Coping with brain injury is not easy on a normal day. 2020 has been anything but normal!

The Covid-19 pandemic has certainly exacerbated the cognitive, physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms associated with TBI. For brain injury survivors, being removed from family, friends, day
EXECUTIVE MESSAGE
BOARD CHAIR DAVID DWORK

These are challenging times. Our nation is suffering from the worst pandemic in over 100 years, our economy has been shaken, and thousands of Americans are taking to the streets daily to protest the brutality and inequality that exists in our society.

We are stuck at home, must keep our distance, and wear masks when we leave the house. Our daily routine and work have been severely disrupted. It is easy to feel stressed out, isolated and despairing at such times. This is especially true for persons with disabilities and their families, who rely on predictable services and support that may no longer be accessible and who are no strangers to feelings of isolation.

However, these turbulent times may be the catalyst to a reevaluation of our societal priorities. We need to examine the prevalence of inequality and prejudice, address the vast disparity in distribution of wealth, and strengthen our
“David Dwork” continued from page 2

commitment to healthcare and science. Most of all we need to affirm such values as empathy, compassion, respect, and unity. I really hope that the voices of the young people in America are heard at this time when our democracy and values seem to hinge in the balance.

Often the best way to deal with uncertainty and loss is to take positive action. That is precisely what BIA-MA did in response to this crisis. Our staff mobilized in March so that most of our programs and services continued remotely with minimal interruption. We addressed any financial implications to assure we could continue to provide information and resources, prevention programs, and advocacy and legislative initiatives. Unfortunately, the cancelation of our Annual Brain Injury Conference in March was imperative to the health and wellbeing of our staff and conference attendees.

Acting as Board Chair for BIA-MA during the past four years I have had many things to be proud of: the organization has seen unprecedented growth and accomplishments; core services have expanded; we reinforced our organizational and fiscal condition and strengthened our Board of Directors; we have more than doubled financial reserves; we have increased funding for the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP); reestablished the Brain Injury Commission; made positive movement on the Cognitive Rehabilitation Bill; and have increased the voice of brain injury on Beacon Hill.

And over the past few months I continue to be amazed. Thank you, Nicole and the BIA-MA staff, for your professionalism, dedication and commitment. Thank you to the thousands of supporters of our proud organization. Everyone of us is entitled to be treated decently and with civility, and without prejudgment, prejudice, or malice. Hopefully, this period will be looked at as a time when we renewed our commitment to these values.

As I sunset my time as Board Chair I know I will continue to be proud of this organization. I believe that we have been and will continue to be true to our mission in creating a better future for those affected by brain injury – in every way imaginable.
Disrupted daily routines can place undue stress on those living with a brain injury during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Information surrounding COVID-19 and its potential impact on each of our lives can be overwhelming. Brain injury survivor Jeff Sebell writes “We need to process and deal with the information we get, but processing information, dealing with change, especially a change that can be threatening, and making decisions under pressure, are not typically strong points for those who have experienced brain injuries.”

When we feel matters are out of our control, negativity and anxiety could gain a grip on our lives. Difficulty sleeping and depression can worsen our health, especially for those living with a brain injury. Staying positive during difficult times can be easier said than done, we are all human; however, choosing to remain positive can improve our health.

How can those living with a brain injury during the Coronavirus pandemic keep stress levels in check? Facing our known triggers and applying a consistent self-care routine is a proactive approach we could all use through this unprecedented public health crisis.

Many brain injury survivors learned the true meaning of resilience, having spent years acclimating to the daily changes in their lives that a brain injury forced upon them. Successful rehabilitation methods one may have used in the past could help survivors adapt to the changes in routines during the Coronavirus pandemic. If the opportunity to go outside is available, taking the time to breathe in the fresh air, exercise, and soaking up the sunshine can improve the health of our brain and body in many ways. Listening to uplifting music is known to boost brain function and improve our moods. Reading a good book, watching an encouraging movie, or laughing at episodes of our favorite sitcoms can shield us from the harmful impact of stress.

