35th Annual BIA-MA Brain Injury Conference - a Huge Success!

What a great way to end Brain Injury Awareness month! On Thursday, March 24th over 800 professionals, brain injury survivors, families and caregivers gathered together at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel & Trade Center in Marlborough, Massachusetts for BIA-MA’s 35th Annual Brain Injury Conference. The sold-out conference featured a record crowd, 29 educational workshops, over 50 exhibitors, 3 poster presentations, and multiple learning and networking opportunities.

After morning coffee and continental breakfast, conference attendees were treated to a heart-felt keynote presentation by Joanne Susi, a life coach who has survived two strokes. Joanne shared her insights and experiences with frankness, wit and sensitivity. Here are a few quotes shared from some of the keynote evaluations:

• “Joanne was a delight, inspiring, moving and fun. From tears to laughter 3 times during her talk. Loved her patience with those who spoke about their own experiences.”

• “I truly appreciated the energizing spirit of this keynote speaker. Joanne Susi was inspiring and left me with a sense of gratitude and hopefulness. She confirmed the fact that, as human beings, we have great potential that reaches beyond our physical and intellectual capabilities and disabilities. Thank you Joanne!”

Conference attendees had opportunities to attend therapeutic workshops on Music, Yoga & Mindfulness, Art, Journaling, and Drumming, along with clinical topics on Neuroplasticity, Psychopharmacology, Applied Behavior Analysis, and more.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Presenting Sponsor, HealthSouth, and the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) for making this year’s event possible. And last but most certainly not least - the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts would like to thank the members of the Annual Conference Planning Committee for the outstanding content of this year’s conference.

SAVE THE DATE!
Thursday, March 30, 2017
BIA-MA’s 36th Annual Brain Injury Conference
As I write this, it is mid-March, which is Brain Injury Awareness Month, and am wearing my blue #NotAloneinBrainInjury bracelet for inspiration (yes, I am). In my relatively brief involvement with the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts, I have found that many of us have a compelling story to tell. These stories pertain to ourselves, or to family and friends, and run the gamut of human experiences. They often relate stunning episodes of persistence & perseverance, setback & progress, failure & success, despair & hope, tragedy & recovery. Our shared stories sustain us, inspire us, and draw us together.

Sadly, the story I relate belongs to my late beloved wife, Andrea Lynn Talbott-Butera, who sustained an acquired brain injury in February 2012 and succumbed to complications resulting thereof in February 2013. There is so much I could convey about that final year of Andrea’s life, but that is not my intent here. However, I will never forget that during her (and our family’s) ordeal, a representative from the BIA-MA found me. I did not seek the BIA-MA. They came to me – and I did not even know the organization existed! Yes, I discovered that we were “not alone in brain injury”. Consequently, sometime after Andrea’s passing, I eventually decided to go to them.

I occasionally wonder why I engaged with the BIA-MA when it might have been more natural to distance myself from anything evoking the experiences surrounding the tragedy of my wife’s death. In all honesty, such distancing is impossible because it is part of me; but I also continue with the BIA-MA for many personal reasons – out of love, honor, and respect for Andrea; and for the wounded hearts of our children who will always love and miss their dearest mother.

Yet – especially now as a new member of the Board of Directors – I also remain engaged because we need the BIA-MA to continue “to create a better future for brain injury survivors and their families through brain injury prevention, education, advocacy and support”. Indeed, we truly do! We all know this. Many of us learned it under difficult circumstances and it is underscored with every telling of our personal stories.

During Andrea’s last year of life, once the extent of her brain injuries became clear, one of the most startling personal discoveries was the uncertainty with regard to her eventual prospects for recovery – an uncertainty compounded by the fact that every brain is different (something each of us in the BIA-MA understands). It seemed as though we possessed vast knowledge about the human heart, or lungs, or liver; but the brain, the seat of our very “self”, remained largely a mystery. I admit that was an unfair and biased assessment based in the struggles of the moment, but it was the one that formed in my mind at that time. In reality, we truly know an enormous amount about the human brain, but there is still so much more yet to be known.

