

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Name: Darcy Merkur

How long have you been a member of BIST? About 10 years.

What is your volunteer role with BIST? I am a long-standing member of the Brain Injury Awareness Month Planning Committee (now known as the Awareness Committee I believe)

What motivated you to become a volunteer with BIST? Wanting to help raise public awareness of Brain Injury and wanting to help develop a sense of community for survivors.

What is the best part of being a BIST volunteer? Collaborating with the survivor community on a rewarding awareness event.

Why do you think it is important to volunteer? To give back something to the community and become a better person.

What would you say to potential volunteers? That volunteering is very rewarding on many levels and gives you a good feeling inside.

How do you balance work, life and volunteering? Balancing priorities is always a challenge, but volunteering is an important part of that balance.

What is your favourite book? Can I say "Confederacy of Dunces" or is that politically incorrect (hope not--it is hilarious).

What is your favourite movie? Can't go wrong with the Godfather I or II.

What other activities are of interest to you? Love all summer sports, like golf, tennis and baseball.

What is the most important thing you have learned through volunteering with BIST? That people are inherently good but some are often not understood due to lack of public awareness.



“To give back something to the community and become a better person. “

UPCOMING COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Monday April 23rd, 2012

Nutrition - Healthy Eating of a Fixed Income.

Aimee Hayes – Dietitian

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

Monday May 28th, 2012

Volunteer Appreciation Event

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

June 25th, 2012

Annual General Meeting

Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Location: Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd, Room 200 (2nd Floor)

IAN'S STORY

I grew up on the northwest side of Toronto: near Jane and Sheppard. My early life was fairly typical. I was active and tried to be athletic; there were a few minor incidents, but I was mostly fairly healthy. I did well in school. Most of my knowledge about the human body came from classes and books. I remember reading when I was very young that nerve cells do not reproduce, so brain damage cannot heal like other parts of the body. Since then, I've learned through personal experience that the brain can heal much more effectively than was previously thought, and it's become something of a personal crusade to correct this misconception wherever I find it.

My degrees are in pastoral studies, from a Bible college in Chicago, and geography: a master's from the Pennsylvania State University. I had finished my schooling less than two years before my Accident (and yes, in my mind, the word is capitalized). I travelled a bit as a young adult, finally getting my first real job in Arkansas. I bought a house in Little Rock, and on the Saturday of Easter weekend, 2001, while travelling home in a rain-storm, I hydroplaned and slammed sideways into a bridge support. I was whisked to the hospital but had suffered significant damage to a number of bones and internal organs. I'm rather glad that I don't remember the healing process for most of this: I was in a coma for 45 days, and by the time I could understand what had happened I was mostly healed.

The day I woke from my coma was a Tuesday. I started therapy the next day: physical, emotional, cognitive and speech therapies that were intended to help me to reclaim my old life. At first it was hard to participate: I thought that since "brain damage" doesn't get better, there was no point in working against the inevitable. I was started on antidepressants that weekend, and by Monday I was at least willing to try. I think that was the first turning point in my recovery: once I discovered that I could get better, I wanted to see how much better I could get.

Initially, the memory loss associated with my Accident spanned over two years. I thought I was living in Pennsylvania: when the doctors told me I was in Arkansas, I didn't believe them. I thought it was all part of an elaborate hoax. But I accepted the parts of my life that were gone: and, over time, I was able to reclaim most of them. As technical manager at a firm that specialized in geographic analysis, it took some time to completely return to my job. But I still remember the day (several



years later) when one of my coworkers said that, from what he could see, I had completely recovered. I was assisted in this by friends, doctors and therapists who worked in the area. I was involved with the Brain Injury Support Group of Central Arkansas for several years, speaking on the subject and assisting with fund-raisers. They helped me to fully understand the long-term ramifications to my injury and to develop coping strategies that helped me to live an active, functional life.

I moved back to Toronto a few years later. I found significant difficulty balancing the implications of my injury with the necessities of life in a new locale. I left one job because my boss was unwilling to work with me regarding the difficulties and needs I encountered at work. My current job is with the Ontario government, doing similar work to what I did in Arkansas. Discovering BIST a couple of years ago, I'm now the chair of the Communications Committee and actively involved in many aspects of the group. Most people will know me as the guy with the camera: some years ago I found that I could use my interest in photography to help me to remember things better. I take pictures not only to document an event for others, but for myself.

