

BIST

Brain Injury Society of Toronto



ANNUAL REPORT

2022 - 2023

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BIST Board Members, staff and volunteers at the ABI Network Conference, November 2022.

MESSAGE

FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BIST BOARD



ALEXANDRA PIOTTI

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto, I am pleased to offer this Message from the Chair in support of the Annual Report for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023.

I want to begin by acknowledging the passion and commitment of Board members who served as Directors this past year:

- Darrell Booker
- Lara Fitzgerald-Husek
- Alison Foo
- Andre Gadbois
- Gazel Kukreja
- Dr. Hiten Lad
- Dr. Carolyn Lemsky
- Aaron Palmer
- Samantha Shatz
- Dr. Milan Unarket

I would also like to acknowledge staffing changes during this fiscal year.

At the beginning of 2023, we said goodbye to Melissa Vigar, our CEO, as she resigned her position to pursue new career opportunities. In her place, the Board was pleased to announce that Laura Bellon accepted an offer in the role of Chief Executive Officer, and has done so fearlessly. We are looking forward to seeing all the wonderful things Laura will accomplish in her new role. We also welcomed Keisha Appiah-Kubi in the role of Community Coordinator in the Intimate Partner Violence program, and a change in the Homeless Prevention Program to our current staff member Neha Mistry.

Year after year, BIST continues to find ways to spread awareness and education to new community partners. On March 30, 2023, Laura Bellon and Meri Perra were invited to speak at the ABI Justice Conference where they had an opportunity to educate shelter staff, and corrections officers on the effects of brain injuries, and how to support those individuals that may find themselves justice involved.

At this time I would like to take this opportunity in my fiscal address, to reflect on my last year as Chair of the Board of Directors and my final term on the board. I have met so many wonderful people over the last six years, and have made truly lasting friendships. I am continually amazed at what this organization can accomplish with limited funds and sheer will power.

I want to thank all of you, our members, for always making me feel welcomed, and for allowing me to be a part of this great community. I am truly honoured. BIST is a unique organization, and for many, it is a safe place where they can be their true authentic selves. In some ways, BIST has also been a safe place for me, a place I could grow both personally and professionally. And for that I am forever grateful. THANK YOU, BIST!

I would like to thank those Board members who will be leaving the board this year with me. Thank you, Dr. Hiten Lad - Co-Chair and Darrell Booker - Secretary, for your contributions to the organization and commitment to BIST. Although we will no longer be a part of the Board of Directors, I am certain you will see us around. When you do, please be sure to say hi.

Finally, the Board of Directors and I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our Corporate Sponsors. Without their continued support, BIST could not continue to provide the high-quality programming we have become known for.

ALEXANDRA PIOTTI



Left to right: Board Members Alex Piotti, Gazal Kukreja, Dr. Hiten Lad and Darrell Booker at our 2022 Summer Picnic

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT



LAURA BELLON

As apart of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto's mission and values, BIST continues to work towards enhancing the quality of life for people in the City of Toronto who live with the effects of brain injury. We are committed to working hard to advocate, educate, support and spread awareness of Brain Injury through workshops, member created initiatives, outings, and direct support, to provide those in our community with a better quality of life.

BIST has been able to continue to offer Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) groups, Case Coordination for stabilization of medical, financial, food security, and housing needs for our members, ongoing Support Group programming, and delivery of programs such as 'Freaky Fridays', client lead programs.

This year has seen many changes. In the start of 2023, our CEO Melissa Vigar completed six years of leadership to begin a new career path. The dedication and hard work that Melissa put into BIST, allowed for the expansion of programming and funding for Case Coordination through her endless grant writing. Her hard work and drive will be greatly missed. Along with the change in leadership, BIST also saw changes in staffing for the Intimate Partner Violence Program, and the Homeless Prevention Program. The new staff were trained to help continue to grow and advocate for the members at BIST.

HIGHLIGHTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS OF BIST OVER THE PAST YEAR INCLUDE:

Trainings and Consultations:

BIST has provided trainings for the Toronto Police Mobile Crisis and Intervention Team (MCIT), a group of police officers and nurses who respond to emergency crisis situations in the community. During this year, training was presented by Alex Brazen, a BIST member speaking about lived experience, tips and strategies to support those in crisis with a Brain Injury, along with Melissa Vigar, and myself.

On April 12 2022, BIST participated in the City of Toronto Training a continuation of the previous years trainings on the anatomy and prevalence of Brain Injury In Vulnerable populations.

On September 30 2022, BIST participated at the 5th Annual Conference on Probation and Parole in Ottawa about www.abijustice.org.

Student Placements:

BIST supports the placement of student learners as apart of the mission to help educate and spread awareness in the community about Brain Injury, and as an equitable partnership, BIST is able to offer functional community support to our members.

During this year, 27 students from Toronto Metropolitan University, University of Toronto MSW program, Wilfred Laurier MSW program, Mohawk College and George Brown, completed placements along side the IPV Program Coordinators and Homeless Prevention Coordinators, learning case management skills, grant writing, support group facilitation, as well as practicing practiced community trainings on ABI.

Hidden Disability Symbol Campaign

Along with Brain Injury Canada and advocate Laura Brydges, BIST is a co-founder of the Movement for Canada to adopt a nationally recognized Hidden Disability Symbol. The purpose of this symbol is to help act as a tool for self-advocacy, and social, cultural, and systemic transformation. Information regarding the Hidden Disability Campaign can be found here. <https://hdscanada.wordpress.com> Meri Perra worked on this campaign on behalf of BIST.