During an extended downtime, taking the opportunity to enroll in online learning or signing up for...
COGNITIVE REHABILITATION AND COVID-19 PANDEMIC

A growing body of research is linking COVID-19 with cognitive impairments, both by the virus itself and as a consequence of long-term ventilator treatment and hospital stays. Patients who had less severe symptoms or were not hospitalized are also experiencing lingering effects such as confusion, memory loss, inability to reason. Targeted, specialized cognitive rehabilitation will be an essential service in assisting patients who have had COVID to regain their skills and resume their lives.

Unfortunately, cognitive rehabilitation is rarely covered by insurance in Massachusetts, so it is crucial that residents at least have access to and coverage for this treatment should they become ill with COVID-19.

In July, BIA-MA supported an amendment to the Health Care Reform bill, that would require health insurance to cover

“Cog-Rehab” continued on page 19

affordable interactive games such as BrainHQ or Elevate can increase neuroplasticity. Technology helps us to stay connected with friends and family through phone calls, texting, video, or emailing to avoid complete social isolation and stay engaged.

Although countless businesses will remain closed for a while, and social distancing has become a new way of life, through the storm, there continues to be the enduring devotion of humanity. Strength from the Holy Spirit within shines through in many who cast out fear and come forward in faith, hope, and love to serve others. Those who work or volunteer for churches, non-profits, restaurants, retailers, and more are discovering innovative ways to connect with local and global communities supplying services, products, food, helpful information, and support. The heroes on the front lines in hospitals, grocery stores, and other government listed essential businesses are risking their lives every day to save and serve others.

We are all affected by this global health crisis in one way or another. Through faith, prayer, and perseverance, we can all share an extraordinary sense of peace, kindness, patience, and comradery, helping each other through these difficult times and beyond.

For current and resourceful information during the COVID 19 pandemic, patients, families, and healthcare professionals can access the Center for Disease Control (CDC) website. residents ongoing vital information during this evolving health crisis.

Jeff Sebell is a published Author, Speaker and Blogger writing about Traumatic Brain Injury and the impacts of his own TBI which he suffered in 1975 while attending Bowdoin College. He has been active in the community since the inception of the NHIF, and was on the founding board of directors of the MA chapter. His book “Learning to Live with Yourself after Brain Injury” was released in August of 2014 by Lash Publishing.
DELIVERING VIRTUAL PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Since March, the Programs & Services team at BIA-MA has been finding ways to reach out to our community to ease the stress of these challenging times, beginning with hitting the phones! In April, we offered our first virtual support groups, starting in Lowell and followed by the Westborough Young Adults Group.

As the country learned more about Covid-19 and it became apparent we were “home” for the foreseeable future, BIA-MA placed our programs “online” in April. The Brains At Risk (BAR) court-related prevention program curriculum was updated and BIA-MA began to offer BAR virtually online. Think A Head, a school-based program to teach students to avoid risk-taking behavior, was presented VIRTUALLY for the first time to a Springfield driving school.

Spring is typically a busy time for educational activities and events at BIA-MA! Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the Annual Conference and the ABI Clinical Continuing Education Series had to be postponed. Fortunately, many of our popular activities were easily adapted to online experiences. We held virtual activities in Mindfulness Meditation, Creative Corner, Write It! (5-week creative writing series), a poetry slam café, and our annual Tea at The Mount – just to name a few.

We hope over the coming weeks and months to continue to provide virtual programming to our friends! Stay up to date with programming and schedules via the links below. If you have any questions, or would like to schedule a program of your own, please contact us at info@biama.org:

Support Groups: www.biama.org/groups

Recreation Activities: www.biama.org/eventsandactivities

Brains At Risk: www.biama.org/virtualbrainsatrisk

Think A Head: www.biama.org/thinkahead
VIRTUAL RECREATION ACTIVITIES

BIA-MA was able to continue some favorite recreation activities and add some new ones - VIRTUALLY! The recreation activities were sponsored in part by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission’s Statewide Head Injury Program. We had a blast!!

