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**Upcoming Community Meetings:**

February 28, 2011

March 28, 2011

**Upcoming Events:**

Volunteer Appreciation Evening – April 2011

## Greetings from the Board

Happy New Year from the Board of Directors!

2010 was a year of change for BIST, and the Board is excited for all the wonderful events and opportunities that promise to make 2011 our best year yet. The Board and all BIST members are excited for the following in 2011: various new programs and services; new fundraising events; interesting and fun community meetings; holiday events; and the big awareness month event in June.

The upcoming launch of our Caregiver Support Group will give BIST a unique, and in the Board's opinion, necessary program for family and friends of brain injury survivors. The Board is also taking steps to hold a fundraising "walk/run" event in September 2011. Details will follow in future BIST Beacon newsletters.

The new BIST website is up and running and the feedback has been terrific. Please visit [www.bist.ca](http://www.bist.ca) and check out the great updated content, information and improved donation tool.

In order to support all this activity and the new programs that are being planned, BIST will need the support of all its members and the ABI community. We will be seeking new volunteers to help us with this work. Please see the Call for Volunteers in this newsletter. We will also require sufficient funds to support the programs and are therefore investigating a number of different fund development opportunities. As a start to this, an email donation drive this holiday season raised approximately \$3,000.00 from people within and outside of the brain injury community. We believe there are a great many other fundraising opportunities for BIST and we hope that you will support us as you are able.

We are excited to announce the hiring of our new Community Facilitator, Michelle McDonald. Michelle was selected from a pool of many qualified and dynamic applicants, and BIST is so fortunate to have such a dedicated new staff member. Kat Powell continues as our Program Facilitator in 2011. Kat is a huge asset to BIST and anyone who has met or worked with her knows how dedicated she is to BIST's mission.

The Board of Directors wishes all BIST members, including potential members and those who have given generously to BIST this holiday season, a healthy, happy and successful 2011.

Yours very truly,

Jonathan M. Burton, Chair

## BIST welcomes Michelle McDonald

BIST is pleased to announce that Michelle McDonald has joined the team as of November 2010. As Community Facilitator, Michelle will be taking on the role of coordinating and enhancing the BIST website, as well as developing a plan for BIST going forward. She will work closely with the Board of Directors and our committees to develop new opportunities for the growth and reach of BIST's programs and services.

Michelle brings with her a wealth of experience from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario where she worked for many years in the Health Information/Health Promotion sector. Michelle is looking forward to working with the members and volunteers of BIST. If you would like to share any comments or suggestions with Michelle please contact her at 416-830-1485 or [info@bist.ca](mailto:info@bist.ca)

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## Call for Volunteers

As you may be able to tell from this newsletter, BIST has a lot of exciting things planned this year and we need your help.

We are looking for dedicated volunteers to help BIST develop and launch new programs, plan and host exciting new events this year, and enhance our awareness campaigns.

If you are able to commit your time and your passion to this worthy cause and if you are interested in any of the following opportunities, please plan to attend the January 24, 2011 BIST Community Meeting to find out more about volunteering with BIST or contact BIST at [info@bist.ca](mailto:info@bist.ca) or by calling 416-830-1485. Someone from the volunteer committee will be in touch and will help you find the right fit for you and for BIST.

### **Current Opportunities:**

1. Develop and Facilitate Personal Development Workshops as part of a session of 9 workshops on topics such as returning to work, managing relationships, etc. You will be responsible to develop and deliver a 2-2.5 hour workshop for adults with an acquired brain injury. You will need to have experience facilitating workshops, working with individuals with special needs, and have knowledge of programs and services available in the community for participants to access to gain further assistance or information.
2. Join the Program and Services Committee to assist with developing, planning, implementing, overseeing the programs & services that BIST offers to its members.
3. Plan and support the delivery of the monthly community meetings. You will work with the Facilitator of the community meetings to plan upcoming themes, arrange appropriate speakers, set up the room and arrange for the refreshments. You will be required to work with other volunteers to ensure

this all gets done in a timely fashion. This opportunity requires that you are able to attend the monthly meetings.

4. Join the Fund Raising Committee to help develop a new fund raising strategy for 2011/12. The committee will be researching new fund raising opportunities and identify best practices to guide its on-going work. You will need to have experience with fund development and be able to work with the team to build on the successful initiatives already underway and seek new opportunities to support BIST's continued growth.
5. Join the Communications Committee to assist with the compilation of the BIST Beacon, potential blog updates, web site management and overall communication strategies. Ideally this committee is looking for someone with a public relations, communications and/or marketing background.

Additional volunteer opportunities are expected soon so please visit the 'Volunteer Opportunities' page of our website [www.bist.ca](http://www.bist.ca) often to find the right opportunity for you to use your skills.

We expect you will find this a rewarding and meaningful experience and hope that you will gain as much from volunteering with BIST as we will from your involvement and support.

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## Upcoming Community Meetings

**Date: Monday February 28th, 6:00\* pm - 8:00 pm**

**Focus:** Laugh it up – Lighten up

**Guest Speaker:** Jacquie Hermans

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

**Date: Monday March 28th, 6:00\* pm - 8:00 pm**

**Focus:** Emotional Well-being

**Guest Speaker:** Michele Meehan

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

**\*Please note the new start time for the meetings.**

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## Upcoming Events

**Volunteer Appreciation Evening**

**Date: April 2011**

Volunteers are an important part of BIST and we rely on their dedication and compassion to deliver services and support to our members. In recognition of their involvement and commitment, a volunteer appreciation evening is being planned for April. More detailed information will be available closer to the date.

