

## ANNUAL REPORT 2012 - 2013



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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.



## **Greetings from the Chair**

On behalf of the Board of Directors, it is my pleasure to report on the fiscal year ending March 31, 2013. This past year was another incredible year of growth and as a result of the efforts of our staff, sponsors, and volunteers BIST is in a strong position to continue building on that growth in the years to come.

Fiscal 2012-2013 was highlighted by a number of accomplishments and successes. BIST continued to work to meet the objectives and requirements of a two year grant received from the Ontario Trillium Foundation in 2011. This grant enabled BIST to develop and offer an unparalleled amount of activities, workshops, and support groups. BIST's 2012-13 program calendar listed an incredible over 70 events that were available to our members. This has not only allowed increased support offered to existing members but has resulted in a growth in membership and allowed BIST to reach new groups (e.g., caregivers and young adult).



June is always a very busy month and 2012 was no exception. The Awareness Month event at Nathan Phillips Square was very successful and despite the heat, members were happy to have the opportunity to get their message of awareness into the hands of the public. The Mix & Mingle, BIST's signature fund raising event, was also held in June and resulted in raising an incredible \$111,660.00. It will be very difficult to beat this in 2013 but I have every faith that the planning committee will yet again exceed all of our expectations.

In addition, BIST hosted our second annual 5 K Run, Walk & Roll at Sunnybrook Park on September 22, 2012. This event is fast becoming the place to be in September. More than 400 people participated and over \$42,000 dollars was raised to support BIST's programs and services. I would like to challenge everyone who is touched by brain injury whether personally or through your professional life to join your friends and colleagues in the third annual Run, Walk & Roll on September 21, 2013.

All this hard work and the incredible support from our sponsors and volunteers has brought BIST to an exciting new place, a home of our own. This year BIST opened its very first office which provides our staff and volunteers with a much needed space to meet and to work. And our team continues to grow. In addition to an increase in hours for some of our part time staff we have been able to hire a program assistant, Mary Ellen Flynn, to support the planning and delivery of BIST programs.

As we finished up the year, the Board put its sights on the future. BIST initiated a strategic planning endeavor to chart a course for the next five years. We have been fortunate to obtain the support of a volunteer consultant, Chris Govern, from Management Advisory Services.

I feel incredibly honored to have been part of BIST this year and I want to express the Board's sincere gratitude to our staff, Michelle McDonald, Kat Powell, Debra Fine and Mary-Ellen Flynn and to 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.

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—Jonathan Burton, Stefanie Linton, and Marnie Russell. This organization could not run without your generosity and passion.

Judy Moir, Chair—Board of Directors

#### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

#### Finance Overview

It has been another exciting year for BIST on terms of our maturity as an organization and our efforts towards income sustainability. In particular, our two major fundraising events saw increases this past year with the BIST Mix and Mingle generating over \$57,000 an almost 25% increase over last year, the BIST Run event generated over \$42,000 which is a 40% increase over last year. Add to this our ongoing support from OBIA, Ontario Trillium Foundation and generous donations we saw our income rise to over \$166,000.

Of course, with our organization maturing we have seen additional staffing commitments as well this year saw BIST acquire its own office. The Trillium project has also seen additional resources and staffing commitment in comparison to last year. Consequently expenses had a corresponding increase to income. However, through the efforts of our members, board members, committee members and very committed staff we once again ended the year with a surplus.

Income and Expences		2011		2012		2013
Total Income		48170		114407		166560
Total Expences		51397		75490		131461
Surplus/(Deficit)	<u>\$</u>	<u>(3,227)</u>	<u>\$</u>	38,467	<u>\$</u>	<u>35,099</u>
Fund Raising Events						
OBIA/BIST Mix and Mingle	\$	23,406	\$	46,195	\$	57,582
BIST Run Event	\$	-	\$	29,106	\$	42,403

#### Comparisons of Interest for 2011, 2012 and 2013

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#### **INCOME STATEMENT**

#### April 1, 2012 - March 31, 2013

<u>2013</u>

OBIA/Donations/Membership	21,544
Mix&Mingle - BIST/OBIA Event	57,582
BIST Run Event	42,403
Trillium	35,300
Donations	9,575
Misc	156

Total Income	
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#### **EXPENCES**

Total Expences	<u>\$ 131,461</u>
Bank Fees	280
Office Rent	8,273
Volunteer Event	869
Insurance	4,918
Admin Expences	7,791
BIST Run Event	9,769
BIAM Event	9,088
Communication- phone	2,863
BIST Programming Exp.	2,181
Trillium Programming Exp	3,770
Trillium Wages	21,858
Staff Wages	59,802