With BIST's support, the movement has grown to include 36 allie-organizations across the country.

The definition of hidden disabilities is recognized in the *Accessible Canada Act* as "any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment – or a functional limitation – whether permanent, temporary or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interactions with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society."

In the Spring of 2022, MP Chandra Arya, Napean, presented a petition to the federal government with double the amount of required signatures, asking for support of the nationally recognized symbol. The petition was tabled.

In response, BIST, with support by placement students and Laura Brydges, organized an extensive social media awareness campaign leading up to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Messages were sent to the Honourable Carla Qualtrough, then Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

Toronto Police Beyond Disability Community Consultative Committee

BIST continues to contribute to the above committee, comprised of community agencies that are working with the Toronto Police to spread awareness on the challenges people with various abilities face, particularly when dealing with law enforcement and EMS. During this past year, several topics were introduced during the meetings to highlight the various groups and participants concerns. I have taken part in this committee to ensure the needs of people living with the effects of brain injury continue to be represented.

FOCUS Toronto

The mandate of the committee is to assist Toronto Police Services in identifying, prioritizing and working towards solutions to issues in policing. BIST staff Isabelle Rivaletto sat at two Focus Toronto tables during the past fiscal year.

Focus tables are a City of Toronto, United Way Greater Toronto and Toronto Police Service initiative that aims to reduce risk, harm, crime, and victimization and improve community resiliency and wellbeing. BIST received over five referrals through the Focus Tables to support individuals with Brain Injury.

The Toronto ABI Network Advisory Committee

The Toronto ABI Network helps hospitals and community-based programs connect people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) to the services they need. BIST attends these bi-monthly meetings to provide insight into what is currently happening in our member community, and to advocate for the needs on a range of topics, including access pathways for publicly funded community services.

The Ontario Brain Injury Association Advisory Council

The council is made up of 26 provincial Brain Injury Associations who meet monthly on various topics. The associations provide updates on activities and fundraisers, currently happening in each association. BIST continues to be active in this Advisory Council, connecting with other Brain Injury Associations throughout the Province.

Toronto ABI Network Conference 2022

BIST submitted two Abstracts for the Toronto ABI Network 2022 Conference held November 3rd and 4th, 2022. Both Abstracts were selected and presented by BIST staff.

I presented on 'Brain Injury and the Clinical Justice Program: A Cross Collaboration Providing Comprehensive Support' with colleagues from the Centre for Behaviour Health Sciences at Mackenzie Health, and the Community Network of Specialized Care – Central East, specializing in Dual Diagnosis and the Justice System.

This Presentation focused on how to support complex individuals who are justice involved as a victim, witness or accused, to ensure that they experience the justice system in an equitable manner.

The presentation objectives illustrated a case study, which highlighted the various models of service within the Clinical Justice Program (CJP) that support individuals with a variety of neuro-diverse needs and considerations; and identified observed gaps in these services through a CJP lens to address how to build capacity and strengthen community partnerships.

Isabelle Rivaletto presented on WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) Groups for Persons with Brain Injury with BIST WRAP Group co-facilitator Fozia Murtaza. The presentation focused on the five key concepts of WRAP, how the program is adapted for persons with ABI, and the long-term benefits and challenges of the program.

Those who attended the workshop had the opportunity to create a Wellness Action and Recovery Plan through participation and facilitation to understand the concept of WRAP.

Along with the two presentations, two BIST community members were a part of the Volunteer Committee to help organize the conference: Bob Murphy and Roxanne Riess.

ABI & Justice Conference - London, Ontario

Meri Perra and I were invited to participate in a ABI & Justice Conference in London, Ontario on March 30th of this year.

The Conference provided an opportunity for BIST to present on the ABljustice.org site along with the strategies and tool kits that were created to support those individuals who have a Brain Injury and are justice Involved. The Conference was attended by individuals who work in the shelter system, medical professions, parole officers, and other front line workers in residential settings. The Conference also allowed BIST to highlight the work completed in the OTF Homeless Prevention Program grant and the IPV grant through the Canadian Women's Foundation.

As the new CEO of BIST, I am grateful to all of the members, staff, the Board of Directors, volunteers and funders who continually support the initiatives at BIST.

We have worked hard in the past fiscal year to continue to promote Brain Injury awareness, educate where we see opportunities and advocate for our members and their needs within the City of Toronto, the Provincial Level and the Federal level through our initiatives.

LAURA BELLON



Laura Bellon with Alex Brazen at Toronto Police Mobile Crisis and Intervention Team (MCIT) in 2022



Laura Bellon and former CEO Melissa Vigar with PIA Superheroes at our very rainy 2022 Heroes Run, Walk, Roll OR Bike

