



Brain Injury Society of Toronto
Annual Report
2011 - 2012

BIST
Brain Injury Society of Toronto



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OUR MISSION

The mission of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto is to enhance the quality of life for people in the City of Toronto living with the effects of acquired brain injury through education, awareness, support and advocacy.

BIST was established in 2004 by a steering committee made up of stakeholders - including people with ABI, family members and people who work in ABI support and rehabilitation in collaboration with the Ontario Brain Injury Association. Today, BIST operates under the direction of a volunteer board of directors.

BIST is a grassroots, member driven organization.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST), it is my pleasure to report on the past fiscal year ending March 31, 2012. Fiscal 2011-2012 (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012) was an incredible year for BIST, and we are already seeing amazing results in our new fiscal year (2012-2013).

Fiscal 2011-2012 was highlighted by a number of accomplishments and successes. BIST was ecstatic to receive a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. This grant will enable BIST to grow by providing enhanced programs and services to our members and potential members. We now have a part-time social worker dedicated to BIST and our mission. In June 2011, we had our most successful Mix and Mingle and Awareness Month events ever. The Mix and Mingle event raised tens of thousands of dollars for BIST. Our June 2012 events were even better – and we will be reporting on these at fiscal year-end.



On September 24, 2011, we hosted our first ever (and now annual) BIST Run, Walk & Roll at Sunnybrook Park. The feedback was incredible. Mark your calendars for our upcoming BIST Run, Walk & Roll, which is taking place on Saturday, September 22, 2012. Check out our website regularly for further details.

As we turn the page on fiscal 2011-2012, I want to express the Board's sincere gratitude to our staff, Michelle McDonald and Kat Powell, and to the many wonderful volunteers who have given their time and energy to support this incredibly important organization in the City of Toronto. Without the hard work of our committee members and other volunteers, our achievements would simply not be possible.

I would like to thank my fellow Board members, particularly those whose terms have come to an end, for all of their hard work and dedication. This organization could not run without your generosity. I want to thank all of our members for another great year. While my term as Chair is coming to an end, I will remain on the Board as Past-Chair for 2012-2013. I plan to keep BIST a priority in my life long after I leave the Board. I would like to formally congratulate and introduce BIST's new Chair, Judy Moir. Judy's experience in the ABI field is unparalleled. She has been an outstanding member of the Board and will remain a huge asset to this organization.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Burton'.

Jonathan Burton, Chair

TREASURER'S REPORT

Income

BIST's 2011-12 fundraising and fees from programs saw a significant increase this past year totaling \$114,407. This was in large part due to three activities: the BIST/OBIA mix and mingle, the new and very successful BIST Run Event and the awarding to BIST of a Trillium Grant. For the first time in several years we ended the year in a surplus.

INCOME STATEMENT

2010, 2011, 2012 Yearly Comparisons

	2010	2011	2012
INCOME			
OBIA/Donations/Membership	13,746	21,164	23,106
Mix&Mingle - BIST/OBIA Event	19,218	23,406	46,195
Brain Injury Association Canada	2,500	3,600	1,000
BIST Run Event			29,106
Trillium			16,000
Total Income	\$35,194	\$48,170	\$115,407

INCOME STATEMENT

EXPENSES

Communications	2,774	686	1745
BIAM	6,733	8020	7252
Programs & Services	22,765	17,870	2,0163
Membership & Volunteers	751	451	1576
Fund Raising (2012 Run Event)	849		8474
General & Administrative	13,872	24,370	34058
Trillium			2672
Total Operating Budget/Expenses	\$47,744	\$51,397	\$75,940
Surplus/Deficit	\$(12,550)	\$(3,227)	\$39,467

**Note that of the surplus, \$13,328 is balance of Trillium Grant.*

Disbursement Activities

We completed the year with a significant surplus, thanks in large part of the Mix and Mingle and the BIST Run event. Expenses were higher this year reflecting the costs of raising additional income and increases in staff time. Other expenses were similar to the previous years.