Sip and Paint - What a fun VIRTUAL activity! Survivors from across the Commonwealth enjoyed the camaraderie and learned to paint sunflowers. Each participant was sent a painting kit with a set of paints and brushes. We then followed the instructor to create a vase of sunflowers. Each individual interpretation was special.

Tea at the Mount - Our women’s support group took our annual spring trip to the Lenox home of writer Edith Wharton VIRTUALLY this year. We had a FABULOUS time and were able to see rooms we normally would not be allowed to see….the attic, for example. We also heard a few ghost stories. All of us were sporting our best hats and tea service, and all were looking forward to reading The Age Of Innocence!

Visit the latest Virtual Events and Activities schedule: www.biama.org/eventsandactivities
PERSONALIZED SOLUTIONS AT HOME IN THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

MEET NICK! “I’m happier, healthier, and more content with my own personal life.” McLaughlin House resident, Nick, explains the positive changes he has experienced since moving into the residence in 2018. “The staff are so respectful, kind, and they are always willing to do more to make sure we are happy, caring, and getting our recovery on.”

McLaughlin House is one of three residential communities that make up Advocates Supported Living Program (SLP), operated in partnership with Supportive Living, Inc. (SLI). The program offers a unique setting for long-term rehabilitation for adults living with acquired brain injury. Residents live in apartment-style, home-like communities that have been carefully designed to meet their needs. Located in Woburn, North Reading, and Lexington, each community offers private bedrooms and bathrooms and welcoming communal spaces. With 24/7 staff support, individuals are supported in pursuing greater independence and achieving their goals.

MEET JIM! At Warren House, another SLP community, resident Jim has gained independence and enjoys frequent trips through downtown Woburn, utilizing his power wheelchair to travel around town on his own. Jim notes that since coming to Warren house, he is busier and has more fun, participating in outings such as an annual Red Sox game with staff and fellow residents.

Meanwhile, Nick has discovered his passion for cooking through SLI’s Neuro Wellness culinary classes, where he has learned to prepare nutritious meals for himself and peers at McLaughlin House. His goal is to one day open his own bakery.

The dedicated SLP team of direct care staff, nurses, and case managers have specialized training and expertise in brain injury and are committed to helping residents live their lives to the fullest. The team works with the family and individual supported to customize a plan to assist with personal care, meal planning and preparation, independent living skills training, and social and recreational activities.

Warren House Program Director, Amanda St. Amant, believes the sense of community within the program sets it apart from other service providers. “It’s just a close-knit community,” she says. “That’s how I feel here at Warren House, and even at Douglas House and McLaughlin House, whenever you go there you just feel welcome. We’re all just working together to strive to make everybody’s lives independent.”

Visit www.Advocates.org/BrainInjury or www.SupportiveLivingInc.org to learn more about the Supported Living Program and eligibility requirements. Questions? Contact Heather Dely, Director of Supported Living Program, at HDely@Advocates.org or call (508) 628-7205.

BIA-MA IS PROUD TO PARTNER WITH ADVOCATES & SUPPORTIVE LIVING, INC. AND IS THANKFUL FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF THE BIA-MA MISSION.
SURVIVOR SPOTLIGHT - SHAUN GRADY

Shaun Grady's life changed forever in 2008 when he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. His journey was long and complicated. It took two weeks of hospitalization and two surgeries to remove the tumor. Less than a week into rehabilitation, the second shoe fell - a pulmonary embolism – which resulted in even more hospitalization and rehabilitation. Shaun had to learn how to eat and walk again and required facial nerve surgery to, among other things, allow him to pursue his passion – swimming.