Consequently, I find the current focus on concussions so fascinating; and, potentially, so promising and beneficial. As we have seen, a great deal of public awareness has been drawn to the very serious matter of concussions and the dangers of developing Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) – especially when resulting from participation in youth, scholastic, amateur, or executive message

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Disclaimer
BIA-MA does not support, endorse or recommend any method, treatment or program for persons with brain injury. We only aim to inform you. No endorsement is intended or implied.

“Executive Message” continued on page 3
“Executive Message” continued from page 2

professional sports.

When I was a volunteer in our Ambassador Program, we often held Q&A sessions following our BIA-MA speakers, and the vast majority of questions (often posed by concerned parents and grandparents) centered on this very topic. What makes this matter so compelling is its seemingly insidious nature; i.e., every repeated contact might be contributing at a cellular level to the development of a debilitating and potentially tragic condition later in life.

It is my sincere hope that shining a light on any area of brain injury – of any kind – has the effect of broadening public awareness and support of brain injury research, treatment, and care – of all kinds. However, I also sincerely hope that the focus on concussions and CTE (in the form of research, funding, legislation, et al) does not proceed to the exclusion of efforts focusing on all the other types of brain injuries that occur every day within this country – the vast majority of which injuries are not related to sports concussions. This does not diminish the seriousness of concussions and CTE, but positions it in the overall and greater landscape of brain injuries.

I look forward to my tenure on the Board of Directors and hope my efforts contribute (even in a minute way) to furthering the attainment of those goals we all seek – goals to which we give voice with every story we tell.

-Stephen A. Butera, BIA-MA Board of Directors
9 Great Reasons to Contact HealthSouth
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**HealthSouth Braintree Rehabilitation Hospital at Framingham**
125 Newbury Street • Framingham, MA 01701 • 508 532-9203

**HealthSouth New England Rehabilitation Hospital at Lowell**
1071 Varnum Avenue • Lowell, MA 01854 • 978 446-1862

**New England Rehabilitation Hospital - Portland, ME**
A joint venture of Maine Medical Center and HealthSouth
335 Brighton Avenue • Portland, ME 04102 • 207 775-4000 • nerhp.org

**HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Western Massachusetts**
222 State Street • Ludlow, MA 01056 • 413 308-3300 • healthsouthrehab.org

**HealthSouth New England Rehabilitation Hospital - Woburn**
2 Rehabilitation Way • Woburn, MA 01801 • 781 935-5050
healthsouthnewengland.com

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Rebuilding Lives After Brain Injury

**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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On Wednesday, February 3, 2016, Senator Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester) and Representative Kimberly Ferguson (R-Holden) sponsored the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) First Annual Advocacy Day at the State House. Over one hundred and fifty survivors, family members and professionals attended along with numerous state representatives and senators.

Before the event, BIA-MA conducted three training sessions to teach the basics on advocacy. During the workshops, BIA-MA also educated attendees on the two major causes it will be advocating for this session: increasing funding for the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP) and passage of the Act Relative to Cognitive Rehabilitation S.485/H.843.

The Advocacy Day began with Senator Chandler speaking generally on her involvement with starting the Brain Injury Commission in 2011. Senator Chandler became interested in this cause after learning of a constituent’s son’s brain injury from a fall; the son was then unable to find any services to help him. The Commission spent about a year touring the state, researching the needs of survivors and families and finding out what services were available. The Commission wrote a very detailed report highlighting recommendations to the state. Senator Chandler explained that as per the recommendation of the Brain Injury Commission last year an epidemiology study on acquired brain injury was completed and that the legislature approved funding for a pilot community center to be located in Worcester County.

Commissioner Adelaide “Nicky” Osborne, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, also spoke at the event. She explained to the audience that BIA-MA is the only group that advocates for the support and prevention of the brain injury community in the state through funding for SHIP. SHIP has a network of community-based services and supports that assists individuals in maintaining or increasing their level of independence at home, work and in their communities. SHIP has been level funded for services for a number of years and she emphasized the importance of the program to the brain injury community.