Our balance sheet as of March 31, 2012

BALANCE SHEET (as at March 31, 2012)

ASSETS

Cash	\$60,570.00
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LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable	\$3,188.87
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EQUITY

Opening Equity	\$18,913.25
Add: Net Proceeds for Period	\$38,467.88

Ending Equity at Mar 31, 2012	\$57,381.23
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Total Assets	\$60,570.00
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Total Assets & Liabilities	\$60,570.00
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ONTARIO TRILLIUM GRANT

On July 1st, 2011 BIST submitted a proposal to the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) and we were thrilled when the entire projected budget was approved. The funding from OTF will be used by BIST in two ways:

1. Expand and enhance BIST's current programming to enable the organization to reach a larger audience;
2. Hire a part-time Social Worker to facilitate the development and delivery of support groups and the creation of on-line forums.

OTF Funding Amount - \$72,300

Funding term – 2 years starting December 1, 2011

Ontario
Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium
de l'Ontario

Year 1

- Hire a part-time Social Worker to plan, implement and facilitate support groups and workshops
- Monthly Community Meetings - continue with current meeting and investigate and plan for implementation of a second meeting in another location in Year 2
- Implementation of a Survivor support group – 3 meetings/month, 8 month/year
- Implementation of a Caregiver/family support Group - 1 /month, 10 month/year
- Personal Development and Education Workshops – 4 survivor and 4 caregiver/family workshops per year
- Purchase two laptops and one LCD projector to support programming needs

Year 2

- Maintain part-time Social Worker to plan, implement and facilitate support groups and workshops
- Monthly Community Meetings - continue with current community meeting and implementation of a second meeting in another location
- Continue Survivor support group - 3 meetings/month, 8 month/year
- Implementation of a second survivor support group - 3 meetings/month, 8 month/year
- Continue Caregiver/family support Group - 1 /month, 10 month/year
- Implementation of a second Caregiver/family support Group - 1 /month, 10 month/year
- Personal Development and Education Workshops – 4 survivor and 4 caregiver/family workshops per year

By expanding the scope our programs and services, BIST will be well positioned to more effectively meet the variety of needs of all people affected by ABI in Toronto. We are in a good position to grow as an organization and are very enthusiastic about the potential this funding will bring to BIST.



MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

BIST's membership grew in the past 12 months, with a particular increase in Survivor members and Family/Caregiver members. The increase in these membership groups can be directly attributed to our Trillium Grant as the expansion of our programs and services drew more members. BIST continues to sign up new members at every Community Meeting, our Personal Development Workshops and through our on-line membership. We also gain new members through OBIA.

Member Role	2011	2012
Survivor	245	305
Family/Caregiver	30	59
Friend/Supporter	46	42
Professional	148	174
Total	469	580

We are excited by every single new member; however we know that there are still thousands of people impacted by acquired brain injury in the City of Toronto who have never even heard of BIST. We continue to work with other committees in hopes of increasing our membership base. In addition, we have been working with our partners to increase awareness about BIST.

We hope to see an increase in our membership in the next year by targeting our referral sources (Occupational therapists, Physiotherapists, Rehab therapists, Social Workers) and spreading the word about the programs BIST offers that can serve their clients.

As much as the membership committee is devoted to increasing the membership, we rely on our current members to spread the BIST message as well.

As a reminder, the dual BIST/OBIA membership allows individuals to join both organizations for \$30/year. Family memberships (two or more people in a household) are available for \$50/year. For ABI survivors, the membership fee can be subsidized to just \$5/year.

2012 Membership Committee Members: Phil Warder (Chair), Julie Ly, Stefanie Linton and Michelle McDonald.

AWARENESS COMMITTEE

The Awareness Committee is composed of a group of dedicated individuals who plan throughout the year to come up with an exciting public event to not only promote brain injury awareness, but to celebrate our amazing survivors.

June is Brain Injury Awareness Month and year after year the Awareness Committee works hard to come up with fresh new ideas, to ensure another successful June event. As with other years, the Awareness Committee worked closely with other BIST committees to ensure the success of this event.

