On February 1, 2017, Senator Harriette L. Chandler (D-Worcester) and Representative Kimberly Ferguson (R-Holden) sponsored the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) Second Annual Advocacy Day at the State House. Nearly two hundred survivors, family members and professionals attended along with numerous State Representatives and Senators.

BIA-MA Board President David Dwork started the event off with a welcome and an overview of BIA-MA, our mission, and our successful involvement with advocacy at the State House.

Senator Chandler then spoke on her involvement with brain injury, starting with the “birth” of the Brain Injury Commission (BIC) in 2011. She became aware of the need after a constituent’s son suffered a brain injury from a fall and was unable to find any services to help. The BIC recommended that the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) conduct an epidemiological study on Acquired Brain Injury (ABI). This study was published in 2014 and identified the need for a pilot community center in Worcester and a Needs Assessment Study. Both were implemented in 2016.

In January 2017, Senator Chandler and Representative Ferguson filed a Resolve to re-establish the BIC to review the 2014 Epidemiology Report and the Needs Assessment, make findings on the current status of rehabilitative residential and integrated community-based support services, and provide recommendations for service improvement.

Representative Ferguson thanked the audience for taking important steps to make connections with their legislators and advocating for the needs of the brain injury community. As a Speech Language Pathologist, she spoke about the need for cognitive rehabilitation after an ABI.

Secretary Marylou Sudders, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, spoke about the various Massachusetts departments, divisions, and detailed services available to brain injury survivors under MRC.

For more information about BIA-MA, call 1-800-242-0030 or visit www.biama.org
David P. Dwork, Esq., was appointed the President of the BIA-MA Board of Directors in November 2016. David concentrates his law practice in traumatic brain injury litigation. Here is David’s incoming message to us all:

I have been fortunate to have had a front row seat to one of the most important events of the past generation: the change in our understanding of the human brain. There was little appreciation a generation ago of the biochemistry that goes on within the brain, or how neurological damage to the brain affects cognition, emotion, personality, and behavior. There was even less understanding about what to do to help individuals who had sustained a brain injury. There was little available in the way of rehabilitation or other services for survivors of brain injury, leaving them in a dark place with nowhere to turn.

A group of courageous and passionate parents of children who had sustained a brain injury connected 35 years ago determined to change this bleak picture. Their vision and determination gave birth to a movement and to the organization now known as the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts.

This movement expanded exponentially over the following 35 years. By connecting with other family members, survivors, and professionals BIA-MA has become the leading organization in the State (if not in the nation) in developing programs to prevent brain injuries and in serving the needs of survivors and their families.

The organization provides information and resources, education, training, support groups and other needed services - always with compassion and professionally-empowering thousands. BIA-MA’s prevention programs, including Brains at Risk, Gateway, Teen Ride, and Think A-Head, have surely enlightened the attitude and changed the behavior of thousands, and probably prevented immeasurable brain injuries.

The organization’s advocacy efforts have resulted in the provision of services for individuals with TBI, including the Statewide Head Injury Program, as well as legislation such as seatbelt and helmet laws designed to prevent brain injuries. These efforts have also resulted in court decisions such as Hutchinson vs. Patrick: allowing survivors to live in the community with dignity.

This momentous change was a result of people connecting and recognizing a need and being determined to address it. I would like to build on these connections through: development of our Board of Directors; collaboration with public and private agencies and business leaders; engaging with our support groups and members; and with the use of technology, including social media, to expand our reach, increase our understanding of the brain

“Dwork” continued on page 13
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).

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.

- Neurorehabilitation
- Neurobehavioral
- Supported Living
- Transitional Living
- Host-Home

- Day Treatment
- Outpatient
- Respite
- Neurofunctional Home & Community

800-743-6802
NeuroRestorative.com
#BIAMAGivingTree Spreads Holiday Cheer

This year, the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts put a new spin on #GivingTuesday, the nationwide giving campaign following the holidays, with our #BIAMAGivingTree program. Every year the staff at BIA-MA chooses a brain injury facility to give back to and implements an employee giving tree. But that only helps one small group.

In order to reach as many brain injury survivors as possible, we asked our friends to help and the #BIAMAGivingTree campaign was developed. The results were huge!! Thanks to so many of you who donated items, our donation boxes overflowed with great items. The #BIAMAGivingTree campaign delivered 74 bags to brain injury survivors across the state, helping to make the holiday season just a little brighter.

Stay tuned for 2017 - The #GivingTuesday campaign starts November 28, 2017!

