caregivers, through advocacy, education, and services.

Some of the programs we deliver include:

- Peer Support Mentoring Programs
- Caregiver workshops
- Monthly Community meetings for members and their families
- Connection to other brain injury services and organizations through an on-line Directory of ABI Services
- Certificate Training Programs
- Support and Advocacy through our 1-800-263-5404 helpline

This annual event has been very successful in raising awareness of this important cause, as well as raising funds to support our ongoing programs and services.

OBIA and BIST will continue to build on the successes of the past. Please join us for a very special evening.

Date: Thursday June 14th, 2012

Time: 5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Location: Steam Whistle Brewery - 255 Bremmer Blvd, Toronto, ON M5V 3M9

Please contact Terry Wilcox (800-263-5404) for further information.

[DOWNLOAD REGISTRATION FORM](#)



Special thanks to Presenting Sponsor:



UPCOMING EVENTS

Family/Caregiver Workshop

Securing the Future of those you care about

Presenter: Todd Gottlieb, LLB

Date: Monday April 16th, 2012

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

Five Pin Bowling

Date: Tuesday May 8th, 2012

Location: Thorncliffe Bowlerama, East York Town Centre, 45 Overlea Blvd.

Time: 12:30pm – 3pm

Price: \$8.50 (for two games of bowling)

BIST/OBIA Mix and Mingle

Date: Thursday June 14th, 2012

Time: 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Brain Injury Awareness Month Event

Date: Wednesday June 20th, 2012

Location: Nathan Philips Square

Time: 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

BIST Summer Picnic

Date: Monday July 23rd, 2012

Time: 6:00 pm–8:00 pm

BIST Annual 5km Run Walk & Roll

Date: Saturday September 22nd, 2012

Location: Sunnybrook Park

Time: 10:00 am

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Darcy Merkur

How long have you been a member of BIST? About 10 years.

What is your volunteer role with BIST? I am a long-standing member of the Brain Injury Awareness Month Planning Committee (now known as the Awareness Committee I believe)

What motivated you to become a volunteer with BIST? Wanting to help raise public awareness of Brain Injury and wanting to help develop a sense of community for survivors.

What is the best part of being a BIST volunteer? Collaborating with the survivor community on a rewarding awareness event.

Why do you think it is important to volunteer? To give back something to the community and become a better person.

What would you say to potential volunteers? That volunteering is very rewarding on many levels and gives you a good feeling inside.

How do you balance work, life and volunteering? Balancing priorities is always a challenge, but volunteering is an important part of that balance.

What is your favourite book? Can I say "Confederacy of Dunces" or is that politically incorrect (hope not--it is hilarious).

What is your favourite movie? Can't go wrong with the Godfather I or II.

What other activities are of interest to you? Love all summer sports, like golf, tennis and baseball.

What is the most important thing you have learned through volunteering with BIST? That people are inherently good but some are often not understood due to lack of public awareness.



“To give back something to the community and become a better person. “

UPCOMING COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Monday April 23rd, 2012
 Nutrition - Healthy Eating of a Fixed Income.
 Aimee Hayes – Dietitian
 Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
 Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

Monday May 28th, 2012
 Volunteer Appreciation Event
 Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
 Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

June 25th, 2012
 Annual General Meeting
 Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm
 Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

IAN'S STORY

I grew up on the northwest side of Toronto: near Jane and Sheppard. My early life was fairly typical. I was active and tried to be athletic; there were a few minor incidents, but I was mostly fairly healthy. I did well in school. Most of my knowledge about the human body came from classes and books. I remember reading when I was very young that nerve cells do not reproduce, so brain damage cannot heal like other parts of the body. Since then, I've learned through personal experience that the brain can heal much more effectively than was previously thought, and it's become something of a personal crusade to correct this misconception wherever I find it.

My degrees are in pastoral studies, from a Bible college in Chicago, and geography: a master's from the Pennsylvania State University. I had finished my schooling less than two years before my Accident (and yes, in my mind, the word is capitalized). I travelled a bit as a young adult, finally getting my first real job in Arkansas. I bought a house in Little Rock, and on the Saturday of Easter weekend, 2001, while travelling home in a rain-storm, I hydroplaned and slammed sideways into a bridge support. I was whisked to the hospital but had suffered significant damage to a number of bones and internal organs. I'm rather glad that I don't remember the healing process for most of this: I was in a coma for 45 days, and by the time I could understand what had happened I was mostly healed.