Our annual Brain Injury Awareness Event was once again held at Nathan Philips Square. The Foo Circus Crew entertained the crowd with stilt walkers, “Dream Weavers”, and the acrobatic bellhop, while the Jerry Stiff Band kept the beat going through the afternoon.

The Membership Committee once again had a display booth to reach out to new members. Our volunteers were out in full force, greeting people and spreading the awareness message. The Survivor VIP tent provided a place for survivors to connect and give a venue for our “featured speakers” series where we had incredible survivors share their story.

Our Survivor Artists once again join us to showcase their amazing collections of unique and creative pieces. All those who attended the event were able to peruse and enjoy the artistry that was displayed.

Thank you to the entire committee who put in so much of their time and energy in order to ensure another amazing event!!!



2012 Awareness Committee Members: Tonya Flaming (Chair), Chris Brown, Colleen Boyce, Darcy Merkur, Edward Shaul, Gary Otsu, Joe Pileggi, Julie Osbelt, Laurie DeOliveira, Vivian Ng, Marnie Russell

PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEE

Community Meetings

The monthly community meetings at the Northern District Library (Yonge & Eglinton) have continued to be a great success over the past year. These meetings were created to provide members with a consistent opportunity to meet with other members, participate in leadership opportunities and take part in information sessions provided by a variety of guest speakers. This past year we have heard from experts on topics such as Tribulation to Triumph (A Survivors Story), Diet and Exercise in Disease Prevention, Toastmasters – Public Speaking, RDSP Information Session, Art Therapy, The Importance of Play, and Relationships and Intimacy Post ABI. We have also had the distinct honour of hearing some moving and compelling survivor stories at our community meetings.

Social/Recreation Events

Social events are a great opportunity to meet fellow BIST members and to explore new interests. This year BIST has been able to continue and expand the opportunities being offered.

The social events that took place this year included our Annual Summer Picnic, a Halloween Dance (in partnership with CHIRS), bowling every other month (one being in partnership with CHIRS) and our Annual Holiday Party. With the support of our Ontario Trillium Grant, a group of our members attended a Marlies Hockey game. We are already planning to hold a number of the activities listed above again and adding a couple new ones that interest members.

Program Development

As you may be aware, over the past year we began the process of developing the new Caregiver Family Support Group Program and ABI Survivor Support Group Program. BIST is excited to have welcomed social worker Debra Fine, who will start offering these programs in April 2012. We are looking forward to reporting on that in next year's report.

Several upcoming programs, including Basics Training programs (in partnership with OBIA), the Meet and Learn program starting in fall 2012 (in collaboration with Sunnybrook) and different workshops for both ABI Survivors and Family Members. The focus of these workshops will be created from member feedback via program evaluations and online surveys. We are looking forward to providing you our BIST members with these workshops in the year ahead.

OBIA Shared Activities

Peer Support Mentoring Program

In collaboration with OBIA, we have continued to facilitate the Peer Support Mentoring Program. The Peer Support Mentoring Program is a program that connects individuals (survivor/family member/unpaid caregiver) who are considered 'veterans' of a life experience involving Acquired Brain Injury (the Mentor) with a 'partner' (survivor/family

member/unpaid caregiver) who is coping with a similar ABI-related situation and is in need of support from someone who is understanding, knowledgeable and empathetic. We encourage our members to consider participating in this program.

Brain Basics Training Program

This past year we have continued to support the Brain Basics courses being offered by OBIA in the GTA, by promoting the program to our community partners and members, and by arranging the Survivor/Family Member Panels. We have received excellent feedback from course participants indicating how truly moving and valuable the panels are in their understanding of brain injury and its impact. We have two Brain Basics coming up this Fall/Winter, one of which will be co-hosted by BIST and the Toronto ABI Network.

2011 Programs & Services Committee Members: Denise McRiner (Co-Chair), Kat Powell (Co-Chair), Alison Jardine, Dr. Gary Gerber, Gail Prentice, Colleen Worsley, Jodi Brasgold.

