



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2013-2014**

**BIST**  
Brain Injury Society of Toronto



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# A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to report on the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

If you are connected to BIST's blog ([torontobraininjuryblog](#)) or Facebook page it will come as no surprise that Fiscal 2013-2014 was a very busy year for BIST. If you are not yet connected, you really should be. Not only do these sites provide information about BIST, they offer a great resource and a wealth of information on a lot of topics. I am really proud of the work the team has done on this front.



Although our staffing resources remain quite lean, the staff somehow keep finding ways to offer more and more to our members and families. In addition to the regular community meetings, social activities, and support groups that happen every month; this year there were a couple of special highlights:

- Family Member Workshop: Strategies for Navigating the Journey After ABI. This workshop highlighted the major challenges facing individuals and families after an ABI. Caron Gan, building on her research on family resilience and decades of clinical experience with families, walked participants through the “Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families.” This has led to an ongoing partnership between Ms. Gan and BIST, allowing us to bring more of these valuable workshops to families and members.
- In June 2013, BIST collaborated with OBIA again to offer another Brain Basics Program. The Brain Basics Training Program is designed to provide frontline Health Care Workers, Caregivers and others with a readily understandable introduction to the world of Brain Injury.
- Workshops for members on Staying Social, Getting Organized and Brain Dancing (if you want to know what this you will have to check out the blog).
- Workshops for families on dealing with difficult behavior and managing stress.
- Field trips to AGO, ROM, Wind Reach Farms, and the Royal Botanical Gardens.

And then there is June! June is always a very busy month for BIST and 2013 was no exception. The Awareness Month event at Nathan Phillips Square was very successful and a lot of fun. Crowds of passersby experienced “Brainstock 2013,” being entertained and educated about the reality of brain injuries. This year the theme focused on the frequency of sports-related injuries and their effects on daily lives.

The Mix and Mingle Fundraiser continues to grow and is really becoming the must attend event in the industry. In 2013, the event raised over \$100,000. Thank you to all our sponsors and supporters.

The third annual 5 KM Run, Walk & Roll was held at Sunnybrook Park on September 20, 2013. Despite the torrential rain, more than 400 people participated and over \$50,000 was raised to support BIST's programs and services. The good news is that the 2014 Run is destined for beautiful blue sunny skies. Mark Twain said ‘Everyone talks about the weather but no one does anything about it’ - We intend to try.

BIST's Board of Directors undertook Strategic Planning this past year. Although it is not nearly as glamorous or exciting as some of the other work, it is certainly a critical factor in ensuring an organization's continued growth and success. With the help of Management Advisory Services, the Board has approved a three year plan that supports the organization to move forward in a deliberate and thoughtful way and ensures that it is accountable for the work that is doing. The details of the Strategic Plan are outlined in this report and the Board has already begun to make strides towards achieving the objectives of that plan.

I feel incredibly honored to have been part of BIST again this year and I want to express the Board's sincere gratitude to our staff, Michelle McDonald, Kat Powell, and Meri Perra. You three achieve an incredible amount with the few hours you have in a week. I would also like to acknowledge the many wonderful volunteers who have given their time and energy to support this incredible organization. Without the hard work of our committee members and other volunteers, our achievements would simply not be possible.

And finally, I would like to thank my fellow Board members for all of their hard work and dedication, particularly those whose terms have come to an end—Tonya Flaming, Julie Osbelt, and Paul McCormack. I am not sure if everyone realizes what an incredible amount of time and effort the Board gives to BIST. But I have seen it first hand and we are incredibly lucky to have benefited from your involvement.

Judy Moir, Chair—Board of Directors

# BIST STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVE

The Board of Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) decided to develop a strategic plan to set the direction for the organization going forward. BIST enlisted the assistance of a volunteer Management Consultant through Management Advisory Services (MAS). As part of that process, information was gathered from a number of sources:

- Key informant interviews
- A member survey
- SWOT analysis prepared by each Board member and staff member
- Focus groups (members, CHIRS clients, staff)
- A review of environmental trends
- An operational review

These reports were used by the Board in the strategic planning sessions and form an integral part of the strategic planning process.

Agreed objective: Articulate clear strategies, goals and measures for the next 3 years.

Process:

1. Situation review
2. Mission revisit
3. Strategy Development
4. Strategic positioning
5. Goals and indicators

The Board met for two sessions with an outside facilitator to complete the Strategic Plan and then met again with the facilitator to translate the strategic plan into an Operating Plan to guide the activities of the first year.