Surplus/Net Income

#### <u>\$ 35,099</u>

<u>\$ 166,560</u>

**BALANCE SHEET** 

(as at March 31, 2013)

<u>ASSETS</u>		<u>LIABILITIES</u>	
Cash	91,196	Accounts Payable	6,537
		EQUITY	
		Opening equity add: Net Proceeds for period	49,560 35,099
		Ending Equity at Mar 31, 2013	\$84,659
Total Assets	<u>\$91,196</u>	Total Assets & Liabilities	<u>\$91,196</u>

#### **AWARENESS COMMITTEE**

The Awareness Committee is compromised 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. This year we changed the date from a Thursday to a Wednesday to capitalize on the crowds that attends weekly Farmers market at Nathan Phillip Square.

Our theme this year – **Brainstock** and we had all our hippies out in full force! The Jerry Stiff Band and our new band - Superfire played and even in the heat helped us dance the afternoon away. We welcomed back the Foo Circus Crew to entertain us with their incredible feats - from the



stilt walkers to the hippie news team and everything in between, the square was buzzing with action. And to top it all off we added a Flash Mob!!! Thanks to the Joy of Dance studio that put together a fantastic routine set the song "Dance to the Music". A few brave committee members even joined in near the end of the performance. All of this was captured on video in order to upload it on to Youtube.

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 this year we had three 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.

This year we had some special guests join us: Ben Mulroney- from eTalk daily as well as Troy Adams, a brain injury survivor who is running a marathon a day across Canada to raise awareness for brain injury.

BIST was also presented with an amazing donation of \$5000 from Charlotte Brown and her team. Charlotte and her team - Adam Bovolitis and Mark Belsky put together a multi-media presentation about BIST and entered it into a competition sponsored by Youth Philanthropy Initiative where they won the grand prize! Thank you Charlotte and her team!

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

This year we said goodbye to long standing committee members: Julie Osbelt, Marnie Russell, and Ed Shaul as they moved on to different employment and other BIST endeavors. We thank the all for their dedication and hard work!

2012 Awareness Committee Members: Tonya Flaming (Chair), Colleen Boyce, Chris Brown, Darcy Merkur, Vivian Ng, Joe Pileggi, Michelle Diamond, Alex Piotti, Steven Gregory

#### COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The Communications Committee has been active and growing over the last year. During 2013, our biggest push has been to continue to expand our use of social media, regularly posting through our BIST Blog, Twitter and Facebook feeds. One of our biggest successes of the year was to achieve our goal of over 500 followers on the BIST Blog. We also have 133 likes on Facebook, and on Twitter 541 followers, having sent out 425 tweets. Throughout 2012, we continued to print and send out the Beacon newsletter via email in PDF format and in printed format for our members who do not have access to a computer. We are transitioning to a newer, more active digital publication method focused through social media and the website. This will be keyed to the Blog, and will keep our membership as informed as the original format, as well as saving significantly on printing and postage costs.

We finished the media plan and established ten media contacts, who will be available when we are asked for interviews from media groups on topics regarding brain injury. We selected people with a variety of backgrounds, ranging from survivors to caregivers to have a number of perspectives if needed.

We had significant success speaking to healthcare groups and informing them of our programs and how we can help their clients/patients. We will continue to target our potential referral sources to market BIST and grow our membership. Further outreach will be done to foster these partnerships in the coming year.

We were able to produce a number of survivor stories during the year, which were published via the BIST Blog and continue to profile our exceptional volunteers through out Volunteer Spotlight on our website.

In response to feedback from our volunteers for more inter-committee communications, we established a bimonthly Cross– Committee Communication update. We are still in the process of refining this initiative and plan to have a yearly meeting of Committee Chairs to ensure we are working together and enhance the cohesiveness of the organization.

We assisted with marketing for the 2012 BIAM Event and Mix & Mingle by developing press releases and strategies that will be reused for 2013. Similarly, we used those strategies to advertise and market the BIST 5K Run, Walk & Roll through press releases and social media.

Our goals for the next year will be:

- Achieve 1200 followers on the BIST Blog.
- Taking an inventory of the website and develop more consistent content
- Re-assess the needs and ideas regarding cross-communication updates between committees.
- Reset our goals and reflect the strategy of the board.
- Continue to develop contacts in the media for coverage of external events
- Consider the idea of Position Statements for the Blog.
- Promote more "Lunch & Learns" by the board, committee and others in BIST.
- Focus marketing efforts for promoting BIST, through promotional materials and personal outreach
- Developing and submit a Google Grant for 2013.