"Advocacy Day" from cover

Josh Mendelsohn, Assistant Commissioner of the Community Living Division of MRC, also spoke at the event. He explained that BIA-MA is the only group that advocates for the support of the brain injury community through the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP). SHIP has a network of community-based services and supports that assist individuals in maintaining or increasing their level of independence at home, work, and in their communities.

Executive Director Nicole Godaire presented all speakers with a framed picture of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts decorated by BIA-MA’s support groups. Nicole commented, “The maps are a visual reminder of how many people are affected by brain injuries across the Commonwealth and the importance of continued legislation to bring services and support to individuals with brain injury.” She also highlighted the three current BIA-MA advocacy priorities:

1. Support for the MRC SHIP Budget Ask (funded by MA Budget line item 4120-6000)
2. Resolve to Re-establish the Brain Injury Commission
3. Passage of the “Act Improving Lives by Ensuring Access to Brain Injury Treatment” (cognitive rehabilitation)

Nicole pointed out that in preparation for Advocacy Day, BIA-MA conducted three training workshops to teach advocacy and state government basics to attendees. After the presentations, attendees then had the opportunity to visit their state legislators, tell their personal story, and advocate for BIA-MA’s current legislative initiatives.
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.

Strengthening Brain Injury Supports

Seven Hills NeuroCare (SHNC) supports people with brain injuries in their seamless transitions from clinical facilities to residential options that provide person-centered, community-based recreation through day and residential programs. SHNC helps identify each person’s life goals and the steps needed to achieve them. The SHNC interdisciplinary team includes:

- Certified brain injury specialists
- Certified co-occurring treatment specialists
- Clinical behavior specialists
- Medical doctors
- Allied health professionals
- Psychiatrists
- Mental health counselors
- Neuropsychologists
- Neurologists

Through a distinctive array of comprehensive supports, the experienced and dedicated Seven Hills NeuroCare team works to restore hope, independence, and dreams. To learn more, call 508.983.2976 or visit sevenhills.org.

Advocates

Brain Injury Services

Our Brain Injury Services offer personalized solutions in the heart of the community.

- Community Supports
- Day Services
- Recreation
- Residential Service

BrainInjury@Advocates.org  www.Advocates.org
Register Now for the BIA-MA Annual Brain Injury Conference!

The BIA-MA Annual Conference provides a forum for the brain injury community (brain injury survivors, caregivers, and professionals) to gather, obtain a better understanding of brain injury, and become up-to-date on supports and services. The 2017 conference will offer 29 workshops, over 40 exhibitor tables, and a keynote from Stacia Bissell and Katya Bowen. Continuing Education Credits are available for professionals in certain fields. To learn more visit [www.biama.org/annualconference](http://www.biama.org/annualconference).

**DATE:** Thursday, March 30, 2017, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**LOCATION:** Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel
181 Boston Post Road West
Marlborough, MA 01752
[www.rplazahotels.com](http://www.rplazahotels.com)

**INCLUDED:** Continental breakfast, lunch, and snacks

**REGISTER:** [www.biama.org/annualconference](http://www.biama.org/annualconference)

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Jennifer McCormick & the BIA-MA Speaker’s Bureau

The BIA-MA Speaker’s Bureau provides an opportunity for brain injury survivors, family members or anyone affected by brain injury to share their story in a variety of settings. Time and time again we hear of the impact this makes on all involved. A goal of this program is to shed light on this silent epidemic and create greater brain injury awareness to the community.

Some examples of our outreach opportunities are managing a BIA-MA vendor table at a wellness fair or conference, volunteering at any of our events, or speaking to local groups such as the Rotary Club. The Speaker’s Bureau enables participants to network with other survivors, family members and professionals in the brain injury community.

Long-time Prevention Program speaker Jennifer McCormick was asked to speak at an Ambassador Program at the Rotary Club in Chelmsford, MA. Opportunities like this help BIA-MA create awareness of brain injury to civic groups, but can also empower speakers like Jennifer. “Speaking with the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts has helped me heal in so many ways. I have gained the confidence in myself that I lost 16 years ago, I feel complete again.”

If you or someone you know has been affected by brain injury and wants to speak or take part in the other exciting opportunities BIA-MA provides with our Speaker’s Bureau, please contact Justine Cote, Manager of Prevention, [jcote@biama.org](mailto:jcote@biama.org) or visit our website [www.biama.org/survivorspeakers](http://www.biama.org/survivorspeakers).
Support Groups Help Create Better Futures

One of the key ways that BIA-MA fulfills our mission of “Creating Better Futures for Brain Injury Survivors” is to offer support to survivors, families, and caregivers is through support groups.

In November of 2015 Lori Tomasetti, CTRS, joined the organization as the full-time statewide Support Group Leader Liaison. Lori came to the BIA-MA with 20 years of experience in several in-patient brain injury and neuro-rehabilitation centers.

Over the past year, Lori’s focus has been getting to know support group members and their leaders. The BIA-MA currently offers 53 support groups statewide, compared to 40 over a year ago. In addition, several new groups are planned for this year.

Lori has also spent the last year revising paperwork, visiting support groups, developing and implementing new procedures, and training support group leaders. “Working for the BIA-MA for the past year has been an amazing experience. Combining my prior clinical and administrative experience in a manner that can help those living with the daily struggles of brain injury and their families has been extremely rewarding. What I have learned is that, while every brain injury is unique just as every individual is, the one thing they all have in common is the need for support and to know that they are not alone. I look forward to continued expansion of support groups.”

BIA-MA’s support groups range in size and style; some are small and intimate, while others are large and provide a forum for speakers. We offer groups for survivors only, as well as a variety of groups open to anyone affected by brain injury.

BIA-MA also offers recreation activities throughout the year, sponsored in part by the Statewide Head Injury Program (SHIP), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC).

For more information please visit our website at www.biama.org/groups or call 508-475-0032.
BIA-MA Central Regional News
Tress Ricker, LSW, Central Regional Manager

Gallery Night in November*

At the Central Regional Office, we encourage brain injury survivors to explore their own creativity. During the past year, we’ve offered art therapy with volunteer therapist, Sonja Boodajee, launched a new bi-monthly Arts Group using fine art materials, and made cozy snowmen in the Creative Minds Crafts Group.

In November, we invited our survivor artists to display their work at Gallery Night. We converted our conference room into a temporary art gallery and showed drawings, paintings, photographs, and crafts. Local brain injury survivors and their family members joined several staff members for delicious hors d’oeuvres, fruit punch, and conversation about these wonderful creations.

Upcoming Central Region Events

- **Arts Group**: The first and third Tuesdays of each month, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Central Regional Office, Westborough. Space is limited.
- **Creative Minds Crafts Group**: The second Thursday of each month, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m., Central Regional Office, Westborough. Space is limited.
  - March 9 Ladybugs & Friends Magnets
  - April 14 Mesh Flowers
  - May 11 Tile Coasters
  - June 8 Beach Signs

For more information or to make reservations contact the Central Regional Office at 508-475-0032 or visit [www.biama.org/centralregion](http://www.biama.org/centralregion)

*Spurred in part by the Statewide Head Injury Program, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission*
Annual Halloween Party!*

A group of very frightening, strange, heroic, and beautiful people celebrated Halloween at the Trowbridge Tavern in Bourne. As you can see from the photograph, we were well-protected by our superheroes who all spent a great deal of time perfecting their costumes. As usual, the dinner was wonderful and the dancing superb.

Pictured above are: Zachary, Brittney, Rob, Anthony, Lindsey, and Sam

Upcoming Southeastern Region Events

• Soaring Without Limits; Healing Through the Arts - Art & Poetry Exhibit: April 1-28, Brockton Public library. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Wareham Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

• Soaring Without Limits; Healing Through the Arts Reception: Wednesday, April 5th. Meet the artists & review the exhibit (12:00-3:00 p.m.); Poetry readings by poets and artist introductions (3:00-5:00 p.m.)

For more information or to make reservations contact the Southeastern Regional Office at 508-743-0333 or visit [www.biama.org/southeasternregion](http://www.biama.org/southeasternregion).

*Sponsored in part by the Statewide Head Injury Program, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission*
BIA-MA Western Regional News
Jennifer Summers, Western Regional Manager

Enso Hibachi Experience*

Imagine sitting around the Hibachi table with kindred spirits, watching as the amazing chefs cook your food with style…. right in front of your eyes!

A shared common experience is a wonderful way to build community, especially when delicious food is involved. Survivors from all over the Western Region shared this experience in October at Enso Asian Bistro in Lenox.

Between tasty bites of food, everyone chatted and laughed, especially at the antics of the amusing chefs. It was wonderful to watch as support group members from many parts of the region shared stories and experiences and soon became friends.

Although isolation is often the “default setting” for many survivors, this popular event brought out the daring and fun loving side of everyone who attended!

Upcoming Western Region Events

- **A Matter of Balance**: March 7, 14, 21, 28 and April 4, 11, 18, 25, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., BIA-MA Pittsfield Office, 180 Elm Street. Space is limited. Manage falls and increase activity levels.

- **Brain Injury Awareness Gala (An Afternoon in Paris)**: March 11, 2017, 1:00 – 4:00 p.m., Crowne Plaza, One West Street, Pittsfield. Cost: $10 per survivor and $15 per guest. Dressy attire. Space is limited.

For more information or to make reservations contact the Western Regional Office at 413-443-0200 or visit www.biama.org/westernregion.

*Sponsored in part by the Statewide Head Injury Program, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
Westborough - Ten years ago, early in the morning Jim Lyman Jr., now 50, needed help. He called his mother, Janet, who heard his slurred speech, hung up and dialed 911. Lyman, in the meantime, made his way down a narrow staircase to the front door of his house in Marlborough. In the midst of a massive stroke, he had enough awareness to know that he did not want to be carried down. He weighed 350 pounds.

Lyman was taken to Marlborough Hospital, and then taken by MedFlight to UMass Memorial Medical Center, where he spent 19 days in the Intensive Care Unit, much of it on a ventilator.

“Twice they wanted our permission to pull the plug,” Janet said.

Semi-comatose and down to 260 pounds, he was discharged to Whittier Rehabilitation Hospital in Westborough. According to Janet, “Seven weeks later, he walked out of Whittier with a cane. A week later he dropped the cane and said that he would never use it again.”

Lyman spent a year as an outpatient at Whittier working hard to recover strength in his right side and improve his diminished communication skills. He continues rehabilitation and is now at a healthy weight.

Kristine, Lyman’s sister, owns a house in Hudson where he and his mother live. They are fortunate to have the support of a huge extended family, but Janet said that hasn’t been enough for her son.

“Jim was heading to 50, and I could see some level of isolation and depression,” she said. “His counselor suggested that he connect with a craft group in Westborough for brain injury survivors.”

Scrunching his face, Lyman’s response was, “Crafts - no way”. Now a few months later, with a big smile on his face, turning red, he said, “It’s a family for me.”

Janet added, “It’s done a world of good for Jim. I see a big change in his attitude.”

The craft group takes place at the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA). Tress Ricker, BIA-MA Central Regional Manager, said, “Jim comes to almost everything that we do. He’s very active, always in a good mood, and always a cheerleader for other brain injury survivors. He’s a joy to be around.”

On the second Thursday of the month, Lyman gathers with 6 to 10 other brain injury survivors for the Creative Minds Craft
Group, also known as “crafty critters.” Making Halloween masks, St. Patrick’s Day t-shirts, and other themed craft projects, they work on fine motor skills and laugh.

Lyman attends “Brain Games” on the third Wednesday of the month, as well. The group plays cards and other games that can help improve cognition. The first Friday of the month, Lyman is at the “Coffee Club” where he and others chat and do journal writing.

He also attends an arts group that meets the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

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Lyman has taken a six-week long “Thrivers Workshop,” taught by fellow survivor, Barbara Webster, BIA-MA Survivor and Family Education Coordinator at the Westborough location. Much of the class is based on a book she wrote, “Lost & Found: A Survivor’s Guide for Reconstructing Life after a Brain Injury.”

Lyman is very proud to have raised $850 for the BIA-MA’s Annual Walk and Roll, held in Framingham Sept. 18, 2016.

He attended the BIA-MA Annual Brain Injury Conference in March 2016. Along with 800 others, he was able to choose among 29 workshops and visit 50 exhibits.

Lyman has also gone on trips to art museums, made friends, and increased his level of comfort at the BIA-MA.

According to Ann Coney, BIA-MA Marketing Communications Associate, “our overall mission is to provide a better future for those affected by brain injury. We have four pillars of action: education, support, prevention and advocacy.”

In addition to Westborough, BIA-MA has regional offices in East Wareham and Pittsfield. Each office offers programs, and coordinates a network of family, survivor and caregiver support groups. The Westborough location works with 23 support groups.

Most of all I feel fortunate to have met so many wonderful people committed to this journey. People such as Teresa Hayes, our past President, whose vision and inspiration as a leader has nearly doubled the organization’s size and reach over the past 4 years. With the help of people like Teresa, our committed staff, and all the other individuals devoted to our mission, I am confident that we will do justice to the vision of the small group of parents who courageously took the first steps that generated this movement.
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts gratefully acknowledges the following gifts from our generous contributors received between October 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016

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Heads Up headlines - Winter 2017

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Upcoming BIA-MA Events

BIA-MA Annual Conference  March 30, 2017
BIA-MA Annual Golf Classic  June 19, 2017
Falmouth Road Race  August 20, 2017
BIA-MA Annual Walk & Roll  
  West  September 9, 2017
  Southeast  September 16, 2017
  Central  September 24, 2017

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

YOUR BIA-MA WINTER 2017 NEWSLETTER HAS ARRIVED!!