Representative Ferguson spoke regarding her background as a speech language pathologist and the importance of cognitive rehabilitation in the recovery from a brain injury. She highlighted how following a brain injury, speech language pathology addresses communication problems, difficulty understanding complex and abstract written or verbal information, finding words and expressing coherent ideas and using language in interpersonal relations. Representative Ferguson emphasized how the passage of the cognitive rehabilitation bill would come at no cost to the state. She concluded by tying in the connection between the need for passage of this bill and the funding for the SHIP Program. This bill will enable individuals to receive cognitive rehabilitation and hopefully, with this additional care, some will not need care in the future through SHIP.

Executive Director Nicole Godaire presented Commissioner Osborne, Senator Chandler and Representative Ferguson with a fingerprint tree. During the month of January, area support groups completed the trees. The fingerprint trees were titled “Every brain injury is unique just like our fingerprints”. BIA-MA also hosted a week long exhibit of the fingerprint Trees at the State House. After the presentations, attendees then had the opportunity to visit their state legislators with previously scheduled appointments. During the meetings, attendees spoke about their personal story and then spoke about the need for increasing funding for SHIP and the passage of the Cognitive Rehabilitation bill. Attendees also delivered 200 fingerprint trees to each state representative and state senator.
Changes at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) is pleased to announce two changes at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). Effective December 27, 2015, Commissioner Adelaide “Nicky” Osborne and Deputy Commissioner Kasper Goshgarian appointed Josh Mendelsohn as Assistant Commissioner of the Community Living Services Division. In this position, he will supervise multiple programs providing or contracting for services to people with disabilities living in residential homes or in the community. Mr. Mendelsohn’s career has continuously focused on promoting and safeguarding the rights of protected individuals, with particular emphasis on persons with disabilities.

Mr. Mendelsohn began working for MRC in 2013 as Associate Counsel. He provided valuable research and guidance on a wide range of issues related to service delivery. He also had a leadership role in issues related to the administration of the Home and Community Waiver Programs within MRC that included Acquired Brain Injury, Money Follows the Person and Traumatic Brain Injury Waivers.

Before joining MRC, Mr. Mendelsohn worked for over twenty years as an attorney for the US Department of Justice. Here, he served as a trial attorney responsible for conducting litigation and investigations of discrimination based on disability in facilities and services of public entities and private businesses under Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). Mr. Mendelsohn received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Economics at California State University at Northridge and Juris Doctoris from the UCLA School of Law.

In October, Sandy Biber became the Director of Community Based Services at MRC. Ms. Biber now oversees the Waiver Unit and Brain Injury and Statewide Specialized Community Services (BI&SSCS). The two departments were combined under one director because many of the duties of the employees in the two departments are similar and MRC has the responsibility of the operations of the Waiver Department.

Ms. Biber began working for MRC in June of 2014 as the Assistant Director of Waiver Operations. She was responsible for managing a team of case managers who did an outstanding job in transitioning individuals from nursing facilities into the community with needed supports.

Ms. Biber has many years of experience in both direct care and the management of programs that provide services on behalf of persons with disabilities. Her career began as a clinician providing individual and group therapy. Further, she had early experience in the management and direction of a clubhouse model for consumers with mental health disabilities.

BIA-MA Staff and Volunteers
Cynthia Cardeli - BIA-MA Director of Programs and Services

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) is proud to announce the promotion of Cynthia Cardeli to Director of Programs and Services. Cynthia joined BIA-MA in October of 2014 as the Western Regional Manager in the Pittsfield office. Her focus was to develop and implement a vision for continued growth of the western region, to increase awareness and education of brain injury, promote community outreach and collaboration, and facilitate support groups.

Cardeli has proven to be an asset to BIA-MA. In the time she managed the western region, she grew the support groups from 8 to a total of 11, and increased the reach of new activities for brain injury survivors in the Greenfield, Northampton and Hadley areas. She also grew the newsletter mailing from less than 200 to presently over 800, and as a result, BIA-MA has connected with more individuals, survivors, families, and organizations in the community. Cardeli has proven to be a sincere and dedicated professional who cares about the brain injury community. “The BIA-MA has really made an impact on me…I mean Cynthia really took an interest in me and I love it,” said Mary Jane Norton, survivor and volunteer.

Cardeli came to BIA-MA with more than 20 years of experience in the non-profit human services field with a focus in elder care, and has a wealth of health and human service knowledge. BIA-MA is excited that she is now focusing her efforts in leading BIA-MA’s Programs and Services team which includes responsibility for prevention, education, and support.