## Halloween Party

Halloween 2010 was celebrated a couple of weeks early for the BIST crowd, and we enjoyed it no matter the time. We shared a Spooktacular evening with our friends at CHIRS, and we all had a blast. Most of us dressed up in some variation of the weird or wonderful, scary or silly. There were witches and jailbirds, mass murderers and hippies. The band was called "The Faded Genes". They played all night and they kept us all entertained. There were prizes for the best costume, and the best dancer. It was a very fun night, and it was good to re-establish connections with people we hadn't seen for a while.



## Caregiver/Family Member Support Groups

Do you have a loved one living with the effects of an acquired brain injury? Would you like to find support, share information and resources with other family members/caregivers who have similar experiences?

If so, this Caregiver Support Group may be the right fit for you.

The purpose of this group is to provide a venue for the connections between friends and family members of individuals with ABI for mutual support and the sharing of thoughts and feelings related to a number of caregiver related topics (e.g., taking on the caregiver roll, self-care, managing emotions related to lifestyle changes, etc).

### Session Information

The sessions will be facilitated by two Social Workers with extensive experience working in a community based practice with individual and families living with the effects of ABI. 9 evening meetings – meetings will be held on the 2nd Monday of each month starting on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

A maximum of 12 participants

Adults 18+

Caregiver, family members, friends

Meetings held at Epilepsy, Toronto (468 Queen St. East, Suite 210)

There is no fee for this program, however participants must be members of BIST

(participants can become members of BIST during the registration process)

To register or learn more about the program, please contact Kat Powell, BIST Programs and Services Coordinator at: (647) 990-1485 or by email at [connections@bist.ca](mailto:connections@bist.ca)

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## Peer Support Mentoring Program (BIST & OBIA)

The program is recruiting new Mentors for the Spring 2011 Training Session that will be taking place in April/May.

The Peer Support Mentoring Program for People Living with ABI connects an individual who is a "veteran" of a life experience involving Acquired Brain Injury (the "Mentor"), with a "Partner" who is coping with a similar ABI-related situation and is in need of support from a knowledgeable friend. Both Mentors and Partners can be survivors, unpaid caregivers or family members.

Mentor/Partner matches are based on similar experiences and/or demographics and personal interests. Most of the mentoring will be conducted over the telephone (some by e-mail), making it possible for anyone in Ontario to participate.

As a Mentor, you can help others by sharing your experiences, relevant information and resources, as well as provide much needed support. Mentoring offers an excellent opportunity to help others during their recovery while learning new skills and making new acquaintances.

As a Partner, you can learn from someone who has been there. Whether you are a survivor or a family member, you can be matched with a Mentor at any time after injury, from acute care to the return home. Your mentor can even help you with situations that may arise many years after the injury.

For further information, or if you are interested in becoming a mentor or a partner, please contact **Kat Powell, Peer Support Coordinator** for the GTA at (647) 990-1485 or [connections@bist.ca](mailto:connections@bist.ca)

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## Christmas Party

The BIST Christmas Party was once again successful, with over forty BIST members in attendance. We played games, sang carols, socialized and snacked on gingerbread and drinks. Probably the most fun was the game where we had to guess a "person" (fiction or real) whose name was stuck on our backs. And, of course, pin the carrot nose on the snowman. With a surprise visit from Santa, the evening was complete.





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## Art Contest!

BIST is looking to its members for inspiration!

We are looking to feature a member's work of art, whether it is a painting, photograph, collage etc. on our website, greeting cards and tribute cards. The contest is open to all BIST members and please feel free to submit more than one entry. Just create your masterpiece, take a clear photo and submit.

There is a great prize for the winner!

**All submissions can be made to Michelle McDonald, Community Facilitator at [info@bist.ca](mailto:info@bist.ca)**

Judging will be done by the Board of Directors and the winner will be contacted by email.

**Contest Deadline: March 1st 2011**

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## Are you looking for the perfect way to show your Valentine you care?

With February 14th fast approaching, BIST is offering you the chance to send your loved ones a Valentine that will stand out from the rest!

Choose to support BIST by making a donation, and select "In Tribute" to send loved ones a Valentine's Day card in time for the big day. You can even customize your card with a special Valentine's Day message.

**So this year, skip the chocolates and roses - and instead choose to give a meaningful gift – a donation to BIST will enhance the quality of life for persons in Toronto living with the effects of ABI through education, awareness, and support.**

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## Blog Information

The BIST communication committee is investigating a BIST BLOG and we welcome the membership's feedback.

### **Definition of a BLOG:**

*a BLOG is a website that allows users to reflect, share opinions, and discuss various topics in the form of an online journal while readers may comment on posts*

Please send your comments or suggestions to [info@bist.ca](mailto:info@bist.ca)

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## Membership News

The BIST Board would like to congratulate **Ian Bowles** on his Spirit Award from the Ontario Public Service regarding his volunteer efforts with BIST.

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## BIST's New Website

We have a new website! Visit [www.bist.ca](http://www.bist.ca) to see the new format. Be sure to check back often for the latest news and upcoming BIST events and new content for survivors, families and caregivers, as well as children and youth. We would also like to feature survivor stories and welcome submissions from our members.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the site or would like to share your story, please contact **Michelle McDonald, Community Facilitator at** [info@bist.ca](mailto:info@bist.ca)

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## Open Call for Submissions

Have any story ideas or submissions for the newsletter? Please send contributions to [newsletter@bist.ca](mailto:newsletter@bist.ca)