FINANCIAL REPORT

ANDRE GADBOIS, TREASURER

BRAIN INJURY SOCIETY OF TORONTO BALANCE SHEET

CDN\$	Year Ended March 31st, 2023	Year Ended March 31st, 2022	Year Ended March 31st, 2021	Year Ended March 31st , 2020
Revenue				
Fundraising Revenue	\$ 33,500.00	\$ 126,647.47	\$ 93,381.72	\$ 207,833.89
Grant Revenue	\$ 80,200.00	\$ 150,674.01	\$ 328,952.45	\$ 205,886.45
Other Revenue	\$ 334,837.85	\$ 96,906.44	\$ 101,810.13	\$ 68,772.01
Total Revenue	\$ 448,537.85	\$ 374,227.92	\$ 524,144.30	\$ 482,492.35
Expenses				
Contractor Fees & Program Expenses	\$ 331,491.65	\$ 131,526.17	\$ 30,090.80	\$ 138,977.47
Fundraising Event Expenses	\$ 52,469.88	\$ 44,862.72	\$ 31,098.35	\$ 46,786.47
Grant Expenses	\$ 70,063.16	\$ 153,797.08	\$ 330,857.34	\$ 209,496.36
Admin and Other Expenses	\$ 60,423.42	\$ 90,280.48	\$ 23,367.37	\$ 31,337.47
Total Expenses	\$ 514,448.11	\$ 420,466.45	\$ 415,413.86	\$ 426,597.77
Surplus (Deficit)	-\$ 65,910.26	-\$ 46,238.53	\$ 108,730.44	\$ 55,894.58
CDN\$				
Assets				
Cash	\$ 178,838.47	\$ 272,405.83	\$ 81,964.47	\$ 222,161.07
HST Receivable	\$ 44,695.99	\$ 26,481.08	\$ 22,526.15	\$ 11,024.31
Accounts Receivable	\$ 2,865.00	\$ 3,534.83	\$ 77,472.52	\$ 36,113.20
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 4,685.00	\$ 2,185.23	\$ 2,185.23	\$ 4,685.23
Investments	\$ 71,439.40	\$ 63,245.90	\$ 218,361.03	\$ 62,781.07
Total Assets	\$ 302,523.86	\$ 367,852.87	\$ 402,509.40	\$ 336,764.88
Liabilities & Equity				
Accounts Payable	\$ 34,732.07	\$ 33,963.56	\$ 38,868.75	\$ 32,630.76
Deferred Revenue	\$ 133,385.00	\$ 118,734.83	\$ 114,079.83	\$ 163,303.74
Retained Earnings	\$ 134,406.79	\$ 215,154.48	\$ 249,560.82	\$ 140,830.38
Total Liabilities and Equity	\$ 302,523.86	\$ 367,852.87	\$ 402,509.40	\$ 336,764.88

PROGRAMS REPORT

MADISON CHONG, PROGRAMS COORDINATOR (CURRENT)

MELISSA FORREST, PROGRAMS COORDINATOR (PAST)

MERI PERRA, COMMUNICATIONS & PROGRAMS MANAGER

First and foremost, we would like to thank our former Programs Coordinator, Melissa Forrest, for all her hard work at BIST. Melissa left BIST to pursue another job opportunity at the end of the summer, in 2023. Her spirit and energy will be missed.

We welcome Alex Brazen, who is our new Programs Assistant, and congratulate Madison Chong who is our new Programs Coordinator.

The 2022 - 2023 fiscal year brought a much anticipated change at BIST: in the fall of 2022 we launched regular, in person programs. We continue to provide online programs to meet the needs of all our members.

In addition, we ran a variety of workshops and series programs, including:

- Yoga Series (ONLINE)
- Wellness Recovery Action Plan Group (ONLINE)
- Friends and Family Workshop (ONLINE)
- Concussion Series (ONLINE)
- ABI Info Series (IN PERSON)

Our 2022 Expressive Art Show was a huge success - and a labour of love - unable to secure a gallery space due to Pandemic restrictions - BIST students and staff hustled to find 15 storefront venues across the city to display works by 35 artists who live with the effects of brain injury. We had an amazing in-person launch event at Spadina Museum, attended by MP Carolyn Bennett along with 75 members of the BIST Community.

2022 EXPRESSIVE ART SHOW VENUES

Courage Cookies

Cristall Opticians

Gwartzman's Art Supplies

Parliament Street Furniture

Rehab Lab

Textile Museum of Canada

ZAZA Espresso Bar – Cumberland Ave

Crying Out Loud

Paint Cabin

Simple Coffee

The Offices of Dr. Milan Unarket

Simple Coffee

The Offices of Dr. Milan Unarket

Boulderz Climbing Centre – Etobicoke

Osteopathy with Marinella Nesso

Propel Physiotherapy

ZAZA Espresso Bar - Willard Ave

Virtual Expressive Art Show:
www.bist.ca/ART

REGULAR PROGRAMS

BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP

This group is facilitated by a Social Worker. It serves individuals with mild to moderate brain injury, providing a supportive setting for people to connect and share their experiences, challenges and successes. Beginning October 2022, the group re-launched in-person, and now occurs online on the first Tuesday of the month, and in-person on the third Tuesday of the month.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 156

ONLINE GROUP: 129 | IN PERSON GROUP: 27

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

A BIST staple - community Meetings have been held on a monthly basis since the beginning at BIST. Meetings feature a guest speaker who presents a topic relevant to brain injury with time for discussion. These monthly meetings also serve as a community social gathering, as well as an educational workshop experience. During this fiscal period, we held online and in-person community meetings.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 302

ONLINE MEETINGS: 162 | IN PERSON MEETINGS: 140

COMMUNITY OUTINGS

Our community outings re-launched in July, 2022 with a trip to the AGO. We have continued these outings since, to places such as: the movies, the Gardiner Museum, Harbourfront, a Haunted Walk and more!

