



## *Press Release*

**For Immediate Release**

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### **State's Oldest Brain Injury Support Group Celebrates 25 Years Berkshire Support Group Meets Needs of Survivors and Families**

"We're going to do something that's never been done before. We're going to gather together families with loved ones who have suffered brain injury and support one another," said Pittsfield resident Barbara Robinson who, along with Jean Haywood, helped to start the state's first support group 25 years ago. Today, many of these same individuals and new members meet each month in Pittsfield as part of the Berkshire Brain Injury Support Group (BBISG).

"Support groups are a valuable resource to survivors and families coping with brain injury," says Suzanne Doswell, a survivor who attended the Berkshire group and is now manager of the Brain Injury Association's western Massachusetts regional office in Pittsfield. The group provides wonderful social opportunities for people in similar situations as well as outreach, education, and information about local and national resources."

"Perhaps, most important, these groups provide support, hope and coping strategies for survivors and families struggling to adjust to a new life," she adds.

According to Doswell, the founding families stuck together through the years, as their injured children grew into teenagers and young adults. Together they faced newfound obstacles ranging from high school education, rehabilitation, and employment to driving, friendships, relationships, housing, and independence.

Today, BBISG meets regularly at the Center for Rehabilitation at Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield. The group attracts survivors and family members from the Berkshire Hills, Pioneer Valley, and Northern Berkshires into Vermont and Eastern New York,

"As BBISG celebrates a remarkable 25-year journey, we welcome change — new faces, new activities, and increased community support," says Doswell, who leads the group. "There's more awareness of brain injury and collaboration in the region than I've ever seen before."

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts, a private, non-profit organization, provides support services to brain injury survivors and their families, offers programs to prevent brain injuries, and educates the public on the risks of irresponsible behavior and the impact of brain injury. BIA-MA is also reaching out to the many veterans returning home from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars with brain injuries.

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