It took time to move from where I considered my Accident to be the end of my old life to where I could think of it as the beginning of something new. There were, and are, several factors that have been important in the process. One is the support of friends, family and professionals who helped me to move in the right direction. Another is a lifelong sense of learning, which I believe is one of the things that helped my brain to be sufficiently pliable to be reclaim some of what had been lost. And third is a positive outlook, which helped to focus on the bright side of life that sometimes seemed very dim. With these outlooks, I've not only reclaimed much of what I lost, but I've developed new perspectives that otherwise would have been hidden.

FAMILY & CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

This BIST support group allows caregivers and families supporting individuals living with the effects of brain injury to meet others with similar experiences. The group offers valuable emotional support, information and resources and will enable you to meet new friends, become more familiar with resources in the community, and provide an environment where positive and negative feelings can be expressed without judgment from others. The sessions will be facilitated by BIST Social Worker Debra Fine.

Topics will include:

- Grief and depression
- Changing roles
- Managing stress and emotions
- Effective communication strategies
- Relationships and intimacy
- Taking care of yourself
- Time and budget management



Starting Tuesday April 24th, 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm (4th Tuesday of every month). Northern District Library – 40 Orchard View Blvd

To Register or learn more about the program, please contact Kat Powell, Programs and Services Coordinator at: (416)-830-1485 or connections@bist.ca.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN TORONTO

Earth Day

Join us at Evergreen Brick Works for a whole host of eco-activities for the family, including a vegan food fare at the farmers' market, a tree tour in the quarry led by LEAF, a public tree planting on site and live music.

<http://ebw.evergreen.ca/whats-on/special-events/earth-day>



Doors Open Toronto

For one weekend a year, buildings across Toronto open their doors to the public during the Doors Open Toronto festival. This year's festival theme is photography and architecture.

Past participating buildings have included Old and New City Hall, Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre, Union Station, St. Andrew's Church, Corus Entertainment and more.

May 26, 2012 - May 27, 2012



BIST BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

June is Brain Injury Awareness Month.

The Brain Injury Society of Toronto is proud to present

Brainstock

Wednesday June 20th, 2012

12:00 pm–2:00 pm at Nathan Phillips Square

With the musical talents of

The Jerry Stiff Band and Superfire



Special Guest Ben Mulroney



Photo Courtesy of CTV

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

Call for Personal Stories AND for Speakers

Here's your chance to tell your story to an audience that may never have heard of acquired brain injury. We are hoping to collect enough personal stories to create a booklet for distribution at the Awareness Event.

We are also looking to choose two speakers to tell their stories at the Brain Injury Awareness Event to promote brain injury awareness.

Who is eligible? Any survivor or family member who is a member of BIST (membership is \$5/year for survivors) can submit their story. If you want to speak at the event, you must be able to commit to attend the June Event. You can ask someone to tell your story on your behalf.

What kind of speech or story? Your speech must be pre-written, about 10-15 minutes in length, and convey a positive message about brain injury. Please note that the Speakers Series will take place in a small tent, not on the main stage.

How do I enter? Submit your story in writing to brainstock2012@gmail.com by May 14, 2012. Be sure to include your name and contact information as well as a brief description of who you are (250 words).

What happens next? The BIST Awareness Committee members will choose the stories for inclusion in the booklet.

For the Speakers Series, the committee will choose 4 candidates, and invite them to speak at a BIST Monday Community Meeting. They will be the only entrants who are contacted individually, but the results will be posted on the BIST website www.bist.ca.

The audience at the meeting will then choose the winning two candidates, and they will be the featured speakers at the June Awareness Event.

BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH EVENT

Call for Artists

Here's your chance to showcase your artwork!

Display your art at the Awareness Event

We're looking for artists to display their work at Nathan Phillip Square on June 20th 2012 from 12-2pm during the BIST Brain Injury Awareness Event.