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 121

FREAKY FRIDAYS

This social drop-in was launched in February 2022 in response to members' request for more opportunity to socialize and a space to share their skills with the BIST community. Beginning in October 2022, the program began offering mixed in-person and online programs.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 400

ONLINE GROUP: 351 | IN PERSON GROUP: 49

NOT SO BLUE MONDAYS

BIST and CHIRS partner to host an interactive social drop-in program where participants watch engaging and/or educational YouTube videos while playing fun games with each other. This program also includes sharing of music videos, discussion, and live singing. It occurs online weekly on Mondays.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 556

PEER-LED CAREGIVER GROUP / CURRENTLY: FAMILY & FRIENDS DROP IN

This group offers support to family and friends of people living with the effects of brain injury, which includes: spouses, roommates, friends, adult siblings, parents and adult children. BIST put this group on hold due to staffing issues from August 2022 - January 2023, when we relaunched the Program as, 'Family and Friends Social Drop In'. This is an online program which occurs on the first Wednesday of the month.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 22

SOCIAL DROP-IN FOR MEN WITH BRAIN INJURY

This social drop-in is a bi-monthly group for individuals who identify as men who live with the effects of brain injury and are looking to connect with others. Beginning October 2022, the group returned to in-person programs. It occurs online on the second Thursday of the month, and in-person on the third Thursday of the month.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 76

ONLINE GROUP: 51 | IN PERSON GROUP: 25

WELLNESS RECOVERY ACTION PLAN (WRAP) GROUP

These online mental health support groups are held in six-weekly sessions throughout the year on Wednesdays, with separate morning and afternoon groups. They are facilitated by Isabelle Rivaletto and Fozia Murtaza. Specialized sessions include: caregiver, persistent concussion, housing advocacy and trauma informed.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 301

WOMEN AND BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP

This group is for women-identified individuals who live with the effects of brain injury, and is inclusive to individuals who identify as trans and/or non-binary. Sessions are held on a bi-monthly basis and are facilitated by a Registered Social Worker with support from BIST staff. Beginning October 2022, the group returned to in-person format and happens on the first Thursday of the month (in-person) and on the third Thursday of the month (online).

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 137

ONLINE GROUP: 114 | IN PERSON GROUP: 23

YOGA SERIES

This online yoga series relaunched in March, 2023 online, and is facilitated by Natasha of Brainwaves Yoga.

TOTAL ATTENDANCE OVER THE FISCAL YEAR: 24

WORKSHOPS & SPECIAL EVENTS

FRIENDS / FAMILY OF PEOPLE WHO LIVE WITH BRAIN INJURY (ONLINE)

April 9th, 2022 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 61

EXPRESSIVE ART SHOW LAUNCH (IN PERSON)

June 3rd, 2022 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 75

SUMMER PICNIC (IN PERSON)

July 27th, 2022 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 50

HALLOWEEN PARTY (IN PERSON)

Oct 26th, 2022 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 25

HOLIDAY PARTY (IN PERSON)

Dec 21st, 2022 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 50

CONCUSSION SERIES (ONLINE)

4 Sessions on Mondays in November, 2022 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 41

ABI INFO SERIES (IN PERSON)

5 Sessions on Mondays in March, 2023 | TOTAL ATTENDANCE: 54



Artists at our
Expressive Launch
Show Launch,
Spadina Museum,
June 3rd, 2022

SUPPORT SERVICES

WEEKLY MEMBER PHONE & EMAIL SUPPORT

BIST Staff, Placement Students and Volunteers remain dedicated to providing regular support via phone communications through the use of our Warm Line. Our team also provides consistent email communication through info@bist.ca and connections@bist.ca. Members are provided with resources, educational information and social support.

TOTAL MEMBERS SERVED OVER THE FISCAL YEAR:

EMAIL: 798 | PHONE SUPPORT: 420

WEEKLY ONE-ON-ONE MEMBER SUPPORT (STUDENT SUPPORT)

This program offers the opportunity for placements students eg. Metropolitan University, Social Work Students to have direct experience in assisting members with tasks, such as completing application forms (Wheeltrans, ABI Network, Access 2 Card). Students also assist members with paperwork and calendar scheduling. During this past fiscal year, we had a total of 27 students completing placement at BIST.

TOTAL MEMBERS SERVED: 174

BIST/OBIA PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Peer Support Program connects trained Mentors with lived ABI experience, either as survivors or as loved ones, with partners seeking support following a brain injury. This program is delivered in collaboration with Brain Injury Association (BIAs) across the province and in partnership with the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA).


2022 - 2023 Peer Support Program Numbers	
Number of Trainings	0
Partner Intakes	3
Mentor Intakes	1
Number of New Matches	1
Completed Matches	1

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM


for people living with the effects of an acquired brain injury (ABI)

Why be a Partner?

As a Partner in the program, you have the opportunity to learn from someone "who has been there" and can offer you guidance and support based on their own personal experiences living with ABI. Support is provided to you via the telephone or internet, based on your preference. This allows you to participate in the program from the comfort and privacy of your home.




PARTNER



MENTOR

Why be a Mentor?

As a Mentor, you have the opportunity to help others by sharing your experiences and by providing support and information to your Partner who has similar lived experience. If being a Mentor is of interest to you, you will undergo comprehensive training in your own community prior to being matched with a Partner.



OBIA
ONTARIO BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION
education • awareness • support

Ontario Brain Injury Association
PO Box 2338
St. Catharines, ON L2R 7R9
Ph: 1-800-263-5404 or 905-641-8877
eMail: peersupport@obia.on.ca
Web: www.obia.ca



Portrait of Gabrielle Union; James OKore
On display at Simple Coffee in 2022

3718

PROGRAM SUPPORT
INTERACTIONS 2022/2023



Hoong Phang and Kyle Whaley of Propel Physiotherapy, who gave a talk at our ABI Info Series this March. Hoong and Kyle were introduced by Christ Lazaris, Associate at Thomson Rogers.