Cardeli remarks, “I am eager to begin my new role as Director of Programs and Services for BIA-MA. I do intend, to continue to utilize my insight and understanding of the needs of survivors, caregivers and professionals in order to provide meaningful and relevant educational programs, to foster strong community collaborations and client relations, and to develop meaningful and enhanced quality of life activities for survivors and caregivers throughout the Commonwealth!”

Get Involved: Opportunities for Survivor Speakers

Within the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA), there are several opportunities to become involved!

Survivor Speakers are integral and invaluable contributors to the prevention programs which provide individuals with the opportunity to share their story of how they sustained their injury and how the injury has changed the way they live their lives.

The following three programs include survivor testimony:

**Brains At Risk** is an effective court-referral program that links the choices made behind the wheel to the devastating effects of traumatic brain injury (TBI). The mission of Brains At Risk is to promote responsible driving and raise awareness of TBI in order to prevent fatalities and serious injury on Massachusetts roads.

**Think A-Head** is a school-based program designed to promote brain injury awareness and prevention among students. Think A-Head teaches students to avoid risk-taking behavior and develop healthy living habits.

**The Ambassador Program** effectively promotes prevention and education by having persons with a brain injury and/or family members present facts related to brain injuries as well as their own story of injury and recovery to various civic groups throughout the state.

Get involved in the prevention efforts and share your survivor story - go to www.biama.org/survivorspeakers
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.

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.

Helping Our Patients Live Life to the Fullest.

At Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (SRN), we help our patients rebuild their physical and cognitive function after traumatic brain injury. We focus on helping them find the emotional strength to thrive in the days to come.

Our brain injury clinical teams bring specialized experience and world-class expertise to the patients in their care. Our physician-led teams provide an unwavering commitment and the support to help patients and family members stay hopeful, determined and strong.

SRN provides patients and families access to an unmatched range of services and programs - from advanced evaluation technologies to evidence based rehabilitation programs to extensive family and community resources.

Patients in the BI Program at Spaulding consistently achieved higher rates of functional improvement than national averages (UDS & e-rehab database).

The TBI Program at Spaulding has been selected as a Model Systems site by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR).
Educational Update

ABI Clinical Continuing Education Program - Topics for May and June!

The ABI Clinical Continuing Education Program was developed to enhance the knowledge, expertise, and skills of providers working with brain injury survivors. Continuing Education Credits are available. For more information, or to register, visit www.biama.org/ABItraining.

There is one more ABI Continuing Education training available.

Problematic Sexual Behavior  
**When:** June 9, 2016, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
**Cost:** $150 BIA-MA Members, $175 Non-Members  
**Instructor:** Laurie L. Guidry, Psy.D.  
**Description:** This training will provide participants with an overview of the continuum and clinical presentation of problematic sexual behavior (PSB) disorders, as well as the challenges experienced by individuals who exhibit co-morbid issues of acquired brain injury. Recommended approaches for assessment and treatment of PSB and other behaviors which place individuals and others at risk, as well as the responsibilities and requirements of the SORB (Sex Offender Registry Board) and implications for community-based programs serving individuals with PSB will be reviewed and discussed.

**Who should attend?** Audiologists, Case Managers, Certified Brain Injury Specialists, Family Counselors, Mental Health Clinicians, Neuropsychologists, Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Psychologists, Rehabilitation Counselors, Social Workers, Speech/Language Pathologists, Program Directors/Managers of residential, day and other programs that serve persons with ABI.

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MRC Provider Trainings - June 2016

The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) are hosting two trainings in June 2016 at the UMASS Medical School Campus. These two hands-on trainings are exclusively for the direct staff of provider organizations. For more information contact Laura MacFeeley at 508-475-0032 or lmacfeeley@biama.org.