2011 Special Events Committee Members: Kat Powell, Colleen Worsley, Michael "Pinky" - Cluthier, Sarah Briggs, Bill Wilkinson, Kevin Browne, Frank Bruno.



COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The Communications Committee has been active and growing over the last year.

We've continued to produce the BIST quarterly newsletter The Beacon, and have revised the format to be more reader friendly. Distribution is sent via email and some print editions are mailed to those members without email access.

We are continually expanding our activity in social media. We topped 100 followers this year in Twitter (@BrainInjuryTO), and hope to reach 500 in the next year. Our Facebook page has shown an increase in views and we have been very proactive in using it to promote our programs and services. Since the launch of our blog www.torontobraininjuryblog.com in the Fall of 2011 we continue to build our online presence and have established a series of monthly "themes".

Our general marketing efforts have continued and expanded; we've printed brochures, posters and bookmarks and are building contacts around the city to get our name in hospitals and doctors' offices. Through these efforts we hope to expand our general membership and continue our mandate: to provide services for brain injury survivors throughout Toronto.

The Committee established a Communication Plan to help steer our activities including the establishment of "Position Statements" on our website, increasing the development of original articles for our website/social media outlets and training some BIST members as media contacts to meet the rising demand from the media. We hope to look into more funding possibilities and expand our activities further.

We are also in the preliminary planning stages of developing a comprehensive ABI Handbook which will be available for distribution in 2013.

There are also a number of projects we're working on, that will come to fruition in the next year. Some potential goals:

- Continue and expand our social media activity and involvement
- Assist in growing general membership
- Improve connections with media outlets: train media reps as contacts
- Continue to produce original survivor and care-giver stories
- Discuss possible avenues of funding/sponsorship with the Fundraising Committee
- Develop "position statements" for use in social media and our website

2012 Communications Committee Members: Ian Bowles (Chair), Colleen Boyce, Jack Shapiro, Corey Sax, Matthew Chung, Danielle Berehowsky, Melissa Myers, Michelle McDonald

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Fundraising Initiatives for 2011 Fiscal Year

1. Mix and Mingle 2011 (actual revenue included in this year's annual report). Note this was the event that took place in JUNE 2011 (approximately 12 months ago):
 - Gross Revenue: \$99,420
 - Expenses (includes venue rental, food, drink, administration, signage for sponsors, entertainment): \$27,200
 - *Net Revenue: \$72,220 of which BIST portion is \$47,000 or 65%
 - 51% or \$24,000 more in net revenue than last year's event!
 - Increase in revenue driven by:
 - Introduction of a Lead Sponsor (\$10,000)
 - Increase in Sponsor levels (Gold sponsors at \$2,500, silver at \$1,000)
 - Increase in number of participants purchasing tickets (note this is the reason for the increase in expenses as well).
- *Note: The agreement that BIST has with OBIA for the Mix and Mingle is as follows: Up to the first \$25,000 made, BIST and OBIA will split the revenue 50/50. After the first \$25,000, BIST will take 75% and OBIA will take 25%. Therefore, the more revenue generated, the higher the percentage of revenue that BIST is able to generate.
2. Introduction of a 2nd fundraising event: The BIST Run (the Run committee will introduce an update on this).
3. Online Fundraising: We made some changes to the website and how the donation pages are currently organized to make it easier and more clear for people to make donations.
4. Refining Sponsorship Process: We clarified the sponsorship process to ensure any prospective BIST partners were aware that there are sponsorship options at BIST. We also clarified what sponsorship opportunities were available and which were not. Our priority is our members best interests.
5. Other: We supported a number of 3rd party fundraising events including a fundraiser at a local Starbucks, as well as a paintball tournament

Fundraising Plan for 2012 Fiscal Year (April 2012 - March 2013)

Priorities for the Year are:

1. Data: Refine our current database to determine who our members are (survivors, family members, industry contacts).
 - Also, start to develop a database of leads (people who may be interested in supporting BIST in the past). Work with other committees (especially membership) to ensure all prospects are captured when possible.
2. Refine fundraising initiatives that have worked in the past:
 - Mix and Mingle (see 2011 revenue above)
 - Build on the Success of the BIST run, and look at introducing new streams of revenue.