BIST Student Austin Dodd with BIST volunteer Josie Caloma at Pride Toronto, 2022.

10

DIFFERENT PROGRAMS
TO CHOOSE FROM

5

MAJOR
IN-PERSON
EVENTS /
SERIES



AGO Community Outing,
Winter, 2023

COMMUNITY COORDINATOR PROGRAM

HOMELESS PREVENTION COORDINATOR PROGRAM

LAURA BELLON, HOMELESSNESS COMMUNITY COORDINATOR APRIL 1, 2022 - FEB 23, 2023
NEHA MISTRY - CURRENT HOMELESS COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

During the fiscal year April 1 2022 to March 31 2023, the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), three-year grant for Homeless Prevention Coordinator (HPC) ran in its second year, servicing individuals in the Toronto area who identify with cognitive issues and/or brain injury, with the stabilization of and/or finding of appropriate housing in order to prevent homelessness. The grant requirements are to service 75 participants during the three years. At the end of February 2023 the program was a new staff hire. The new Community Coordinator is Neha Mistry, who will complete the work of the HPC program.

During this time period, a total of 88 individuals requested support from the program and are currently being serviced, superseding the grant requirements. Within the multiple areas of program support, 15 were supported from being evicted from current housing arrangements, 46 participants were supported in securing housing or transition to new housing.

Support for individual participants included the need for help with navigating housing searches, communications with landlords and superintendents to address ongoing concerns and needs, Legal Aid referrals and preparation for meetings, advocacy and involvement with the Landlord and Tenant Board, shelter workers, and community housing workers in various areas across the GTA.

Continuing to work on connections with various shelters across the city was instrumental in allowing for better communication, direct support and stabilization of basic needs, as well as smoother transition for our members and grantee participants into stable housing. These connections continue to grow and have been instrumental in allowing better help and support, direct communication and follow-up care related to medication, referral signatures and visits.

RESULTS OF THE PROGRAM:

88

RECEIVING SERVICE

15

PROTECTED FROM
EVICTION

46

HOUSED

35

CONNECTED TO
FINANCIAL
SUPPORTS

Along with housing stabilization the HPC program continues to work on various other needs identified by participants: during this time period 35 individuals were connected to financial supports, 41 were connected to social supports and/or community agencies; 62 participants requested support with connecting to medical specialists, support with medical referrals and information.

Grantee participants received and continue to receive help with booking and planning of various appointments, as well as the follow-up on recommendations and requisitions.

Completion of various referrals to the ABI network, ODSP application process support, Legal Aid, Toronto Housing, Access Point referral and the Compassionate Justice Fund were also integral to the ongoing care of individuals.

During this period, we continued to adopt a flexible mix of in-person supports and virtual care to help accommodate as many individuals as possible. Placement students completing both 3rd and 4th year placements, as well as Masters of Social Work worked along side the Community Coordinators to contact participants on a weekly basis. These student placements were necessary to extend the reach of the program and to provide additional care helping the BIST community at a faster pace.



BIST Members celebrate
at our 2022
Halloween Party

TRANSITIONAL SUPPORT COORDINATOR PROGRAM

ISABELLE RIVALETTO, VIOLENCE IMPACT COMMUNITY COORDINATOR

The Violence Impact Coordinator Program offered support to women and individuals who identified as female, were living in the Toronto area, who were survivors of intimate partner violence and had a Brain Injury and/or cognitive issues that impact their lives. The purpose of the Violence Impact Program was to provide rapid stabilization for participants through connection to Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, Disability Tax Credit, Tax support. The participants in this program also received support with community referrals to the ABI Network, family physicians and other specialists.

In addition to transitional case-management, the Violence Impact Coordinator was able to provide support in learning new compensatory strategies and increasing insight and awareness of self, through providing WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) Groups. Through the course of these groups, participants were able to explore symptoms and symptom management in a group setting through facilitation offered by the Violence Impact Coordinator and a Stress Prevention Strategist, both certified WRAP Facilitators. These groups were offered through a virtual platform which allowed individuals with transportation, mobility and other barriers to attend from a comfortable location of their choosing.

The WRAP Program is designed to assist individuals in understanding the importance of planning for crisis during periods of wellness. WRAP supports individuals in maintaining choice and control of their lives throughout the crisis period. The purpose of the WRAP program is to empower participants to take control of their symptom management by learning their stressors, what character traits they exhibit when they are well, what symptoms they experience during early warning signs and the changes in symptoms during escalation when things are breaking down. Each participant is provided a workbook and handouts at the beginning of the program and the group works together while each individual creates their own WRAP.

During the course of the Violence Impact Program, which ran from April 1st 2022 to March 31 2023, a total of 64 individuals received support. Of these individuals, 15 were connected with social assistance through Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program, 18 received support with housing, 22 received support connecting to family doctors or other medical professionals, 13 were supported with legal issues, 9 were referred to counseling services, 17 were connected to WRAP groups, 5 received diagnostic supports, 8 received food security and 21 received miscellaneous referrals or supports which include but are not limited to, employment supports, educational supports, help with increasing social connections and organizational support.