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):**  
**When:** Tuesday, June 21, 2016, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
**Instructor:** Kathleen Shahrokhi, Ph.D., Clinical Neuropsychologist  
**Description:** An introduction to TBI including common causes, symptoms, and behavioral, psychiatric and cognitive consequences. *Required for Residential Directors*

**Managing Difficult Behaviors with ABI Clients:**  
**When:** Monday, June 20, 2016, 10:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
**Instructor:** Susan Magocsi, D.Sc., Clinical Neuropsychologist  
**Description:** Designed to enable better communication with people with ABI to increase independent, appropriate behavior, prevent aggression, and strategies to foster meaningful actions.
BIA-MA Western Region News
Cynthia Cardeli, BIA-MA Director of Programs & Services

On Saturday, March 19, the Western Regional support groups came together to celebrate survivors at the second annual Brain Injury Awareness Gala sponsored by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. More than 50 attendees, including survivors, caregivers, friends, family, and BIA-MA staff gathered at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Pittsfield for an afternoon of celebration. Guests dressed in formal wear and wore colorful (sometimes bedazzled!) masks. We spent the day enjoying delicious food, a wonderful view of the city from the top floor of the hotel, a fun slideshow of our previous events, and even a surprise musical guest – Isabela Costello, daughter of Cynthia Cardeli (BIA-MA Director of Programs and Services) entertained us all with her rendition of “Can Can” and “Cabbage Song” on the viola. The gala was a huge success, and we are looking forward to celebrating survivors again next year!

Upcoming Western Region Events

- Smith College Museum of Art and Joe’s Pizza, Northampton – May 26, 2016, 3 p.m. - 6 p.m.*
- Mini-Golf and Ice Cream, Lanesborough – June 2016*
- PVBISG Annual Picnic and Potluck, Pioneer Valley – June 2016*
- Contact the Western Regional Office for information regarding recreational events in July and August!

*Sponsored by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
For more information about these events, contact the Western Regional Office at 413-443-0200
Winter is over, and spring has finally sprung!
A season of fun events is planned for survivors and family members in the Central Region. There will be an educational workshop for family members on basic information about brain injury. In June, we have a Paint Nite scheduled for survivors. The Creative Minds Craft Group will continue to meet monthly, making one-of-a-kind craft projects you can take home. And the Brain Games group will also gather monthly to play, learn, and laugh together. In July, we will welcome back art therapist Sonja Boodajee, MA, for another round of her art therapy series. All events take place at the Central Region office, 30 Lyman St., Suite 10, Westborough, MA. For more information about any of these events, call Beth or Tress at 508-475-0032.

Upcoming Central Region Events

Brain Injury 101 for Caregivers & Family**
Our staff will explain the basics of brain injury to give caregivers and family members a better understanding. We’ll discuss the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive changes that can come from brain injury, the process of acceptance, and tips for helping you and your loved one in their recovery. Tuesday, May 10, 6-8 pm at the BIA-MA office in Westborough, MA.

Young Adults Recreation Group*
Are you a brain injury survivor age 18-30 looking to meet others? Join us for one or both of these two exciting events scheduled this spring for the Central Region’s Young Adults Recreation Group! For details or to sign up, call Tress or Beth at 508-475-0032.
1. Young Adults Recreation Group:  Paint-Your-Own-Pottery event: On Saturday, May 14th, 10:30 am – 12:30pm, Clay Time Studio in Shrewsbury.
2. Young Adults Recreation Group:  Castle Island lunch and stroll: On Saturday, June 18th, 10:00am - 12:00pm, we’ll gather on Castle Island in South Boston for lunch and a stroll around this historic fort. Come out and get some fresh air at a lovely spot in the city!

Brain Games*
This ongoing, free, social recreation group for brain injury survivors, takes place on the THIRD WEDNESDAY of every month from 1:00pm - 3:00 pm at the BIA-MA office in Westborough, MA. Free for survivors. Space is limited so please pre-register at 508-475-0032. “Brain Games” is sponsored by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

Wednesday, June 15   “Welcome Summer” indoor picnic

“Creative Minds” Craft Group
This ongoing, free, social recreation group for brain injury survivors takes place on the SECOND THURSDAY of every month from 1:00pm - 3:00pm at the BIA-MA office in Westborough, MA. This program is for survivors who enjoy crafting with a wide range of art materials. Space is limited to 10 participants. There is no charge for this program, however, donations will be accepted on the day of craft program to offset the cost of materials. Here are the craft themes for the upcoming months:

Thursday, June 9     Beach in a Glass

*Sponsored by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission   **Sponsored by Spaulding Rehabilitation Network
For more information about these events, call the Central Regional Office at 508-475-0032
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  • Monthly Family Support Groups
  • Consultation and Inclusion Support Services
  • Interdisciplinary Team Approach
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  • DOE and OCYS approved

www.biama.org
Soaring Without Limits, Healing through the Arts

This exhibit was held at the Brockton Public Library from April 1 through May 6, 2016 in the Driscoll Room. Fabulous artwork created by our very talented survivors and caregivers was paired with poetry written by invited poets, who were inspired by the artwork. An artists’ and poets’ reception and a poetry reading was held on April 6, 2016.