The outcome of these sessions enabled us to identify key Strategic Priorities for the organization:

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

<b>Increase the number of people involved with BIST by expanding opportunities for engagement and leveraging partnerships.</b>
<b>Increase and diversify our revenue to ensure the sustainability of our operations.</b>
<b>Build our capacity for advocacy to become a more effective voice for individuals and families affected by acquired brain injury.</b>
<b>Ensure that BIST has a sustainable infrastructure by improving our governance and enhancing our staffing model.</b>

# PROGRAM & SERVICES REPORT

## Community Meetings

The monthly Community Meetings the Northern District Library (Yonge & Eglinton) in Room 200, continue to be a cornerstone program. 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.

Within this past year we have heard from professionals and other speakers on topics such as :

- Understanding Social Cues
- Managing Change, Never Give up – from a Canadian Paralympic Sledge Hockey Player
- Living with ABI – Exploring the Mind and Body connections
- Retrain the Brain through Neuro-Feedback
- Brain Dance.

## Social/Recreation Events

Social and Recreational events are great opportunities to bring BIST members together and to explore new interests, socialize and get out in the community.

Our Community Social Night, held at AccessPoint Danforth Centre wrapped up in December 2013. After seeking member feedback, we changed the format to an afternoon Social Drop In at the Northern District Library and have seen consistent increase in attendance and a few new faces at each meeting.

With the support of our Ontario Trillium Grant we were able to go on a variety of trips in the City, including the Royal Ontario Museum, The Art Gallery of Ontario, The Ontario Science Centre and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. We also had the pleasure of taking members by bus to the Botanical Gardens in Burlington in the Spring and Wind Reach Farm in the Fall.

Our bowling program has continued to flourish! Participation has grown and become more regular over the past year. Due to the popularity, we are now offering this program monthly instead of every other month. There are a number of members who come out regularly to the program, but each game day there is a new player two. The other special social events that took place this year included the Improv Night (in partnership with CHIRS), the BIST Annual Summer Picnic in High Park, Annual Halloween Dance (in partnership with CHIRS), and our Annual Holiday Party.

These successful social events were put together by the BIST Special Events Sub-committee. Thank you for your great work team!



# PEER SUPPORT MENTORING PROGRAM



## Get Connected with Peer Support



82%

of Mentors say that being a Mentor improved their quality of life!

90%

of Partners recommend the Peer Support Program.

BIST continues to offer The Peer Support Mentor Program in partnership with The Ontario Brain Injury Association.

The Peer Support Program connects a volunteer who is a “veteran” of a life experience involving acquired brain Injury (the “Mentor”) with an individual who is coping with similar issues (the “Partner”) and is in need of support. All Volunteer Mentors are screened and trained prior to being matched with a “Partner”. Mentoring can be done over the telephone, email and/or Skype, making it accessible for people who otherwise would not attend our programs.

A successful mentor recruitment and training took place in the fall and we have another one already scheduled for September 2014. There is always a need for new Mentors in all of the categories (ABI survivors, parents, spouses). At the moment, we are doing targeted recruitments for family members who are spouses and parents and survivors who are in their 20’s.