Before these life-changing events, Shaun was an engineer in the medical device industry, a career he says he chose to help others improve their quality of life. Shaun's goal is now laser-focused: “To help individuals with brain injuries improve their quality of life through shared experiences, empathy, increased knowledge of self, self-advocacy, and improved integration of both the brain injury community as well as the broader community in which we live.”

And help he does! Shaun has been a BIA-MA Support Group Leader since 2014. He is always ready to offer support in a warm, witty, and insightful manner. He is a source of inspiration and motivation to people with whom he interacts. Indicative of his spirit is the ending of all Shaun's communications: STAY SAFE. BE WELL. KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOVED.

Shaun enjoys spending time with his wife and two daughters, holds a Master's degree from Northeastern University, and resides in a residential community in the MetroWest area.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT - SCOTT DOANE

Scott Doane, a brain injury survivor, has been working for BIA-MA since 2013 and is currently a Resource & Support Liaison. In this capacity, he is responsible for providing survivors and caregivers phone support, connections to brain injury resources and providers, and support group leadership (including a men's only group).

Scott was seven years old when his family's car was in an accident with an 18-wheeler. He sustained injuries to his frontal, parietal and temporal lobes. Scott was in a coma for three weeks, hospitalized for three months, and had to re-learn how to walk, eat, get dressed, and write. He went on to graduate from Flagler College in St. Augustine, FL, and started a career in the human services!

After working in human services for almost 30 years, Scott found that he was able to relate to the people he was serving and wanted to learn more about his own TBI. He sought out a neurologist, received an updated MRI, and started to make visits to the BIA-MA office. After attending a few support groups, he shared his story and shortly after was hired by BIA-MA.

Scott is an empathetic individual that continually strives to understand callers needs and the resources available to them. He is a professional and a survivor who understands firsthand the challenges many of our callers and their families face. His calm and confident nature allows him to provide unbiased resources and support. Scott believes that “gathering brain injury survivors and caregivers together provides a common feeling of belonging and understanding.” Scott is incredibly dedicated to his wife and two daughters; they enjoy trying new foods and exploring. Thank you, Scott, for all you do!
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts gratefully acknowledges the following gifts from our generous contributors received between January 1, 2020 and June 31, 2020

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On May 5th BIA-MA joined the global movement called #GivingTuesdayNow, created by the GivingTuesday movement, traditionally held on the Tuesday after Black Friday.

This year May 5th was chosen as a day of giving and unity created in response to the unprecedented need for funding caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. You, our donors and friends, did not disappoint, THANK YOU!

IF YOU MISSED GIVINGTUESDAYNOW, THERE ARE ALWAYS OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT BIA-MA:

• **Check out Team BIA-MA**, who will be running a very special At-Home Edition of the Falmouth Road Race this year. Learn about our runners and their “why” – you can help them “reach the finish line!”

• **Take part in our Annual Cere-bration, September 26th** - We will be Walking, Rolling and Running all over the state with this year’s VIRTUAL Cere-Bration! Walk & Roll a fun mile or challenge yourself to run a 5K in your favorite place proudly donning your Cere-bration Shirt! Raise important funds and awareness for the brain injury community and BIA-MA.

• **Make it official by tagging us on social media #Cerebrateathome**. Sept. 26th is OUR day to come together while apart in CERE-BRATION of brain injury survivors and remembering those who cannot be with us today!

• **Become a sustaining donor** by turning your one-time gift into a monthly or quarterly reoccurring donation that will allow BIA-MA to continue to provide its programs and services all year long!

DONATE NOW!

“Covid” continued from the cover

programs, club houses and support groups only amplifies fear and isolation. For caregivers and family members used to a routine – that routine has been turned upside down. Brain injury symptoms can worsen, in some cases rehabilitation services were halted or all together canceled, and the fear of the unknown paired with the unusual demands required for extended quarantine, this pandemic has certainly been taxing to say the least.