2011 Fundraising Committee Members: Greg Neinstein, Terry Wilcox, Danielle Berehowsky, Ruth Fernandes, Ellie Lapwich, Nick Gurevich, Stefanie Linton, Joyce Chiang, Milan Arket, Aaron Stiller, Joanne Driscoll



VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

The mandate of the Volunteer Committee is to recruit and interview volunteers and help them find the right opportunities to best use their skills and meet their needs.

The volunteer committee had several accomplishments this past year.

The committee has improved its recruitment processes by expanding the volunteer biography and developing and maintaining an up-to-date list of our active volunteers. It continues to actively recruit, place and orientate new volunteers as needed to fulfill BIST's mission, including placement of volunteers on committees, skills sets needed for project specific tasks or the many number of volunteers needed to support the first annual 5 KM Run, Walk and Roll that was held on Saturday September 24th, 2011.

The committee has also increased its communication with the other committee chairs and would like to continue this in order to better serve BIST in the recruitment and retention of our volunteers.

The volunteer committee was instrumental in assisting with the development of the successful proposal for the Ontario Trillium Grant proposal by developing the volunteer recruitment strategy.

Over the next year the committee will continue to improve the recruitment process for new volunteers at BIST and will introduce a Volunteer of the Year Award named after the Vetter Family at the Volunteer Appreciation event that will be held in May 2012.

2012 Volunteer Committee Members: Kate Moore and Beverley Melamed (co-chairs), Colleen Boyce, Dr. Peter Rumney, Romy Berger, Troy Lehman, and Kat Powell



FIRST ANNUAL 5KM RUN, WALK & ROLL

BIST hosted its First Annual Run on September 24th 2011. The event was sold out and the day was an **unqualified** success. It brought together many people from the brain injury community and raised more than \$20,000 for BIST. Over 250 people completed the Run and the event was supported by many volunteers and sponsors. A highlight of the event was the opening remarks offered by ETALK anchor, Ben Mulroney. Ben, who was personally touched by brain injury when a close friend was involved in a motor vehicle crash, has become a great supporter and friend of BIST.

Building on the success of the event, planning for the Second Annual BIST 5K Run, Walk & Roll on Saturday September 22nd, 2012 is underway. Although some changes are being planned, the committee recognizes it is important to stick with a successful formula. Visit www.bistrun.com for more information.

First Annual 5K Run, Walk & Roll



September 24, 2011

GOLD SPONSORS



SILVER SPONSORS



BRONZE SPONSORS

Elements Support
Services

FunctionAbility
Rehabilitation Services

Howie Sacks & Henry
LLP

Shekter Dychtenberg
LLP

Catastrophic Injury
Mangement Inc.

Medisys Corporate Health
LLP

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jonathan Burton, Chair

Jonathan is a lawyer at Gluckstein & Associates LLP in Toronto. He received his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Western Ontario in June 2006, and was called to the Ontario Bar in June 2007. Jonathan restricts his practice to insurance litigation including personal injury, disability matters, occupier's liability issues and product liability. Jonathan has always been driven by a passion to help those in need, which fuelled his decision to pursue a legal career representing injured persons and their families. Prior to commencing his legal studies, in 2003 Jonathan attained a Bachelor of Administrative and Commercial Studies degree in Organizational and Human Resources, also at the University of Western Ontario. He has an outstanding ability to communicate with people and is dedicated to his clients and to BIST.

In addition to sitting on the Board of Directors of BIST, Jonathan is also an active member of the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, the Advocates' Society, Toronto Lawyers Association and the Ontario Bar Association.

Judy Moir, Vice-Chair

Judy is the Assistant Executive Director of the Toronto ABI Network and a project manager for the GTA Rehab Network. As a collaborative, membership-based organization, The Toronto ABI Network provides leadership to engage clinicians, health administrators and government stakeholders in working to enhance the coordination of and access to acquired brain injury services. Her current position provides Judy with the opportunity to look at the provision of ABI services at a system level and advocate for needed change.