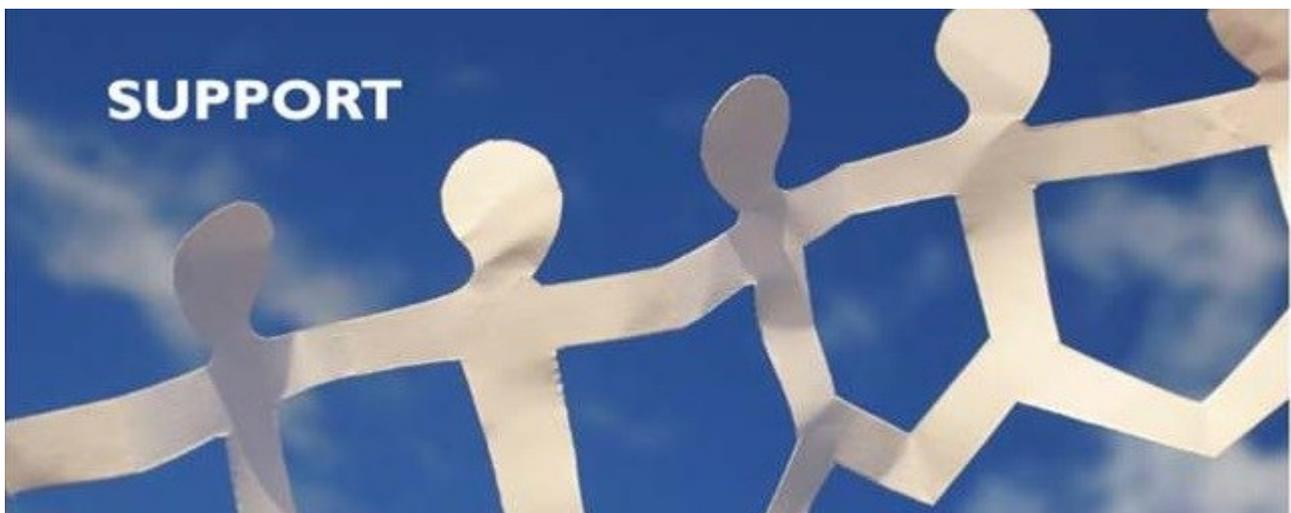
We have many successful matches and are looking forward to growing the programs over the next year.

OBIA’s Provincial Peer Support Program connects persons with lived experience (the Mentor) with an individual who is living with the effects of acquired brain injury and who requires support (the Partner). This program is available to survivors, family members and/or unpaid caregivers.

For more information contact:  
**Brain Injury Society of Toronto**  
416-830-1485 [www.bist.ca](http://www.bist.ca)

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# FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAM

In September, BIST launched the Family Support Program. This program had originally been offered as part of the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital Brain Injury Family Support Services, and when it was discontinued, BIST was asked by the young adults and families to take on the program.

The program is geared towards Young Adults between the ages of 18-26 and their parents. The program consists of two groups that meet concurrently and are facilitated by BIST staff, Rehabilitation Support Workers, Social Workers and a family member.

## **Young Adult Group**

This is a great way to socialize, improve relationships, learn new skills and get out in your community. This group meets monthly.

## **Parental Support Group**

This group is facilitated by a Social Worker and a Family Member who has been living with ABI in their family for years and has valuable experience and knowledge to share. The Parental support group met every other month, but will start meeting monthly in 2014.



# BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

The Awareness Committee was yet again dedicated to planning 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 Committee works to come up with fresh ideas.

**Brainstock 2013** rocked again on an absolutely beautiful June day at Nathan Phillips Square! This time the crowds were entertained by a fantastic Rhianna and Beyonce tribute act that had people dancing in the streets. Brainstock highlighted the day's current events surrounding sports related concussions and mild traumatic brain injuries. Special guests included former NHL players Ron Ellis, Wayne Primeau and Cam Stewart, in addition to Canadian Sledge hockey Paralympian, Paul Rosen. The event featured an interactive area with Foos ball tables and a NHL style Shooter Net. Our amazing volunteers helped participant's don adaptive glasses to simulate and demonstrate common visual deficits experienced by survivors. It was definitely an eye opening experience for some...pardon the pun. We were also pleased and proud to have the Toronto Police Services hosting a booth to raise awareness on helmet safety.

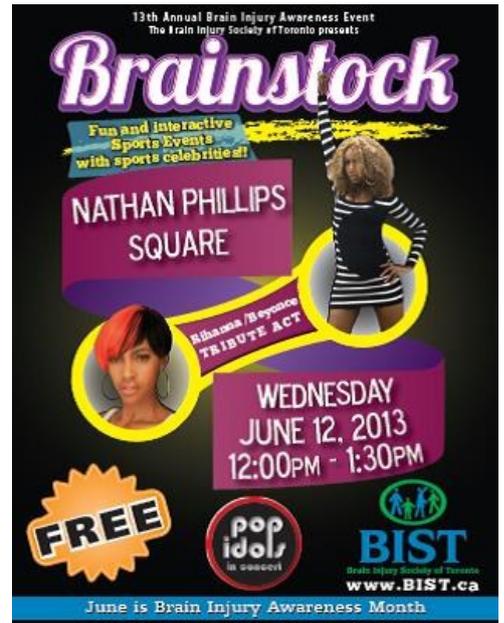
A couple of days before the June event, committee members and volunteers took the streets to spread the word and to invite the surrounding community. Many local businesses kindly displayed the BIAM poster making this year's event a success as hundreds of people visited the square that day.