With tragedy often comes a movement of warmth and community love. We hope that in the past months you have experienced some of this – from neighbors, friends, family, or even your healthcare professionals. It is also our hope that in recent months you have been able to take advantage of the virtual opportunities available to you through the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts. Our priority is, and always has been, ensuring that the Massachusetts brain injury community is safe, informed, and has access to quality and supportive programs. By offering virtual support groups and recreation activities we hoped to bridge the gaps in social comforts as mentioned above.

We will continue to provide virtual offerings exclusively in the near future and will re-evaluate our in-person opportunities as we follow State openings and regulations. To stay up to date on this information visit www.biama.org/groups.
Building bridges between Substance Use Disorder and the Traumatic Brain Injury Communities in MA

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) and the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts have received a federal grant for three years to implement “Bridges Between”.

The project will build connections between the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment communities, strengthen services for families and individuals living with TBI and SUD and conduct statewide trainings for professionals in both fields.
After brain injury, rehabilitation is one of the most important steps in the recovery process. Our hospitals offer innovative therapies, a specialized team and advanced technologies to give patients the confidence and strength they need to return to their community.

Learn more at ehc.rehab/bima20

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NeuroRestorative Massachusetts is a leading provider of post-acute rehabilitation and support services for individuals with brain injuries and other neurological challenges. In a variety of locations and settings, we offer a continuum of care through our community-based programs.

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Vinfen transforms lives by building the capacity of individuals, families, organizations, and communities to learn, thrive, and achieve their goals. Our services promote the recovery, resiliency, habilitation, and self-determination of the people we serve. As a human services leader, we strive to be the provider, employer, and partner of choice.

Vinfen proudly supports the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts!

Thank you for serving the needs of people with brain injuries, their families, and their caregivers across Massachusetts.

Personalized solutions at home and in the heart of the community.

Together, Advocates and Supportive Living, Inc. partner to provide the highest quality of housing, services, and programs to meet the challenges of brain injury survivors. Our goal is to ensure people live their lives to the fullest.

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Heads Up Headlines - SPRING/SUMMER 2020 17
Seven Hills NeuroCare (SHNC) provides post-acute brain injury rehabilitation to survivors of acquired brain injuries and people with neurodevelopmental disorders. Our goal is to help people reclaim their lives, and maximize their independence and recovery in the community.

The SHNC multidisciplinary team of licensed and certified professionals offers individualized services to fit within people’s home- and community-based routines, including cognitive rehabilitation, rehabilitation counseling, behavior analysis, psychology, speech language therapy, nursing, assistive technology, and coaching/support with daily living skills. We also offer day programming, and workforce readiness and employment in collaboration with colleagues at Seven Hills ASPIRE!, and both individual psychotherapy and psychiatry through Seven Hills Behavioral Health.

To learn more, contact Dr. Jonathan Worcester, Vice President of SHNC, at 508.320.4991, or jworcester@sevenhills.org.
cognitive rehabilitation for patients and survivors of COVID-19. This amendment was filed by Representatives Kimberly Ferguson and Christine Barber. The amendment was passed by the House and then members unanimously voted for the Health Care bill.

The Senate unanimously passed the Health Care Reform bill in June. The bill’s next step is to a conference committee, where Senators Cindy Friedman, Julian Cyr and Dean Tran and House Majority Leader Ronald Mariano, Representatives Dan Cullinane, and Randy Hunt will negotiate over the two competing bills. Both the House and Senate bills aim to build on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and make a commitment to telehealth access, though their approaches differ.

Passage of this bill will be the first step in requiring commercial health insurance plans to cover cognitive rehabilitation for ALL individuals with an acquired brain injury in the Commonwealth.

Stay tuned for Advocacy Alerts on this bill.
Upcoming BIA-MA Events

2020 Cere-Bration Walk . Roll . Run  September 26, 2020
ABI Clinical Series:  September 23, 2020
ABI And the Family: A Biopsychosocial Perspective

Learn more at www.biama.org or call 508-475-0032

YOUR SPRING/SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER HAS ARRIVED!!