



25th Anniversary

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**Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts Celebrates 25 Years
of Helping Individuals with Brain Injury and their Families
National Association Started by Massachusetts Families**

Twenty-five years ago a small group of family members met around a kitchen table in Framingham, MA, to talk about how to better meet the needs of their loved ones who had suffered traumatic brain injury (TBI). Dramatic advances in trauma care and life support had significantly increased the number of individuals surviving severe head injury; however, at that time, the community was ill-prepared to serve this population.

From these humble beginnings emerged the National Head Injury Foundation which later became the Brain Injury Association of America with chapters in 46 states. The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) was incorporated in 1982 as one of the first statewide brain injury associations in the U.S. and remains the only organization of its kind in Massachusetts.

“I remember those early days when a handful of volunteers and part-timers ran the association,” said, Arlene Korab, one of the early pioneers of BIA-MA and currently its Executive Director. “We did everything from answering the phones to cleaning the office.”

Today the association serves more than 30,000 children, teenagers, and adults in the Commonwealth, and is presently reaching out to soldiers returning home from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with brain injuries. BIA-MA has two regional offices, and offers information, resources, and support groups to thousands of people throughout the state. BIA-MA works with judges, district attorneys, police, and probation officers on programs to educate first-time offenders and teens at risk about the consequences of brain injury. It also collaborates with schools, hospitals, and state agencies, teaching people of all ages about risk-taking behavior and healthy living habits. BIA-MA has been honored locally and nationally for its prevention programs.

“Our growth has been fueled by an extraordinary level of passion and focus on the goals we established 25 years ago,” said Marilyn Spivack, a BIA-MA founder and board member. “Our success has been due to the incredible support we had from our friends, professionals, business leaders, and caring members of both state and federal government.”

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A 25th Anniversary Celebration will be held at the Fairmont Copley Plaza in Boston on September 29, 2007. David Storto, President of Partners Continuing Care, is the event's honorary chair. Jim Braude and Margery Eagan, hosts of "Eagan and Braude," on 96.9 FM Talk will emcee the event. Jim Braude is also host of NECN's "NewsNight," and Margery Eagan is a columnist for the *Boston Herald*. Robin Young, host of NPR/WBUR's "Here and Now," and other illustrious guests will be presenting at the event.

The theme of the gala is "Soaring without Limits" which symbolizes the hope and promise for the future of individuals with brain injury. To support this, Kites were decorated and signed by celebrities, including: ABC news reporter Bob Woodruff and his family, members of the New England Patriots and Boston Red Sox teams, Author Mary Higgins Clark, the cast of an award-winning television program, and more. These kites will be displayed and auctioned at the event. Also, kites designed by members of BIA-MA support groups will be displayed. Artist and designer Mark Millstein designed invitations, kites, and decorations to accompany the theme.

Four individuals who have played a special role in helping BIA-MA achieve its mission to create a better future through prevention, education, advocacy, and support of individuals with brain injury and their families, will be honored at the event. They are:

- Therese Murray, President of the Massachusetts Senate
- Debra Kamen, Director of the Statewide Head Injury Prevention Program (SHIP)
- Arlene Korab, Executive Director of BIA-MA
- Suzanne Doswell, Survivor of a brain injury

According to the Centers for Disease Control:

- Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is more prevalent in the U.S. than breast cancer, HIV/AIDS, multiple sclerosis, and spinal cord injuries.
- The cost of TBI in the U.S. is estimated to be \$60 billion each year.
- The majority of TBIs (more than 85 percent) are preventable!