As always our generous community partners and donor's set up booths around the square handing out information and free swag to interested passerby's.

At the event, BIST was honoured and pleased to be the recipient of a \$2000 donation on behalf of Paul Gilkinson and the staff at WSIB. Paul's brother Bill Gilkinson is a long-time member of BIST and a volunteer on our Special Events Committee, and his daughter Ainsley Gilkinson has volunteers with BIST assisting with Public Relations and Media.

Before his retirement, Paul auctioned off his Elvis memorabilia collection with all funds raised going to the BIST. Our sincere thanks to Paul and all the staff who donated

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



# BIST VOLUNTEERS

BIST is fortunate to have so many dedicated volunteers. Our volunteers sit on committees, helping to plan our programs, promote our organization and plan our fundraising and social events. Our volunteers are survivors, health professionals, lawyers, families and individuals interested in giving back to their community to support the mission of the Brain Injury Society of Toronto

Our Volunteer Committee works hard to place new volunteers in positions that both suit their interest and the needs of the organization. The committee planned and held the annual BIST Volunteer Appreciation night in April 2013. This event is in recognition of all BIST volunteers to say thank you for all the hard work they do. Many of our volunteers attended this event and enjoyed the food and conversation. The committee also plans and coordinates the Volunteer of the Year Award. Thanks to all the members of the committee for their hard work!

## **Volunteer of the Year Award**

Every year BIST recognizes a volunteer who has gone above and beyond the call of duty with the Vetter Volunteer of the Year Award named for Esther and Alfred Vetter. They have an adult son who sustained a brain injury many years ago, and have been instrumental in brain injury awareness over the years. Esther was the founding Executive Director of the Head Injury Association of Toronto.

Congratulations to all our deserving nominees!

This year's winner was Colleen Boyce. Colleen is about as dedicated a volunteer as you can get. Colleen has been with BIST since the beginning as the founding Chair in 2004 and currently sits on three committees – BIAM, volunteer and communication. She also volunteered in the interview process for the hiring of the staff position in Fall 2012. She is very active in her volunteer role and is always ready to lend a helping hand. Her enthusiasm and commitment to BIST and those living with brain injury is exemplary and she is a cornerstone in the delivery of our programs and services. She frequently attends BIST events and is always ready to lend her expertise and support to staff and volunteers.

Congratulations Colleen!



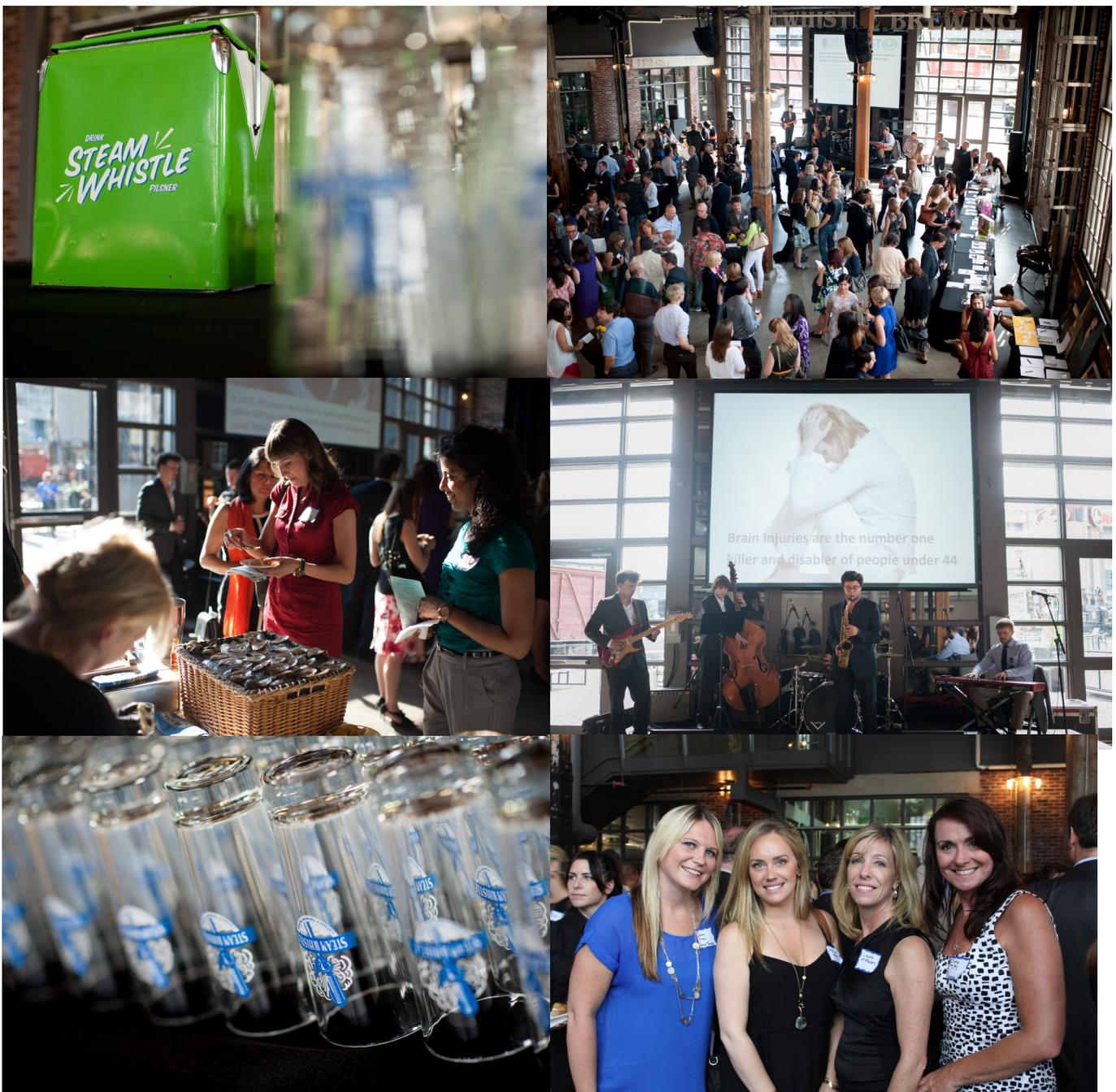
# Volunteer.