The day I woke from my coma was a Tuesday. I started therapy the next day: physical, emotional, cognitive and speech therapies that were intended to help me to reclaim my old life. At first it was hard to participate: I thought that since "brain damage" doesn't get better, there was no point in working against the inevitable. I was started on antidepressants that weekend, and by Monday I was at least willing to try. I think that was the first turning point in my recovery: once I discovered that I could get better, I wanted to see how much better I could get.

Initially, the memory loss associated with my Accident spanned over two years. I thought I was living in Pennsylvania: when the doctors told me I was in Arkansas, I didn't believe them. I thought it was all part of an elaborate hoax. But I accepted the parts of my life that were gone: and, over time, I was able to reclaim most of them. As technical manager at a firm that specialized in geographic analysis, it took some time to completely return to my job. But I still remember the day (several



years later) when one of my coworkers said that, from what he could see, I had completely recovered. I was assisted in this by friends, doctors and therapists who worked in the area. I was involved with the Brain Injury Support Group of Central Arkansas for several years, speaking on the subject and assisting with fund-raisers. They helped me to fully understand the long-term ramifications to my injury and to develop coping strategies that helped me to live an active, functional life.

I moved back to Toronto a few years later. I found significant difficulty balancing the implications of my injury with the necessities of life in a new locale. I left one job because my boss was unwilling to work with me regarding the difficulties and needs I encountered at work. My current job is with the Ontario government, doing similar work to what I did in Arkansas. Discovering BIST a couple of years ago, I'm now the chair of the Communications Committee and actively involved in many aspects of the group. Most people will know me as the guy with the camera: some years ago I found that I could use my interest in photography to help me to remember things better. I take pictures not only to document an event for others, but for myself.

It took time to move from where I considered my Accident to be the end of my old life to where I could think of it as the beginning of something new. There were, and are, several factors that have been important in the process. One is the support of friends, family and professionals who helped me to move in the right direction. Another is a lifelong sense of learning, which I believe is one of the things that helped my brain to be sufficiently pliable to be reclaim some of what had been lost. And third is a positive outlook, which helped to focus on the bright side of life that sometimes seemed very dim. With these outlooks, I've not only reclaimed much of what I lost, but I've developed new perspectives that otherwise would have been hidden.

FAMILY & CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

This BIST support group allows caregivers and families supporting individuals living with the effects of brain injury to meet others with similar experiences. The group offers valuable emotional support, information and resources and will enable you to meet new friends, become more familiar with resources in the community, and provide an environment where positive and negative feelings can be expressed without judgment from others. The sessions will be facilitated by BIST Social Worker Debra Fine.

Topics will include:

- Grief and depression
- Changing roles
- Managing stress and emotions
- Effective communication strategies
- Relationships and intimacy
- Taking care of yourself
- Time and budget management



Starting Tuesday April 24th, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm (4th Tuesday of every month). Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd

To Register or learn more about the program, please contact Kat Powell, Programs and Services Coordinator at: (416)-830-1485 or connections@bist.ca.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN TORONTO

Earth Day

Join us at Evergreen Brick Works for a whole host of eco-activities for the family, including a vegan food fare at the farmers' market, a tree tour in the quarry led by LEAF, a public tree planting on site and live music.

<http://ebw.evergreen.ca/whats-on/special-events/earth-day>



Doors Open Toronto

For one weekend a year, buildings across Toronto open their doors to the public during the Doors Open Toronto festival. This year's festival theme is photography and architecture.

Past participating buildings have included Old and New City Hall, Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre, Union Station, St. Andrew's Church, Corus Entertainment and more.

May 26, 2012 - May 27, 2012



BIST BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

June is Brain Injury Awareness Month.

The Brain Injury Society of Toronto is proud to present

Brainstock

Wednesday June 20th, 2012

12:00 pm–2:00 pm at Nathan Phillips Square

With the musical talents of

The Jerry Stiff Band and Superfire



Special Guest Ben Mulroney



Photo Courtesy of CTV

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

Call for Personal Stories AND for Speakers

Here's your chance to tell your story to an audience that may never have heard of acquired brain injury. We are hoping to collect enough personal stories to create a booklet for distribution at the Awareness Event.

We are also looking to choose two speakers to tell their stories at the Brain Injury Awareness Event to promote brain injury awareness.

Who is eligible? Any survivor or family member who is a member of BIST (membership is \$5/year for survivors) can submit their story. If you want to speak at the event, you must be able to commit to attend the June Event. You can ask someone to tell your story on your behalf.

What kind of speech or story? Your speech must be pre-written, about 10-15 minutes in length, and convey a positive message about brain injury. Please note that the Speakers Series will take place in a small tent, not on the main stage.