Judy completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Manitoba and obtained a Masters of Public Administration from Queen's University.

Marnie Russell, Secretary

Marnie Russell has been a BIST Board member since 2007 and a member of the BIST Awareness Committee since 2005. Marnie is a Service Coordinator at CHIRS which offers a broad range of services including supportive housing, community support, adult day services and employment services to adults living with the effects of an acquired brain injury.

Marnie started the CHIRS Mentorship program which empowers clients to help run programs and take on a greater leadership role. She has been working with adults with acquired brain injury since 1997.

Paul McCormack, Treasurer

Paul is a Senior Manager at Delisle Youth Services and has worked with people with multiple complex special needs for the past 25 years. He has specialized in community based services for people with mental health, cognitive and developmental issues for the majority of his career. He established the Toronto Centralized Access Mechanism for Residential Services and

worked with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services in the establishment of innovative models of service delivery for children and youth with developmental and cognitive special needs. The work of his team has been recognized as an emerging best practice. In 2008, Paul was recognized by the United Way through the Bhayana Professional Dedication Award for his efforts in working with the 'hard to serve'. In addition, Paul has worked in the private sector, he is the owner/operator of Elements Support Services – a community based rehabilitation support service, has been a lecturer at George Brown College, sat on numerous advisory committees and presented at conferences throughout Canada.

Paul takes pride in supporting his community and is a past board member of the Ontario Brain Injury Association, a founding board member of the Toronto Brain Injury Society, past President of the Board of Directors for the Burlington Art Centre, and has served on the boards of the Burlington Economic Development Committee and Burlington BIA.

Danielle Berehowsky

Danielle has had 15 years of experience in the marketing and sales fields within the Consumer Packaged Goods industry. In these roles, she has led projects, managed budgets and worked with cross functional teams to achieve and exceed corporate objectives. She has a drive and passion to achieve success in all that she takes on. Three years ago, her brother suffered a traumatic brain injury. As a result of that experience, she has gained a solid understanding of the resources that are available for victims and their caregivers.

Danielle believes there is an opportunity to not only create more awareness around brain injury but to improve the quality of care for those people that are affected and those that work in the field.

Tonya Flaming

Tonya has been a nurse since 1997 and has worked in that capacity at SickKids Hospital for the last 13 years. Approximately five years ago she took on the role of Transitional Care Coordinator with the Trauma and Neurosciences Program. In this role she has had the opportunity to work with many children with an Acquired Brain Injury and their families in order to facilitate their transition from SickKids to either a Rehab facility such as Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab Hospital or home. This role has allowed Tonya the occasion to be involved in many initiatives and projects aimed at streamlining the transition process. Tonya joined the BIST Awareness committee in 2009 and she then took on the role of chair in 2010 and is their current chair.

Steve Gregory

Steve never intended to be a brain injury survivor – it just has worked out that way. Steve started his career coming off a Masters in Engineering and worked at a variety of engineering jobs for 11 years before finding himself in a coma. During rehabilitation Steve excelled at some things, however, his vision was affected in the accident and this hampered his attempts to rejoin his career path. Steve now spends his time involved in exercise and service on advisory organizations.

Stefanie Linton

Stefanie is a fundraising and communications professional with experience in for profit and non-profit organizations including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Sears Canada and the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). Currently, she is the Director of Alumni Relations at George Brown and is responsible for the initiation and implementation of strategic plans for the Alumni Relations office including the development of activities designed to inform and engage graduates of George Brown College.

Stefanie's husband is a brain injury survivor following an accident that occurred in 2009. She is dedicated to promoting the mission of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto: to enhance the quality of life for persons in the City of Toronto; who are living with the effects of acquired brain injury, through education, awareness, support and advocacy.