# BIST/OBIA MIX & MINGLE

The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual BIST/OBIA Mix and Mingle was held on June 12 at the Steam Whistle Brewery and was a huge success generating over \$100,000 in revenue. With 600 tickets sold, this event brings together professionals from across the brain injury community for an evening networking and socializing, while supporting two great causes.

An event like this takes many people to make it a success. We would like to thank all of our generous sponsors for their support, including our presenting sponsor McKellar Structured Settlements. We would also like to acknowledge the planning committee members for all their hard work to make this such a successful event. Next year we look forward to celebrating the 10 year Anniversary of the Mix & Mingle!



# BIST/OBIA MIX & MINGLE Sponsors

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# BIST/OBIA MIX & MINGLE Sponsors

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  - ◆ Pace Law Firm
- ◆ Physio-Logic Rehabilitation Services
  - ◆ Preszler Law Firm LLP
    - ◆ The Social Work Consulting Group
- ◆ Vertex Solutions Corporation

# BIST 5K RUN, WALK & ROLL

Despite the damp weather the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual BIST 5K Run, Walk & Roll was a huge success! We had almost 350 participants registered for the event. This year we introduced a 1K Kids run and we had over 50 participants rush towards the finish line to receive their medals.

Congratulations to all the runners and walker who took to the trail on a rainy Saturday morning.

## Top Male Finishers

1. Garvin Moses
2. Rick Stewart
3. Steve Nackan

## Top Female Finishers

1. Caitlin Zammit
2. Tonya Mah
3. Sally Clara

We thank our sponsors for their support of this event and our organization in general, as we strive to enhance the quality of life for people in Toronto living with the effects of acquired brain injury through education, awareness, support and advocacy.

Through sponsorship, fundraising and registration, we grossed over \$50,000 that will go a long way in supporting our programs and services.

We would also like to extend a special thank you to our Top Individual Fundraiser Celia M who raised over \$1200 to support the programs and services delivered by BIST.

Thank you to the Run Committee for their hard word and dedication.

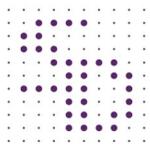


# BIST 5K RUN, WALK & ROLL SPONSORS

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# TREASURER'S REPORT

BIST has continued to grow and mature as an organization. As a result we have been offering more programs and services, increasing our staffing commitments and increasing our efforts in fund development. This year we have managed to once again increase our revenue from our two major events; The Mix and Mingle generated just over \$58,000 and the BIST Run Event generated almost \$51,000. Trillium funding was down as expected due to this being the last year of the agreement but so was the corresponding expenses.