To prepare for exhibits, healing art classes met monthly. Healing through the arts can help with organization, problem solving, and memory when the frontal lobes have been affected by a brain injury. The arts can reduce anxiety, decrease isolation, increase hand-eye coordination and dexterity, and improve attention span. Survivors of brain injury find this is a way to express themselves when other methods have failed.

Brain Healthy Meal and Drum Circle

On March 30, 2016, 24 survivors and caregivers gathered at the Trowbridge Tavern to share in a Brain Healthy meal prepared by chef Mary Ellen McCarthy and take part in a drum circle guided by Sam Holmstock, founding member of the band Entrain. Each attendee was given a brain healthy cookbooklet and information on the safe handling of food. Some of the comments from the group members: “I could do something I’ve never done before! My husband had a great time.” “I learned the benefits of drumming to relieve stress while working on coordination. It was nice to see happy faces.” “The meal was great and it was nice to talk and spend time with each other but drumming was amazing.”

Spring Fling Ball

On April 25th the 5th Annual Spring Fling Ball was held. About 83 people attended and enjoyed lots of dancing with new friends and a full-course dinner including the Trowbridge Tavern’s fabulous desserts. State Senator Vinny deMacedo attended the ball and spoke to the group about the importance of providing services to brain injury survivors. Dancing was to the sound of our favorite DJ Doug Lauzon. Raffle items were beautifully compiled by Zelinda.

Upcoming Southeastern Region Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bus trip to Boston Museum of Science</td>
<td>Monday, May 16</td>
<td>with lunch (9am-5pm)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Classes</td>
<td>Thursday, May 19</td>
<td>(1pm-3pm)*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caregiver Advocacy Workshop</td>
<td>Wednesday, June 22</td>
<td>with Marilyn Price-Spivack (5:30pm-8pm)**</td>
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*Sponsored by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission  **Sponsored by Spaulding Rehabilitation Network
For more information about these events, call the Southeastern Regional Office at 508-743-0333
Did you know failing can be a beautiful thing? Now that’s an idea that goes against what many of us have been taught since birth. Those of us who have experienced a Traumatic Brain Injury are all too familiar with failing as we strive to make our lives work following TBI; it eats at us and drives us crazy.

Our first encounters with failing after TBI occur as we learn that we can’t do the things we used to do. These are educational failures, and they are necessary to go through simply because we need to learn about ourselves.

After that, we go through a prolonged period when we engage in practice failing as we re-learn and re-apply those skills and abilities we are trying to recapture. This type of practice failing is necessary also. In essence, we are re-learning how to be a human being.

Yes, failing is a necessary thing as we work to live a fulfilled life after TBI. For this reason, failing should be looked at as, “But one step taken on the road to success.”

Easier said than done

Life would be a lot easier if we were living our lives in a glass dome; where there was no one around to pass judgment on us and no one’s expectations to meet.

Except, of course, for our own. Yes, our own, for we are probably our harshest critics. We do not forgive ourselves for failing, even when the failing is educational or practice because we can’t get it through our heads that we are allowed to fail.

In our society, people who are considered “failures” have a stigma attached to them. They are outcasts; looked down upon, and frowned on. “Failures” are frequently said to “not have their act together.” Some think people have failed because they, “didn’t want it bad enough,” or simply, “didn’t try hard enough.”

It must be noted that there is a big difference between “living your life as a failure” or “being a failure,” and the act of failing. Sometimes, you need to fail in order that you “get your life together.”

Imagine you are a first time baseball player and you’re standing in the batter’s box waiting for the pitcher to throw the ball. He winds up and throws an amazing pitch that baffles you; the ball at first looks like it’s going to your head but then seems to magically take a left-hand turn, and drops perfectly over the plate.