2012 Communications Committee Members: Ian Bowles (Chair), Colleen Boyce, Jack Shapiro, Matthew Chung, Michelle McDonald, Meghan Hull Jacquin, Richard Haskell, Elayne MacKay, Kris Mamaril

#### FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

The 8th Annual BIST/OBIA Mix and Mingle 2012 took place June 15, 2012

- Gross revenue: \$111,660.00
- Net income: \$85,109.25 in which BIST portion is \$57,581.94.
- 12% or \$12,240 more in net revenue than last year's event\*

\*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.

Changes in 2012 Event:

- Venue change to Steam Whistle brewery which allowed for:
  - BIST to have greater control over catering, bar sales, etc. resulting in a reduction of expenses despite the fact that there were more attendees than the year prior.
  - Introduction of a live auction
  - Larger space ensured we were able to sell more tickets and more prominently feature sponsors.
  - New band: Soul Stew

Priorities for the upcoming year:

- Expanding the fundraising committee to include individuals who can act as corporate sponsors
- Identifying a list of possible private funders
- Determining long term needs for BIST will help to determine how much funding is required and from what sources.

2012 Mix & Mingle Committee Members: Stefanie Linton (Chair), Greg Neinstein, Nick Gurevich, Anya Tamir, Ruth Fernandes, Ellie Lapowich, Joyce Chiang, Milan Unarket, Aaron Stiller, Joanne Driscoll, Terry Wilcox



#### **PROGRAMS & SERVICES COMMITTEE**

#### **Community Meetings**

The monthly community meetings have continued to be a great success over the past year at the Northern District Library on the 4th Monday of every month. 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 Managing Personal Finances, Tai Chi, Internet Safety, How to Get from Where You are Today to Where You Want to Be (A Survivors Story), Art Therapy, Mentoring and Support Groups.

#### Social/Recreation Events

Social events are great opportunities to meet fellow BIST members and to explore new interests. This year BIST has been able to continue and expand the opportunities being offered. Our recreational trips are quickly becoming a member favourite and members took a great trip to WindReach Farm in Ashburn, just outside Toronto in October. Although it was a chilly Fall day, a great time was had by all and we are happy to be planning more trips based on feedback from members.

The other social events that took place this year included our Annual Summer Picnic, a Halloween Dance (in partnership with CHIRS), an Improv night (also in partnership with CHIRS), bowling every other month and our Annual Holiday Party

We are already planning to hold a number of the activities listed above again and adding a couple new ones that interest members.

#### **Community Social Night**

This past January, BIST started a new Community Social Night program that takes place on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at the AccessPoint Danforth Centre. This program has offered activities such as board games, live karaoke and a movie night so far. The interest in the program has been great and the number of people attending continues to grow. We are looking forward to continuing this program.

#### Programs – Peer Support Mentor Program (PSMP), Support Groups, Workshops

Over the past year a number of different programs took place. The programs offered included the Survivor Support Groups that met three times monthly. In January we were happy to start a Second Survivor Support Group. To meet the needs of Family Members in a relaxed and comfortable environment, we began offering drop in support groups starting in January. Unfortunately, participation in this program was lower than expected and therefore it is presently on hold. The Programs and Services committee continue to identify and search out different ways to reach the needs of Family Members.

The Peer Support Mentor Program (in partnership with OBIA) continues to be a success. We held two mentor recruitment and trainings over the past year and have made a number of matches. The program continues to grow in participants. BIST continues to be offering workshops to ABI Survivors and family members throughout the year. Topics that were focused on throughout the past year included Dating and Relationships, Brain Injury 101, Substance Use and Brain Injury, Delivering Quality Support, Communication: Opening up Dialogue about the Journey and Community Resources and Navigating the ABI System.

#### **Program Development**

As BIST has been growing in membership and the number of programs offered over the past year, a need was identified for an extra part time staff member to assist in the planning and implementation. Early in 2013, BIST was very happy to welcome Mary-Ellen Flynn to the team.

Several exciting upcoming programs are currently being worked on for the year ahead. This includes:

- A Brain Basics Training (in partnership with OBIA)
- A Young Adult and Family Member support program that will be starting in the fall of 2013
- A variety of different workshops for both ABI Survivors and Family Members.
- More recreation trips including Art Gallery of Ontario, the Royal Ontario Museum, and another farm trip

2012 Programs & Services Committee Members: Julie Osbelt (Co-chair), Kat Powell (Co-chair), Colleen Worsley, Dr. Gary Gerber, Jodi Brasgold, Anne-Louise Cole

2012 Special Events Committee Members: Kat Powell (Chair), Colleen Worsley, Michael Cluthier, Sarah Briggs, Frank Bruno, Kevin Browne, Bill Gilkinson, Mark Coveyduck





#### **VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE**

The volunteer committee continued to support BIST and it's volunteers in the following ways this past year.