In addition to these supports, The Violence Impact Coordinator was also a member of FOCUS Toronto and held seats at Scarborough and Black Creek FOCUS Tables. The FOCUS Tables are designed to support individuals in the community who are deemed to be at Acute Elevated Risk and in need of immediate support. Through presentation at FOCUS, community agencies seated at the table are able to provide immediate wrap-around support to individuals and families as well as obtain support through direct referral to community agencies if not deemed Acute Elevated Risk but still identified as a higher risk/needs case within the community. The aim of FOCUS Toronto is to provide rapid stabilization to high risk individuals and families by providing immediate connection with community supports.



Program Funder



Heroes come in all sizes: one of our most adorable heroes enjoys the benefits of giving her mom a pie-in-the-face at our 2022 Heroes Run, Walk, Roll OR Bike. BIST folks got pied for every \$5000 earned at our event.

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

ALISON FOO & COLLEEN WORSLEY; CO-CHAIRS

The Advocacy Committee was formed to support BIST in its goals of reducing vulnerability in the brain injury community with a focus on self-advocacy. In its third year of operation, the eight committee members have spread awareness about brain injury and advocated for our community in various ways, including, but not limited to:

- Representing BIST and brain injury survivors at city-level meetings and discussions
- Completing surveys and participating in focus groups that aim to improve services, increase visibility, and address accessibility issues
- Creating and delivering a presentation with Behavioural Therapist, Stacey Levine, on feasible communication strategies for self-advocacy

Committee Members: Marie Barber, Rosa Firsten, Michelle Kennedy , Bob Murphy, Meeta Gugnani and Laura Pazzano.

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH COMMITTEE MATTHEW CHUNG, CHAIR

For June's Brain Injury Awareness Month 2022, BIST's Brain Injury Awareness Month (BIAM) Committee continued to evolve our successful Annual Expressive Art Show, #BrainInjuryInThe6ix. The work of more than 30 artists who live with brain injury was featured at 15 venues in all four corners of Toronto, including coffee shops, fitness facilities and clinics. New for this year, the BIAM Committee developed an interactive map for BIST's website that showcased the venues hosting art, making it easier for Torontonians to locate the works of the artists.

After two years of virtual celebrations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BIAM Committee was thrilled to organize a launch event at the Spadina Museum. Artists presented their works, including visual art, poetry and songs while attendees enjoyed music, food and beverages. Guests included Carolyn Bennet, MP for Toronto-St. Paul's. Our thanks to the many venues who agreed to host art and to our sponsors.

The Committee also put an increased focus on social media to drive awareness, including posting artists' bios and work on BIST's social media platforms, as well as engaging with influencers in the health and wellness space to further amplify the art show.

Posts about the art show were some of our best-performing posts of 2022.

The CN Tower was also lit up once again in the Brain Injury colours of Blue and Green on June 3 and Mayor John Tory proclaimed June Brain Injury Awareness Month in the city of Toronto. BIST was also proud to have a presence once again during Pride Toronto on June 24 and 25, with volunteers staffing a booth to connect with the members of the community and raise awareness.

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

MERI PERRA, COMMUNICATIONS & PROGRAMS MANAGER

Across all platforms, BIST has over 11,703 followers - representing a 37% increase from the previous fiscal period.

INSTAGRAM: 1989 FOLLOWERS

- 59 K REACH - 18% INCREASE
- 9% INCREASE IN FOLLOWERS

FACEBOOK: 1850 FOLLOWERS

- 76K REACH
- 21% INCREASE IN FOLLOWERS

TWITTER / X: 3702 FOLLOWERS

- 89 K Reach

LINKED IN: 1076 FOLLOWERS

- 48 K Reach
- 23% Increase in Followers

BLOG: 2031 FOLLOWERS

- 8700 Visits

YOUTUBE: 138 FOLLOWERS

- 3 K Views

TIKTOK: 917 FOLLOWERS

- 4292 Views

EMAIL CAMPAIGNS

- 38,536 Opened Emails

Linked IN
showed the
largest
increase in
followers -
increasing
by 23%

Twitter / X
had the
highest
social media
reach of 89K

VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Volunteers keep BIST strong! To recognize the hard work members of our BIST community dedicate to administration, the blog, committees and fundraising events, we honour outstanding service in the following categories: ABI Survivor/Thrivers, Caregiver, BIST Ambassador. In 2023, we created a new category: TOP FUNDRAISER!

2022 WINNERS

ROXANNE (ROXY) RIESS

ABI SURVIVOR/THRIVER WINNER

Roxanne has been a pivotal member of BIST for many years. She is a huge advocate for the neuro-diverse community and is a master at creating connections amongst people and organizations to improve the quality of life for people with brain injury. She is a passionate speaker and advocate and has done media talks, consultations and is a respected member of BIST's Advocacy Committee. In addition she is also a talented artist and contributes her work to our Annual Expressive Art Shows.

SAMIRA OMAR

CAREGIVER WINNER

Samira Omar is the sister of an individual with a brain injury. In her journey to support her brother she has become a strong voice and advocate in recognizing the role race plays in accessing rehabilitation. Samira spoke to BIST members this past year on her experiences and research and helped BIST to launch our IDEA (Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) Committee.

JOSIE COLOMA

AMBASSADOR WINNER

Josie has been volunteering with BIST for four years. During her time she has written blog articles, showcased her cooking skills and now assists with administrative support and helps at all our events. Josie's warmth, smile and humour brightens everyone's day!

2023 WINNERS

EMILY HONDERICH

ABI SURVIVOR/THRIVER WINNER

Emily has volunteered in the BIST Office since Pre-Pandemic times and has shared her incredible design and artistic skills with us. We were thrilled when she returned to the office this past year!