This year we created an adhoc committee to develop more sophisticated financial policy and procedures. This work is now completed and will help guide the organization over the next several years. I want to thank Steve Gregory and Colleen Worsley for all their efforts on this committee.

I want to thank our members, community partners, sponsors, OBIA, Ontario Trillium Foundation and our staff for all their monetary and volunteer work as all efforts help contribute to BIST being a viable organization. For the third year in a row we ended the year in a surplus position.

## Comparisons of Interest for 2012, 2013 and 2014

<u>Income and Expenses</u>	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Total Income</b>	48,170	114,407	166,560	159,424
<b>Total Expenses</b>	51,397	75,490	131,461	154,222
<b>Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<u>\$ (3,227)</u>	<u>\$ 38,467</u>	<u>\$ 35,099</u>	<u>\$ 5,202</u>

## Fund Raising Events

OBIA/BIST Mix and Mingle	\$ 23,406	\$ 46,195	\$ 57,582	\$ 58,176
BIST Run Event	-	\$ 29,106	\$ 42,403	\$ 50,863

# TREASURER'S REPORT

## INCOME STATEMENT

April 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014

	<u>2014</u>
<b><u>INCOME</u></b>	
OBIA	21,804
Mix&Mingle - BIST/OBIA Event	58,176
BIST Run Event	50,863
Trillium	21,000
Donations	6,648
Misc, incl interest	933
<b>Total Income</b>	<b><u>\$ 159,424</u></b>

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## EXPENCES

Staff Wages	79,560
Trillium Wages	16,000
Trillium Program Expense	7,895
BIST Program Expense	4,209
BIAM Event	5,313
BIST Run Event	11,652
Admin Expenses	11,452
Insurance	1,639
Volunteer Event	581
Office Rent	12,538
Communication- phone	3,209
Bank Fees	174
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b><u>\$ 154,222</u></b>

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<b>Surplus/Net Income</b>	<b><u>\$ 5,202</u></b>
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# TREASURER'S REPORT

## BALANCE SHEET

(as at March 31, 2014)

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### ASSETS

Cash 93,926

### LIABILITIES

Accounts Payable 4,065

### EQUITY

Opening equity 84,659

add: Surplus 5,202

Ending Equity at Mar 31, 2014 89,861

---

**Total Assets** **\$93,926**

Total Assets & Liabilities **\$93,926**

---

# BIST DONORS

**Thank you for your generous support!**

Andrea Alex Abunassar  
Lisa Adams  
Monika Adelman  
Catherine Aguan  
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# BIST COMMITTEES

## **Awareness Committee**

Tonya Flaming (Chair), Colleen Boyce, Chris Brown, Darcy Merkur, Vivian Ng, Michelle Diamond, Alex Piotti, Miranda Hong, Anne Sorvari, Ian Bowles, Kerry Goulet, Julie Mauceri, and Deb Daniel, Maria Di Mauro

## **Communications Committee**

Ian Bowles (Chair), Colleen Boyce, Jack Shapiro, Matthew Chung, Elayne MacKay, Richard Haskell, Megan Hull, Kris Mamaril, Michelle McDonald

## **Programs & Services Committee**

Kat Powell (Chair), Dr. Gary Gerber, Jodi Brasgold, Ann-Louise Cole, Julie Osbelt

## **Special Events Committee**

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## **Fundraising Committee**

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## **Mix & Mingle Committee**

Greg Neinstein (Chair), Ruth Fernandes, Ellie Lapowich, Nick Gurevich, Joyce Chiang, Milan Unarket, Aaron Stiller, Joanne Driscoll, Ainsley Gilkinson, Ann Grozier, Jason Katz, Deena Ginsberg, Darcy Merkur

## **Volunteer Committee**

Bev Melamed (Co-chair), Kate Moore (co-Chair), Colleen Boyce, Kat Powell, Dr. Peter Rumney, Troy Lehman, Romy Berger, Deanna Gilbert, Marcia Allen

## **Run Committee**

Judy Moir (Chair), Michelle Diamond, Cora Moncada, Lesley Suchter, Michelle McDonald

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## **Judy Moir, Chair**

Judy is the Manager of Community Support Services at CHIRS which is a community based agency that provides support to people to reintegrate to their communities following a brain injury. Judy completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Manitoba and obtained a Masters of Public Administration from Queen's University. She has been working with people with complex needs (including brain injury) for over 20 years. Through her current and previous roles, Judy has had the opportunity to look at the provision of ABI services at a system level and advocate for change. Much of her current focus is on enhancing capacity for people with brain injury through the development of partnerships with organizations in other sectors (e.g., Addictions and Mental Health).