A binder was developed for all committees that will organize and keep a record of the work being done on each committee. This binder will help standardize the format of all of our work across the various committees. This binder will also be used to orient new volunteers to the committees as turnover occurs. The volunteer committee will assist the other committees with implementing this binder in their own committee soon.

The volunteer committee also planned and held the volunteer appreciation night in May 2012. This event is a recognition for all BIST volunteers to say thank you for all the hard work they do. Many of our volunteers attended this event and enjoyed the evening. 2012 was the first year of the presentation of the Vetter Volunteer of the Year Award and the winner of the first year was lan Bowles.

The volunteer committee also completed the volunteer survey that was a requirement of the Trillium grant. This survey was distributed to all volunteers and brought back valuable information from our volunteers about the services BIST offers and the experiences of our volunteers.

The committee continued to screen, orient and place new volunteers on our various committees at BIST.

2012 Volunteer Committee Members: Bev Melamed (Co-Chair), Kate Moore (Co-Chair), Colleen Boyce, Kat Powell, Peter Rumney, Troy Lehman, Romy Berger, Deanna Gilbert, Marcia Allen



Thank you to all of our Volunteers. We couldn't do it without you.













#### BIST 5K Run, Walk & Roll

The second annual BIST 5K Run, Walk & Roll was another huge success! Almost 400 participants joined us on what started out as a raining fall morning. That didn't seem to dampen anyone's spirits! Gila Karp and Vanessa Ellis from NeuroDynamics led us through a rousing group warm-up and we were thrilled to have Kathleen Wynne, former MPP Don Valley West and now Premier of Ontario give opening remarks. The clouds broke just as the race was about to start.

To expand on the success of last year's inaugural event, we increased registration limits, and included a Kids Zone, complete with fire truck, inflatable bouncy castle, face painting and other activities. We also introduced a prize for the highest individual fundraiser. Congratulations to Julie Ly for raising \$1500 to support BIST.

We couldn't be happier with the success of this event and will continue to build on this formula. Plans are already underway for the 2013 run, including the addition of a 1k Kids Run and personal fundraising pages, where participants can build profiles and send emails to their networks to raise funds. Mark down Saturday September 21st, 2013 in your calendar and visit www.bistrun.ca to register today!

A sincere thank you goes to the members of the Run Committee, who dedicate their time and effort to make this event a success, and to all the volunteers on race day who helped out.

A very special THANK YOU to our sponsors:

Gold Level:

- Himelfarb Proszanski LLP
- Personal Injury Alliance McLeish Orlando LLP, Oatley Vigmond LLP, Thomsom Rogers Lawyers
- Shekter Dychtenberg LLP
- Lawlor Therapy Support Services Inc.

Silver Level:

- Howie, Sacks & Henry LLP
- The Social Work Consulting Group
- Hanson Duby Lawyers
- Kerr Lawyers

#### Bronze Level:

- FunctionAbility Rehabilitation Services
- Catastrophic Injury Management Inc.
- Gluckstein & Associates LLP
- Inter-Action Rehabilitation Inc.
- Adair Morse LLP

2012 Run Committee Members: Judy Moir (Chair), Michelle Diamond, Cora Moncada, Lesley Suchter, Kristie Kennedy, Michelle McDonald









### **BIST 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).

#### Stefanie Linton, Vice-Chair

Stefanie got involved with BIST in 2010, and is also the Chair of the Fundraising Committee. 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 Executive Director of the FPSC Foundation.

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.

#### 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.

#### Jonathan Burton, Past-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.

#### **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.

#### 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.

#### 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.

#### **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 Communication and Run Committees. She is also the on the OBIA Advisory Council of ABI Community Associations and also sits on the Toronto ABI Network Advisory Council. 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.

#### 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.

#### Mary-Ellen Flynn—Programs and Services Assistant

Mary-Ellen started with BIST in March 2013. Mary-Ellen is a Master's of Science graduate in Occupational Therapy, while also holding a Bachelor's Degree in Social Care. Mary-Ellen has over three years work experience working in both community and clinical Brain Injury settings. Mary-Ellen has a wide range of experience dealing with a varied spectrum of clients from mild to severe Brain Injury. In addition she has experience in the areas of mental health, medical research, paediatric and geriatric care. Since Mary-Ellen has started working she has always said "Working in the area of Brain Injury has always been a rewarding occupation where you can really make a difference"

#### Debra Fine, M.A.—Psychotherapist/Group Facilitator

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.

# BIST gratefully acknowledges the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation



The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario

## BIST is a proud member of







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