



Press Release

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Pioneer Valley Brain Injury Support Group Offers Dynamic Programs for Survivors of Brain Injury and Their Families

The Pioneer Valley support group, which recently celebrated its first anniversary, offers an array of professional presentations and interactive programs for survivors of brain injury, their families and local professionals. The group is sponsored by the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts.

"So many people don't know where to turn when they need support or answers," says Anne Flaherty, facilitator of the Pioneer Valley Brain Injury Support Group. "This group provides cutting-edge educational and social support to people recovering from brain injury, their families, friends, caregivers, and local health professionals."

During the first year, group members have participated in workshops on energy healing, also known as Reiki, neuro-feedback, homeopathic medicine and hands-on healing. In a recent event, Trevor Smith, a local social recreation professional, presented "Laugh for the Health of It: Creating Healthy Lifestyles in Work and Everyday Life through Laughter." This workshop addressed the physical and psychological benefits of community laughter.

In addition to modern healing techniques, the group brought in medical professionals such as Clinical Neuropsychologist and Assessment Specialist Constance Carpenter-Bixler, PhD, who spoke about "tricks and tools" for keeping your brain strong. Group members were able to learn about the neuroscience of brain recovery by use of simple tools and interactive techniques that strengthen brain function, refresh short-term memory, and refine emotional and behavioral responses.

"It has been so helpful for me to discover a group created to support others in the valley struggling with the aftermath of a brain injury," says one member who regularly attends the group. "For me, this injury has been a rather 'silent' demon, as there are no lasting, visible signs of the injury, but I still struggle with recovery."

"We already have some exciting workshops scheduled for 2011-12," says Ann Flaherty, co-facilitator of the group. "Presenters include: a team of lawyers who

will address disability rights and entitlements; physical rehabilitation specialists who will discuss “proactive” recovery; and community social workers who will talk about independent living and vocational rehabilitation.

The support group, which meets in Hadley, welcomes survivors, family members, caregivers and professionals from Amherst, Hadley, Northampton, Greenfield, South Hadley, Shelburne Falls, and other towns within Franklin and Hampshire counties.

“The support group fulfills the isolation of so many people,” says Flaherty. “We exchange experiences and ideas, identify local support systems, and just have fun together.”

The next meeting of the Pioneer Valley Brain Injury Support Group will be held Thursday July 7 from 7- 8:30 p.m. at Fit Together, 231 Russell Street (Route 9), Hadley, MA. For more information, contact Anne Flaherty at pvbisg@gmail.com or call 413-253-8889.

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts is a private, non-profit organization that provides support to brain injury survivors and their families, offers programs to prevent brain injuries, and educates the public on the risks and impact of brain injury. BIA-MA has offices in Westborough, Pittsfield and East Wareham Massachusetts. For more information on brain injury, call BIA-MA’s Western Massachusetts office call 888- 554-5553 or visit www.biama.org.

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