## **Paul McCormack, Vice-Chair and 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.

## **Kate Moore - Secretary**

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.

## **Michelle Diamond**

Michelle Diamond currently works with Functionability Rehabilitation Services as the Director of Case Management and Client Services. She has worked in the field of Brain Injury for over 12 years. She graduated with her Master's Degree of Social Work, from the University of Toronto, in 2000 and began working at Toronto Rehab on the ABI service in 2001. Michelle was with Toronto Rehab for over 10 years in the capacity of Social worker, Service Coordinator and was seconded for one year to the Toronto ABI Network as Project and Referral Coordinator. Michelle continues to work directly with clients and families living with the effects of brain injury. Michelle has been involved with BIST for two years as a volunteer on two committees; the BIAM Committee, and was a founding member of the Run Committee.

## **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.

# BIST BOARD OF DIRECTORS

## **Kerry Foschia**

Kerry Foschia has been working with adults with acquired brain injury for over 15 years. She is a Service Coordinator at CHIRS, managing the Aging at Home Program which provides home and community support to clients and their caregivers. Kerry also has a background in addictions as a counsellor and outreach worker. Outside of her work with ABI, Kerry is a member of the parent council at her children's school and enjoys pursuing her two other passions: painting and running.

## **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.

## **Ryan Murray**

Ryan is a partner at Oatley, Vigmond Personal Injury Lawyers LLP. Ryan has been representing people with traumatic brain injuries for nearly a decade. That experience has taught Ryan that a brain injury often has a lifelong impact on both the injured person and their family. Raising awareness about brain injury and promoting injury prevention are two of the reasons that Ryan volunteers with BIST. Ryan holds a Bachelor of Laws degree (LL.B.) and a Master of Laws degree (LL.M. – Civil Litigation and Dispute Resolution) from Osgoode Hall Law School. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from York University. Ryan is a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada, Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, the Advocates Society and the American Association for Justice (formerly American Trial Lawyers Association).

## **Julie Osbelt**

Julie Osbelt has over 16 years of experience supporting individuals and families effected by brain injuries through her work as a Recreation Therapist and Life Skills Facilitator at Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. In her most recent role as the ABI referral coordinator for the Toronto ABI Network, Julie supports, navigates and advocates to enhance the coordination of and access to acquired brain injury services. Julie has been a member of the BIST Awareness Committee since 2004.

## **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.

## **Colleen Worsley**

Colleen is dedicated to raising awareness and building support systems for individuals living with acquired brain injury. (ABI) Colleen is currently working with Delisle Youth Services as a Community Resource Consultant as well as continuing to work on fund raising projects in the ABI community. She has more than 15 years of experience in the social services field. She graduated from York University with a Specialized Honours Degree in Psychology, has a certificate in Nutrition and training in Behaviour Therapy techniques. Her continuing education involves conferences, seminars, and courses focusing on advances in the understanding and treatment of ABI and spinal cord injury.

# BIST STAFF

## **Michelle McDonald** **Director of Operations**

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. She sits on the Communications, Mix & Mingle, BIAM and Run Committees. Since starting with BIST, Michelle's says "I am in constant awe of the many volunteers that enable BIST to reach its mission. We would be nowhere without the dedication and commitment of these individuals".

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.

## **Kat Powell** **Programs and Services Coordinator**

Kat has been working with BIST since the fall of 2008. Kat joined BIST with 10 years' experience working both 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 Kat 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 Kat 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.

## **Meri Perra** **Communications and Support Coordinator**

Meri Perra is excited to be the new Communications and Support Coordinator at BIST. She has several years' experience connecting people to resources, through her former position at Find Help Information Services. Since leaving Findhelp, she earned a diploma in journalism and has been blogging and writing for an online parenting magazine. "The Brain Injury 101 training was really eye opening for me," she says. "I am amazed at the strength and resilience of so many survivors."

Meri lives downtown with her partner, two kids, tiny cat and massive cargo bike.





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