Denise McRiner

Denise is a Coordinator of Rehabilitation Services for Bartimaeus Inc. in the GTA. Denise has 20 years of experience supporting individuals living with the effects of acquired brain injury. Denise became involved in the area of brain injury when a close family member sustained a brain injury. Over the years Denise has worked in a variety of capacities in the field of brain injury rehabilitation including rehabilitation therapist, program director, service coordinator and executive director. Denise joined the BIST Board of Directors in October of 2007 and is currently the Chair of the Programs and Services Committee. She is also the BIST representative for the OAC (OBIA Advisory Council) as well as the Chair of OAC Awareness Committee. Previously Denise volunteered extensively with the Niagara Brain Injury Awareness Committee.

Kate Moore

Kate Moore is a manager of ABI Services at COTA Health, which offers a variety of services to individuals with ABI such as supportive housing programs, a case management program and an adult day services program. Kate has worked in the field of ABI for the past 11 years in various roles, such as rehabilitation therapist (Toronto Rehabilitation Institute), behaviour therapist (Dale Brain Injury Services, London) and manager (COTA Health). She is dedicated to the field of ABI and in serving the community in a volunteer capacity.

Anya Tamir

Anya Tamir is a lawyer practicing personal injury and disability law in Barrie and Toronto at Andrew R. Kerr Professional Corporation.

Anya's involvement in the area of brain injury and brain disorders began a decade ago when she was an undergraduate student majoring in psychology, with the focus on neuro and clinical psychology. In the last year of her undergraduate studies Anya completed an internship at the department of psychiatry of the Free Clinic of Greater Cleveland (Ohio, USA) where she worked with individuals suffering from a variety of psychiatric ailments, including acquired brain injury, DSM-IV organic brain disorders and drug dependency.

Anya graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School and became a persuasive and passionate advocate on behalf of her clients. She appeared at all levels of Ontario Court and is an active member of Ontario Trial Lawyers Association. She is also a member of Advocates Society and Simcoe County Law Association. As a lawyer litigating on behalf of persons with traumatic brain injury Anya works on ensuring that her clients have access to all the necessary resources. As such, Anya is committed to expanding services provided by BIST and increasing awareness of brain injury in the community and among the medico-legal profession.

STAFF

Michelle McDonald

Director of Programs and Development

Michelle started with BIST in November 2010 and works closely with the Board of Directors, Committees and staff to develop new opportunities for the growth and reach of BIST's programs and services and the organization as a whole. She sits on the Communications, Membership and BIST 5km Run Committees.

In addition to her experience as a Marketing Consultant, Michelle has worked in the non-profit sector for many years, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario and Toronto Preschool Autism Service.

Outside of work, Michelle loves to ski, run and spend time with her two young children and husband.

Katharine "Kat" Powell

Programs and Services Coordinator

Katharine has been working with BIST since the fall of 2008. She joined BIST with 10 years of experience working here in Canada and overseas in Australia, Asia and East Africa with Non-Profit and Non-Governmental organizations that focus on community inclusion, training of trainers, health promotion and sport for development.

Since Katharine started working she has always said "I love working and volunteering with organizations that work towards helping people with special needs improve their quality of life and maximize their potential". Outside of work Katharine enjoys volunteering in the winters with Track 3 as a Ski instructor for children/youth with physical and cognitive needs and in the summer with Camp Oochigeaus – a camp for kids with cancer. When she has the time she enjoys participating in musicals and choirs.

Debra Fine, M.A.

Psychotherapist/Social Worker

Debra stated with BIST in March 2012 helping to develop and facilitate both the Survivor and Caregiver Support Groups. Debra completed her Masters degree in Counselling Psychology from the California Institute of Integral Studies in 2000. She has worked extensively in diverse mental health settings including non-profit and community agencies, universities and colleges and has a private practice. Throughout her career, Debra has worked with disabilities, chronic illness and other medical issues, as well as a broad scope of mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder. Outside of work, Debra enjoys spending time with her family and friends, painting, yoga, swimming, reading and other recreational activities.

Debra looks forward to further developing and growing BIST's new support groups.