If you’ve never seen a pitch like this before how are you going to know how to hit it?

You don’t.

We are learning how to live this life after brain injury; in other words, we are seeing the pitch for the first time. We need to adjust and adapt.

Make failure your friend

Those of us who have suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury have this in common...we fail at things where we used to be successful. The inability to live up to our own expectations is one of the most damaging aspects of brain injury, but it can be corrected.

Just think...why should we have those expectations? Who are we trying to impress? What are we trying to prove? Why should a person who has suffered a TBI beat themselves up because they could not function the way they used to? You’re not going to learn how to do anything better or faster by treating yourself poorly.

There is just no sense in it.
Accepting those times when you fail is all part of learning to forgive yourself and getting to know the new person you are. Like it or not, things have changed. You might as well like it, put on your explorer’s hat, pull on your hiking boots and go for the ride.

Don’t miss this opportunity to learn about what a brave, great person you are when you go off and explore new worlds in order to become more than you ever thought you could be because you accepted failing.

The mistake is thinking you have to go back and be the person you used to be. Get over the thought that you have to do everything perfectly, and realize that the only way you’re going to be able to improve yourself is by trying new things. The use of the word trying implies that whatever you do, you may not be successful.

Start small. Start by trying things that won’t have major repercussions if you fail. You have to spend some time learning the right way to fail, and gradually build up your repertoire to have things you are successful at. As your successes build, so does your self-confidence and knowledge.

It’s not a fast and easy road, but it’s the only one in front of us. Who cares that it is not paved? What does it really matter? We are strong. We know what we want, and we’re going to make it happen whatever way we have to.

Meet Jeff Sebell - Jeff Sebell is a nationally 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. His book “Learning to Live with Yourself after Brain Injury,” was released in August of 2014 by Lash Publishing. Reprinted with permission.
Join Team BIA-MA at the New Balance Falmouth Road Race

We are once again partnering with the Numbers for Nonprofits Program for the 44th running of the New Balance Falmouth Road Race, and are looking for 10 runners (or non-runners!) to help us cross the Falmouth finish line in August. Participation in this event not only helps raise crucial funds but important awareness for brain injury. More than 11,000 runners, from elite to beginner, will gather to run along the shore from Woods Hole to Falmouth Heights – join us there!

Since 2014 the dedicated Team BIA-MA runners and their supporters have raised nearly $26,000 in support of brain injury survivors and their families – $14,000 from 2015 alone! The prevention, education, advocacy and support provided by BIA-MA would not be possible without the support of our friends. Your involvement in this event, and many others, ensures our work toward a world where all preventable brain injuries are prevented, all unpreventable brain injuries are minimized, and all individuals who have experienced a brain injury enjoy a maximum quality of life continues.

To learn more, visit www.biama.org/falmouthroadrace or call Sandra Madden 508-475-0032 and submit your application by June 3rd to be considered for Team BIA-MA!

SAVE THE DATE!
Walk & Roll for Brain Injury
Western Region: September 10, 2016
Central Region: September 18, 2016
Southeastern Region: Fall 2016

SAVE THE DATE!
2016 Golf Classic
Monday June, 20, 2016
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts gratefully acknowledges the following gifts from our generous contributors received between December 1, 2015 and April 1, 2016

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Answers to Brain Games from page 15

7 9 6 5 8 4 1 3 2
5 3 8 1 2 6 7 4 9
2 1 4 3 7 9 5 8 6
4 2 5 7 9 3 8 6 1
1 7 9 4 6 8 2 5 3
8 6 3 2 5 1 9 7 4
9 8 2 6 3 7 4 1 5
3 5 1 8 4 2 6 9 7
6 4 7 9 1 5 3 2 8
Upcoming BIA-MA Events

2016 Annual Golf Classic  June 20, 2016
Walk & Roll For Brain Injury
   Western Region  September 10, 2016
   Framingham, MA  September 18, 2016
Southeastern Region  TBD

For more information visit biama.org or call 508-475-0032

YOUR BIA-MA 2016 SPRING NEWSLETTER HAS ARRIVED!!