ELIZABETH TAY

CAREGIVER WINNER

Elizabeth has been a fixture at BIST programs with her daughter for many years, and is always a welcome addition to our space! This year she generously shared her story of being a parent to an adult child with a brain injury at our Family and Friends Workshop.

JORDAN ASSARAF

AMBASSADOR WINNER

Jordan Assaraf has been involved with BIST for the past nine years - having served as Chair on our Board of Directors - and also being a tireless and integral part of our Birdies for Brain Injury Committee. He is an associate at Gluckstein Lawyers, and we love having him in our BIST Community.

ALDEN DYCHTENBERG

NEW! FUNDRAISER OF THE YEAR WINNER

Alden has gone above and beyond to raise funds for our events such as our golf tournament and Heroes Run, Walk, Roll OR Bike. We are so thankful to him for his endless generosity and dedication. He is a Lawyer at Lerner Law Firm.



FUNDRAISING EVENT TOTALS

BIRDIES FOR BRAIN INJURY

Lionhead Golf & Country Club- June 17th, 2022

\$61,860.78 RAISED

HEROES RUN, WALK, ROLL OR BIKE

Wilket Creek Park - September 25th, 2022

\$31,796.18 RAISED

TANYA'S RIDE FOR BRAIN INJURY

Albion Hills - October 1st, 2022

\$25,158.83 RAISED

A BIG THANK YOU to the Luder Family who organized this event, with all proceeds supporting BIST!



Birdies for Brain Injury Golf
Tournament, 2022

HAUNTED HOT WING CHALLENGE 🔥

Hart House - October 19th, 2022

\$11,039.12 RAISED

\$130K TOTAL



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Gold Sponsors



Silver Sponsors



Bronze Sponsors





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LOCAL 183

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BIST

Brain Injury Society of Toronto



Heroes Run, Walk, Roll OR Bike

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PERSONAL INJURY LAWYERS

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LiUNA!

LOCAL 183

Feel the Power

LEARNERS

LAWYERS



SMITIUCH INJURY LAW



PRESENTS

BIST

Brain Injury Society of Toronto

Heroes Run, Walk, Roll OR Bike



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PIE-IN-THE-FACE SPONSOR



BRONZE SPONSORS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD CANDIDATE - TIM ANDREWS

Tim Andrews is the Executive Vice President, Brand Experience, at Bridgepoint Financial. He is responsible for branding, marketing, product development and strategic initiatives.

Before joining BridgePoint in 2020, Tim was Vice President at Emblem where he was the creative and strategic lead on brand, digital, social media, product development, packaging and marketing collateral. As member of the Senior Management Team, he contributed to strategies behind corporate operations, culture and vision.

Tim has over 20 years of experience working with a diverse client roster including banking, finance, legal, aerospace, commercial and residential development, beer, wine, cannabis and the public sector. He studied at Queen's University and Sheridan College, and he puts a strong emphasis on design thinking, meaningful strategies and thoughtful, business-minded work. Tim has chaired business development groups, founded successful not-for-profit campaigns and has helped with the launch of several startups.

BOARD CANDIDATE - EMILY DOLYE

Emily Doyle is currently a Senior Technology Recruiter at Rogers Communications. She has been working in the Human Resources field for the past three years. Prior to this, Emily worked in the social service and co-operative housing sector on special projects, specifically focusing on diversity and inclusion. She is very passionate about affordable housing and specifically housing co-operatives. If you ever want to talk co-ops, she is more than happy to!

Emily lives in a housing co-operative in downtown Toronto where she served on the Board of Directors for three years as staff liaison. In this position, she supported the running of the office of about 5 staff members.

Emily learned about BIST in 2020 when she experienced a concussion in the August of that year. The concussion ended up turning into post concussion syndrome and she was at a loss as to where to turn.

She says, "Having a concussion completely humbles you and I was so happy to have access to the services at BIST. I knew I wanted to give back in some way and hopefully I can as a board member. I'm looking forward to working with the rest of the board and staff to help to support and continue BIST's amazing services and initiatives!" Emily loves biking, hiking, and walking around the city. She also really loves baking and feeding people.

LARA FITZGERALD-HUSEK

Lara is a lawyer from Oatley Vigmond, representing seriously injured individuals and their loved ones. Lara's practice focuses solely on personal injury law, including motor vehicle accidents, medical malpractice, occupier's liability, and product liability cases.

Lara completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto. She obtained her Juris Doctor and Master of Public Administration at Queen's University and also completed the International Business Law program at the Bader International Study Centre in England.

When Lara is not practicing law, she enjoys hiking with her dog and tending to her balcony garden.

ALISON FOO

Alison has been a member of BIST since 2013. She was previously on the Special Events Committee and currently writes for the 'Mind Yourself with Alison' column on the BIST Blog. She's dedicated to using her unique perspective, research and experience to help other brain injury survivors and their caregivers. She has a B.Sc.H. from Queen's University, a M.Sc. from University of Toronto and a Project Management Professional (PMP) certification.

She worked in the pharmaceutical industry for over 10 years and created the brand, Cooking with Alison, which offers social media marketing services. Her other interests include dogs, new experiences, and psychology. Her current daily mantras are, "good enough is good enough" and "I didn't come this far to only come this far".

ANDRE GADBOIS

Andre completed his undergraduate degree in BComm specializing in finance and accounting at the University of Toronto. He currently works as a Bilingual Junior Analyst at First National LLP. During his time at the University of Toronto, he was the director of finance at CivicSpark.