How do I enter? Submit your story in writing to brainstock2012@gmail.com by May 14, 2012. Be sure to include your name and contact information as well as a brief description of who you are (250 words).

What happens next? The BIST Awareness Committee members will choose the stories for inclusion in the booklet.

For the Speakers Series, the committee will choose 4 candidates, and invite them to speak at a BIST Monday Community Meeting. They will be the only entrants who are contacted individually, but the results will be posted on the BIST website www.bist.ca.

The audience at the meeting will then choose the winning two candidates, and they will be the featured speakers at the June Awareness Event.

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

Call for Artists

Here's your chance to showcase your artwork!

Display your art at the Awareness Event

We're looking for artists to display their work at Nathan Phillip Square on June 20th 2012 from 12-2pm during the BIST Brain Injury Awareness Event.

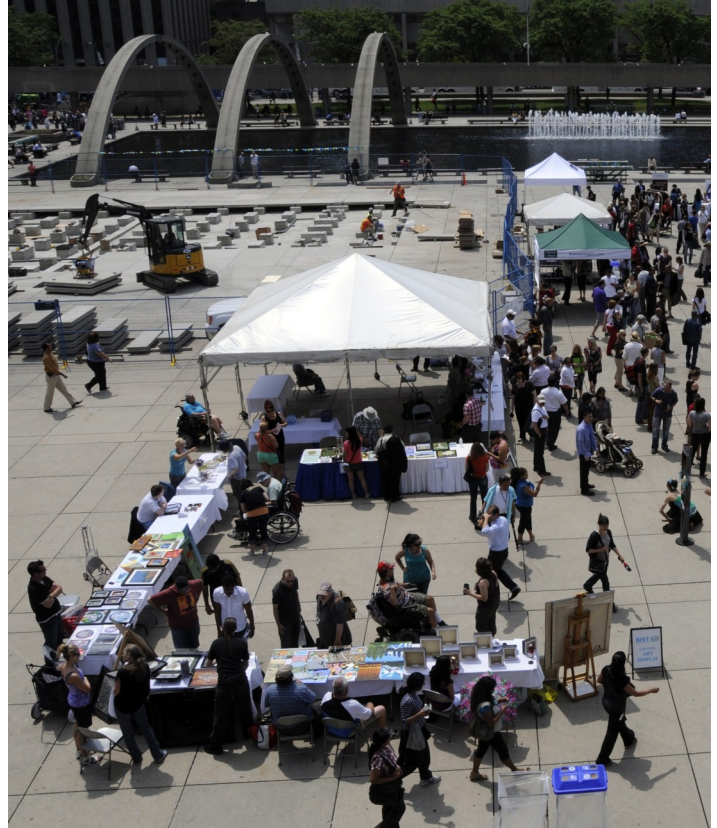
Who is eligible? All artists who are able to bring and display their work.

Do I have to be a survivor? No, all artists are welcome.

What kind of art? Any visual art that can be displayed in an open-air format. You will be responsible to transport and display your work.

How do I enter? Email Vivian Ng at brain-stock2012@gmail.com or call 416-480-4854.

What is the cost? FREE! but you must follow some rules. These will be explained when your reservation is confirmed.



BIST ANNUAL 5KM RUN WALK AND ROLL

After the huge success of our First Annual 5km Run, Walk & Roll, The Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) is excited to be planning this year's event.

Save the date!

Date: Saturday September 22nd, 2012

Race Time: 10:00 am

Location: Sunnybrook Park – Entrance on West side of Leslie and north of Eglinton

Visit www.bistrun.com for registration information or to become a sponsor.

5K Run, Walk & Roll



September 22, 2012

SPRING WORD SEARCH PUZZLE



WORDS TO FIND IN SPRING WORD PUZZLE:

- | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| APRIL | BABIES | BLOOMING |
| BLOSSOMS | FLOWERS | GROWTH |
| MARCH | MAY | PLANTS |
| RAIN | RENEWAL | SEASON |
| SPRING | SUNSHINE | WARM |

Courtesy of www.best-free-word-search-puzzles.com

The mission of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto is to enhance the quality of life for people in the City of Toronto, living with the effects of acquired brain injury, through education, awareness, support and advocacy.

Our services include:

- Community Meetings
- Support Groups
- Personal Development Workshops
- Peer Support Mentoring
- Special events

For more information, volunteer opportunities or to make a donation, please visit www.bist.ca or 416-830-1485

BIST is proudly supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.



Ontario Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

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The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario