STATEWIDE SUPPORT GROUP TRAINING

This year the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) hosted a statewide support group leader training session.

BIA-MA's support group leaders include brain injury survivors, family members, BIA-MA staff, and professionals. The goal of the event was for support group leaders to collaborate with others, to review the enhanced Support Group Leader Guide, and to attend a
EXECUTIVE MESSAGE FROM BIA-MA CEO NICOLE GODAIRE

What an exciting time this is for BIA-MA! We have accomplished so much in this past quarter many of which you will read about in the coming pages. Our accomplishments include the BIA-MA Celebration Field Day & 5K which raised over $33,000 for our mission and the Brain Injury Services Provider Fair in October, which was a first time collaboration for multiple state agencies.

I am especially excited about the upcoming 2020 events so SAVE THE DATES for: The Annual Meeting & Awards Banquet is scheduled for March 25, 2020 and presents an opportunity for BIA-MA members, friends and donors to come together to celebrate and recap the previous fiscal year, learn more about our future endeavors, and acknowledge a very special group of partners, volunteers, survivors and families through our Community Impact Awards. For more information visit www.biama.org/annualmeeting

The 39th Annual Brain Injury Conference will be held on Wednesday, March 25, 2020 with a Half-Day Pre-Conference and a Full-Day Conference on Thursday, March 26, 2020. For more than 38 years, the Annual Conference has provided a place to gather and discuss the challenges faced by the brain injury community. For more information visit www.biama.org/annualconference

Thank you all for your help in the above endeavors! Without you these milestones would not be possible to accomplish!
presentation by Dr. Francesca LaVecchia, a senior level clinician with over 40 years’ experience in the field of clinical neuropsychology, rehabilitation, and neurobehavioral treatment.

The training was held in April at Arturo’s Restaurant in Westborough Massachusetts providing a great opportunity for BIA-MA staff and support group facilitators to network. Attendees from large and small support groups had the chance to mingle and learn from experiences and share resources. The meeting also enabled group leaders to discover a vast range of possible areas for their groups to expand.

The Support Group Leader Guide answers many of the most common inquiries and “How To’s” from current support group leaders. The binders included helpful tools and resources for leaders to utilize and follow.

Dr. LaVecchia spoke on how BIA-MA support groups include not just TBI survivors but ABI survivors and family members. She further outlined the wider concepts of various support group models but then highlighted the benefits of support groups for individuals with medical disorders or diseases. Dr. LaVecchia also spoke about how support group leaders may need to tackle issues that require immediate response (psychiatric presentation, suspected abuse or neglect, call to law enforcement or medical emergency).

“The leadership meeting was very helpful, it felt good to be in a setting with support group leaders from across the state. The Support Group Leader Guide will be a great resource to bring to each meeting with the forms we need in it. Semi-annual or quarterly get-togethers with district/zone support group leaders will also be useful.”

In 2020, BIA-MA plans to hold three regional events instead of one central event for support group leaders.
On October 22, 2019, BIA-MA submitted testimony in support of H.1876, an Act Creating a Commission to Study Concussions and H.2007 an Act for No Organized Head Impacts to School Children or “No Hits” bill to the Joint Committee on Public Health.

H.1876, an Act creating a commission to study concussions, compliments the legislative action in fiscal year 2011 under Governor Deval Patrick to establish the Brain Injury Commission. The Commission identified gaps in service and other challenges experienced by Massachusetts residents who experienced an Acquired Brain Injury. As a result of the Commission, the state conducted an Epidemiology Study on Acquired Brain Injury (October of 2014), a Needs Assessment on Brain Injury (November 2017) and the establishment of a pilot community center in Worcester (July 2016). The Brain Injury Commission was re-established last year and began meeting again in April. The Commission has met each month and conducted 6 regional meetings. A new report is expected to be released in the spring of 2020. If enacted the Concussion Commission will supplement the findings of the Brain Injury Commission further studying and then suggesting how the state can best protect and treat children that suffer a concussion.

BIA-MA believes the law should be expanded to require school nurses to report all concussions to the state not just sports related ones. According to survey paper by Dr. Holly Hackman and Dr. Jonathan Howland “Application of Components of the Massachusetts’ Sports Concussion Regulations to All Students With Concussion: A Survey of School Nurses”, (December 2018) the Massachusetts concussion law should be broadened to reflect the standard of practice that has evolved in the field to ensure that all Massachusetts middle and high school students with concussion equally benefit from protections afforded through the law and that data collection and reporting can clearly distinguish between the causes of the concussions. Rep. Paul Schmid, lead sponsor of the No Hits bill, testified that “increasingly, science is telling us that hits to the head are bad, and that the sooner they start, the younger you are when they start, they worse it is for you.” The No Hits bill would prohibit tackle football (flag football and other non-tackle varieties are allowed) before eighth grade as a way to protect children from brain injuries. Schools, leagues or other entities that violate the prohibition would be subject to a fine of up to $2,000 per violation, with penalties increasing for subsequent violations and for “serious physical harm” to participants.

Chris Nowinski, a former professional wrestler and Harvard football player who co-founded the Boston University Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE) Center and is the founding CEO of the Concussion Legacy Foundation, testified in support of the bill. Nowinski noted a recent Boston University study that found the risk of developing the degenerative brain disease CTE rises by 30 percent with each year of playing tackle football and for every 2.6 years of play, the risk of developing CTE doubles.

Also speaking in support of the bill, Dr. Robert Stern, director of clinical research for BU CTE Center, noted that a “growing body of research” shows that it’s not just the “big hits” that can affect players’ brains. Repetitive sub-concussive hits that can be part of routine football can also cause short-term and long-term neurological consequences.

To support these bills please contact: Chairperson Joanne Comerford (Jo.Comerford@masenate.gov), Chairperson John Mahoney (John.Mahoney@mahouse.gov), and Members of the Committee https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J16
For the last fourteen years, the Massachusetts legislature has attempted to pass legislation making seat belt violations a primary offense, for which police can stop drivers. The state now has a secondary enforcement policy, which makes it illegal to not wear a seat belt but allows citations only when the driver was pulled over for another infraction. Past attempts to make the law more stringent have not passed because of fear of racial profiling and privacy concerns. According to the Massachusetts Highway Safety Division, Massachusetts ranks 46th in-the-nation for seat belt usage. The Bay State's rate of seat belt usage is 78.2%, lagging behind the nationwide average of 90%.

In October, the Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security heard a bill, filed by Rep. Jeffrey Roy and Sen. Paul Feeney, which would make the violation a primary offense and increase the fines for seat belt violations. Drivers and passengers over the age of 16 would be fined $50 for not wearing seat belts. The driver would be charged an additional $50 for each passenger between the ages of 12 and 16 who were not wearing belts. The bill specifies that seat belt violations would not “result in surcharges on motor vehicle insurance premiums,” and that police officers could not search the car or its occupants solely because of a seat belt violation.

The bills supporters argued the primary seat belt law could save roughly 45 lives a year and would help the state avoid $525 million in health care costs over 5 years! To support the primary seat belt bill please contact: Chairperson Michael Moore (Michael.Moore@masenate.gov), Chairperson Harold Naughton (Harold.Naughton@mahouse.gov), and Members of the Committee https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Detail/J22/19

### 2016 Seat Belt Use Rates

**By Law Type and State**

[Bar chart showing seat belt use rates by state, marked MA with 74.2%]
The Brain Injury Services Provider Fair, hosted for the first time by a collaboration of Massachusetts agencies, was held in October and attended by over 150 providers, agency staff, and professionals that work with individuals with brain injury.

What a sight! The ballroom was filled to capacity with over 60 vendor tables. In addition, there were 3 two-hour workshops offered: ABI and the Brain, Maintenance Therapies, and SUD & Brain Injury.

The agencies that worked jointly to host this open house included: Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA), Department of Developmental Services (DDS), Executive Office of Health and Human Services (MassHealth), Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), and the University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS).

Does the scene on the left look familiar? Are you tired of not being able to find things? Are you feeling overwhelmed by the clutter around you? You are not alone! Brain Injury survivors have unique challenges in dealing with clutter.

To help individuals with brain injury get rid of clutter and get more organized, Barbara Webster conducted two “Clutter Be Gone!” workshops in October at the BIA-MA office in Westborough.

Watch the biama.org/education web page for future dates and locations for this workshop series.
HARVEST FEST - FOOD & FUN!

BIA-MA celebrated the fall harvest tradition with a feast on Sunday, October 20th in Marlborough, MA.

Survivors of brain injury, families and caregivers came together to enjoy a delicious roast chicken dinner and line dancing with Jackie Lloyd, at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlborough.

WITCHES AND SCARECOWS AND FROGS... OH MY!

We were almost a week away from Halloween day, but that didn't stop the crowd that attended the 11th annual Halloween Ball at the BIA-MA Southeastern Region to dress up in their costumes.

The witches arrived, followed by the scarecrow, the frogs, the princess and other scary and not so scary but very original costumes. Dinner was served to this crowd of frightfully, spooky and funny people attending this event, followed by the contest that all wait for...the winners of the best 3 costumes of the night. The winners this year were Frankenstein, the Princess and the frogs!

A NEW PERSPECTIVE AT CLARK!

On September 26th a small group from the BIA-MA Pittsfield office went for a wonderful visit to the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown.

The tour guide explained the museum layout and taught us what to look for in paintings. In one gallery, we examined and marveled at the different colors, shades, styles and techniques that were used in the gallery paintings.

In another gallery we explored perspective. We stood close to a painting and then slowly stepped back. As we did, the painting “changed”! We were amazed at how the focus, shades, and colors changed with a different perspective. After our tour we had a delicious lunch in the café.

For more activities such as these, visit www.biama.org/eventsandactivities
Thank You to all who Participated in the 2019 Cere-Bration Field Day & 5K!

What a gorgeous Fall day we had for the Cere-bration Field Day & 5K at the Cape Cod Canal and Buzzard's Bay Recreation Area!

Over 400 Walk & Roll participants and 47 runners enjoyed stunning views of the canal and raised over $33,000 in support of BIA-MA’s mission – to create better futures for those affected by brain injury. The new festival on the green sparked smiles with activities that included entertainment from Malik the Magician, music from Jae Mannion, yoga with Laney Evers, face painting, a pie eating contest, and more!

The awards ceremony highlighted the enthusiastic response to all attending! For the Walk & Roll Katie Atchue and Katie’s Angels came in with the top fundraising award at over $5,500 and NeuroRestorative brought the largest team! In our newly added 5K component the results were: Overall Results & Men (men took the first 3 places) – 1st Ashton Fields, 2nd Mark Bushnell, 3rd Pawel Zawistowski; Women – 1st Amanda Nardone, 2nd Alison Macleod, 3rd Rebecca Lombardi.

Special thanks goes out to our wonderful sponsors for this event: Cape Cod Healthcare, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, BAMSI, Comprehensive Mental Health Systems, Inc., and Seven Hills Foundation. And of course thank you to year-round support from our Corporate Partners: NeuroRestorative, Vinfen, Spaulding, Advocates, Seven Hills, Ivy Street School/MAB, Supportive Living, Inc. and May Institute.

Thank you to all who came out to celebrate with us!
DETERMINATION: BRADY’S RECOVERY FROM ANOXIC BRAIN INJURY
Kara Lavertu, MS, CGFI, Manager, Neuro Wellness, Supportive Living, Inc.

In 2017, at 20 years old, Brady suffered an anoxic brain injury while at school in California. After six weeks in a coma, he opened his eyes, but found it impossible to talk, let alone stand. Thankfully, his cognition was still intact, and he was able to regain his speech. However, was physically restricted to a wheelchair, as the injury resulted in lack of muscle coordination and impaired lower body function. After his coma, Brady was finally able to be med-flighted home to Massachusetts to attend therapy.

Brady's first big challenge during therapy was to stand. The process of getting himself up was excruciatingly painful, leaving him in tears during many sessions. Once standing became bearable, he began relearning how to walk with assistive devices and braces, which proved even more challenging. Even though he was still working on walking and improving his functional abilities, Brady was discharged from therapy after only three months, left to somehow continue improving by himself.

In July 2019, Brady's mom heard about Supportive Living, Inc. and SLI's Neuro-Fit assisted exercise program, which provides brain injury survivors hands-on assistance, an accessible facility, adaptive equipment, and affordable fitness. Brady quickly joined the program, dedicated himself to fitness class three days each week, open to trying anything and everything that could help him reach his goal of walking and living independently.

After just 3 months in Neuro-Fit, Brady's legs have become stronger, he is increasingly more confident, and has become more social. He was even able to move into his own apartment in September. His Neuro-Fit program has been specifically created to meet his goal of walking unassisted, improving his balance, and functional activities. Brady continues to be one of the most motivated and strong-willed individuals in the program, demonstrating to others what determination can do.

For more information about SLI's Neuro-Fit Program, please contact Kara Lavertu at klavertu@supportivelivinginc.org

BIA-MA is proud to partner with Supportive Living, Inc. and is thankful for their continued support in the BIA-MA mission. BIA-MA Support Groups are hosted at Douglas House (Lexington, MA) on the first and third Tuesdays of each month. Please visit www.biama.org/eventsandactivities for more information on upcoming activities.
Gary Brennan was on his way to help his son with a kitchen project in January 2014 when his life changed forever. He was rear-ended in the high speed lane by a distracted driver causing a horrific accident. His truck spun out and struck a traffic sign which fell on his vehicle. Rescue workers found Gary with serious visible injuries on his head and left hand. But the worst injury was invisible, a severe traumatic brain injury. When Gary arrived at the Boston Medical Center ER, memory issues were immediately apparent. Even though he had been married to wife Lynne for 40 years, he told the emergency workers that he wasn't married and that he was engaged to be married in a few months. His brain thought it was 1974!

After a week at Boston Medical Center and eight days at Spaulding Cape Cod, Gary went home. Lynne quit her job to become his full-time caregiver. Between on-going outpatient therapy and Lynne's help, Gary re-learned many activities he had forgotten such as tying shoes, driving, and reading. But the journey did not take him all the way back to his old self. Even now he experiences gaps in memory. He also struggles with fatigue and concentration.

Gary 2.0, as he calls himself post-TBI, is an optimistic, fighting guy! Says Gary, “Attending BIA-MA’s support groups helped me find people that spoke my language and allowed raw, honest conversations to take place”. To give back Gary became a BIA-MA support group leader, volunteers as a peer counselor at Spaulding Cape Cod 2 days a week, and does motivational speeches, most recently as the keynote speaker for the 2019 Cere-Bration Field Day & 5K held at the Cape Cod Canal.

Thank you Gary for lending your voice to brain injury survivors and advocating on their behalf every day!

As the Director of Programs & Services, Cynthia Cardeli is responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of BIA-MA’s agency-wide prevention, education, and support programs.

Cynthia came to BIA-MA in 2014 as the Western Regional Manager with over 20 years of experience in the non-profit human services field with a focus on elder care. After two successful years promoting the growth of brain injury education, awareness and community outreach in the western part of the state, Cynthia was promoted to Director of Programs & Services in 2016. In this capacity, her goal and passion is to best serve all those affected by brain injury. She has accomplished this goal by leading the re-organization of BIA-MA’s program and services department, growing the number of support groups, providing support group leader training, and enhanced the Think A-Head and Brains at Risk programs.

Cynthia is an avid human rights advocate for brain injury and enthusiastically states, “My goal moving forward is 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!”

Cynthia and her husband Jesse have 4 children. She holds a Bachelors of Social Work from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. She is passionate in her quest to create a better quality of life for individuals with disabilities.

From all of us at BIA-MA, thank you for all you do!
The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts gratefully acknowledges the following gifts from our generous contributors received between July 1, 2019 and September 30, 2019

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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.
In proud support

We proudly support the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts.

Encompass Health
Rehabilitation Hospitals

Woburn • Braintree • Ludlow • Fairlawn
encompasshealth.com

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
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.

Advocates

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

• Community Supports
• Day Services
• Recreation
• Residential Services

For questions or more information contact BrainInjury@Advocates.org.

HEALING HOME.

Do you have a family member or client who could live more independently in the right environment?

IF THEY:
■ Have the potential to achieve greater independence
■ Are classified as low income and eligible for MassHealth
■ Are over 18 and have a permanent disability

Supportive Living, Inc. might be the right home for them. We meet the challenges of brain injury survivors with affordable supportive residential programs that enable people to live as fully as possible. To learn more contact us at 781-937-3199 or info@supportivelivinginc.org

Visit us at supportivelivinginc.org
Seven Hills NeuroCare (SHNC) supports people with brain injuries in their seamless transitions from clinical facilities to residential options. SHNC’s person-centered programs include day habilitation, workforce readiness and employment, and recreation through meaningful, community-based activities. 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 rehabilitation counselors
- Speech language pathologists
- Psychologists
- Behavior analysts
- Nurses
- Assistive technology professionals
- Access to mental health counselors, social workers, and psychiatrists

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, contact Dr. Jonathan Worcester, Vice President of SHNC, at 508.320.4991, or jworcester@sevenhills.org.

May Center School for brain injury and neurobehavioral disorders

STRENGTHENING BRAIN INJURY SUPPORTS

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Seven Hills NeuroCare
An Affiliate of Seven Hills Foundation
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Heads Up Headlines - FALL 2019 19
Upcoming BIA-MA Events

39th Annual Brain Injury Conference

Half-Day Pre-Conference             March 25, 2020
Full-Day Conference               March 26, 2020

2020 Annual Meeting & Awards Dinner       March 25, 2020
2020 Advocacy Day at the State House        April 8, 2020

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

YOUR BIA-MA FALL 2019 NEWSLETTER HAS ARRIVED!!