Andre found BIST through our Persistent Concussion Series, and used it as a resource to understand his symptoms and manage his new world following his concussion. Seeing the benefit that BIST provides, he enjoys lending his experience, knowledge and talents to BIST.

GAZAL KUKREJA

Gazal was motivated to join BIST as a board member through her experience collaborating with the organization in her roles at the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (ONF) and the Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA).

At ONF, Gazal was responsible for managing projects across the province that involved implementing evidence-based brain injury guidelines in practice with the aim of providing better services and care for persons living with brain injury. Using the principles of Implementation Science, Gazal provided implementation and evaluation support for project leads.

At OBIA, Gazal was expanding Brain Injury Speaks, the Stakeholder Engagement Network of Ontario, to provide persons with lived experience with the opportunity to share their opinions, express their needs, and provide feedback about existing service and initiatives. Gazal holds a Master's degree in Kinesiology from Western University where she focused on mental health and resilience research. She is a strong advocate for mental health and is looking forward to being involved with BIST to help improve the quality of life of those affected by brain injury.

In her downtime, Gazal is an avid traveler and loves to be active outdoors. She is adventurous in trying new foods and seeks the excitement of exploring new places.

DR CAROLYN LEMSKY

Dr. Carolyn Lemsky is a neuropsychologist with over 25 years of experience working in rehabilitation settings in the U.S. and Canada and has been the Clinical Director at CHIRS since 1998.

She is also the director of the Substance Use and Brain Injury Bridging Project (SUBI), a research and knowledge transfer initiative funded by the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation.

Carolyn supervises an active clinical research program related to co-morbid mental health and problematic substance use and is a regular presenter at national and international conferences on brain injury. She is hoping to bring her skills and expertise to the BIST board to help further awareness and advocacy efforts.

Carolyn has a passion for working with people and loves the outdoors. In her spare time, she volunteers with the Canadian Association for Disabled Skiing, plays soccer and baseball and is an expert 'green thumb.'

AARON PALMER

Aaron is a registered Occupational Therapist and owner at Palmer Wellness & Rehab, a community-based company that provides rehabilitation services to individuals of all ages who are dealing with the effects of complex and serious injuries (e.g., orthopaedic, neurological, spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries), have complex needs (physical, sensory, cognitive and/or emotional) as a result of injury/illness, and children who experience development, learning and behavioural challenges.

He has developed a passion for working with individuals to live a life of purpose and meaning. As a BIST board member, Aaron brings his personal and professional experience to contribute and create positive change for people living with the effects of brain injuries.

BOARD CANDIDATE - BRANDON PEDERSON

When he was a young boy, two of Brandon's family members were killed in a motor vehicle crash caused by a negligent driver. This motivated Brandon to pursue a career as a personal injury lawyer so that he could advocate on behalf of others affected by negligence.

While at law school, Brandon served as a volunteer caseworker and student director at one of Western Law's legal clinics. Brandon was also heavily involved in Western Law's mentorship program, providing guidance and support to fellow law students. In addition, Brandon was a three-year member of both the Western Law Men's Hockey Team and the Law Games Team, where he competed in everything from ultimate frisbee to ball hockey. For his contributions to the law school and the community through extra-curricular events activities and by maintaining a strong academic record, Brandon was awarded the David C. Scott Memorial Award in 2020.

DR MILAN UNARKET

Dr Unarket is duly qualified specialist in physical medicine and rehabilitation and licensed to practice medicine by the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Ontario. He has a fellowship from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. He is currently in community practice after almost 15 years combined experience of being a consultant physiatrist at Bridgepoint hospital and Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, as a subspecialist in neurological rehabilitation, musculoskeletal rehabilitation and electromyography.

His clinical work does and has involved the assessment and treatment of patients with various neurological and musculoskeletal injuries from the initial inpatient rehabilitation stay to the latter stages of rehabilitation.

(Cont'd on next page)

DR MILAN UNARKET (Cont'd from previous page)

He has assisted in publishing in vocational rehab and was involved in the U of T with an academic appointment at the University of Toronto as a lecturer and has have taught students and residents over time. He successfully obtained certification and proficiency in electromyography from the Canadian Congress of Neurological Sciences. He has completed on certification training in performing catastrophic impairment based on the 4th Edition AMA Guides on Permanent Impairment. He also has completed certification in non-economic loss impairment assessments through the WSIB.

He has a special interest in Acquired Brain Injury rehabilitation including the medical complications of Acquired brain injury and their functional implications. He is married to a pharmacist with two young children.

SAMANTHA SHATZ

Samantha completed her Bachelor of Arts at Wilfrid Laurier University and went on to obtain her J.D. from the University of Western Ontario. Following her call to the bar, she practiced both plaintiff side personal injury and insurance defence.

However, her passion was to practice exclusively on behalf of plaintiffs, particularly in medical negligence cases. At present, she is a lawyer at Howie, Sacks & Henry LLP. Her practice focuses primarily on medical malpractice, helping victims and their families who have suffered as a result of medical and hospital negligence. A large portion of the cases she assists on are obstetrical negligence cases.

She works with young children who suffered severe brain injuries at or around the time of their birth. Through her work, she sees first-hand the impact that a brain injury can have on an individual and their family and how important community supports are.

In her spare time, she loves going to concerts; watching live music is one of her favorite things to do! She also loves spending time outdoors (in the summer!), going to movies and spending time with friends and family.



COMMUNITY OF HEROES

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