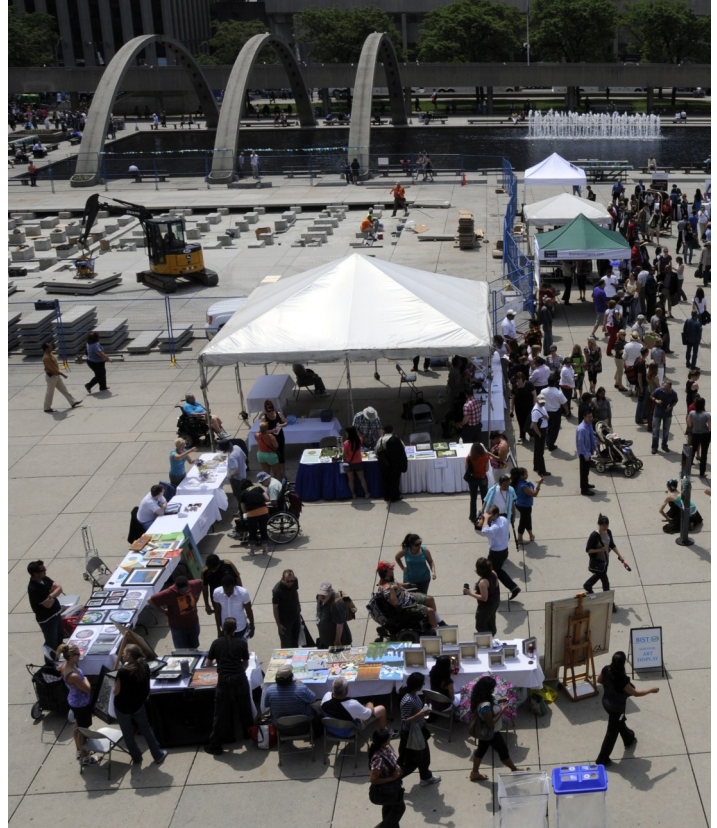
Who is eligible? All artists who are able to bring and display their work.

Do I have to be a survivor? No, all artists are welcome.

What kind of art? Any visual art that can be displayed in an open-air format. You will be responsible to transport and display your work.

How do I enter? Email Vivian Ng at brain-stock2012@gmail.com or call 416-480-4854.

What is the cost? FREE! but you must follow some rules. These will be explained when your reservation is confirmed.



BIST ANNUAL 5KM RUN WALK AND ROLL

After the huge success of our First Annual 5km Run, Walk & Roll, The Brain Injury Society of Toronto (BIST) is excited to be planning this year's event.

Save the date!

Date: Saturday September 22nd, 2012

Race Time: 10:00 am

Location: Sunnybrook Park – Entrance on West side of Leslie and north of Eglinton

Visit www.bistrun.com for registration information or to become a sponsor.

5K Run, Walk & Roll



September 22, 2012

SPRING WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Z I B R A Q N U I L G L V L
 L M X B E I M A Y L M A L O
 B I I E R W R U J P R N S O
 Z E R P N H O K V B A T N M
 S D S P V W S L L R W S L I
 A H U X A L Z O F A Q F A N
 H C R A M Z S H A M E E W G
 G H D A E S S W Y I Z H E K
 B R P I O W F T B K N F N B
 Z U O M E N I H S N U S E H
 C V S W P D T M C Q Z B R T
 N T V T T S E A S O N E H Z
 C X W W Q H W Q G Z S Q U U

WORDS TO FIND IN SPRING WORD PUZZLE:

APRIL	BABIES	BLOOMING
BLOSSOMS	FLOWERS	GROWTH
MARCH	MAY	PLANTS
RAIN	RENEWAL	SEASON
SPRING	SUNSHINE	WARM

Courtesy of www.best-free-word-search-puzzles.com

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.

Our services include:

- Community Meetings
- Support Groups
- Personal Development Workshops
- Peer Support Mentoring
- Special events

For more information, volunteer opportunities or to make a donation, please visit www.bist.ca or 416-830-1485

BIST is proudly supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.



Ontario Trillium Foundation



Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

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