

Family Update



Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Region III Family Support Council

Lakes Region Brain Injury Support Group

*By June Tillotson-Norman,
Family Update editor/designer*

The newly-formed Lakes Region Brain Injury Support Group is off to a strong start. A group of brain injury survivors, family members, and caregivers began meeting in December 2013 to share experiences and resources, to provide support to each other, and to learn more about living with brain injury through presentations and discussions. Between 15 and 20 people consistently attend the meetings; several others attend when they are able. Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month from 6-7:30pm at Lakes Region Community Services' (LRCS) Main Office in Laconia.

Dianne, a member of the group, reports, "Both survivors and care givers can benefit from the open discussions we have. It is so enlightening to hear from different people on both sides." Bryan continued on to say, "I enjoy the people I encounter at the meetings."

Meetings are both flexible and structured, with each month centered around a topic of interest to the group. The group is member-driven, deciding upon upcoming presentations and discussions. In April, the group watched a film from the Brain Injury Association of America about veterans returning home after acquiring traumatic brain injuries. At the June meeting, a young man who has made great strides in his recovery, and his mother, were guest speakers, sharing their stories of being a survivor and a family member/caregiver. In the near future, a presentation on the healing properties of music therapy will be planned.

The May meeting was centered around a group discussion. The group facilitators posed the question, "If

you were to speak to a group of people who knew nothing about brain injury, what's the most important thing you would tell them?" One member reflected back to the origin of his injury, saying, "Always have a designated driver."

Members also participated in a fill-in-the-blank exercise "Since my brain injury, life has been ____." Answers ranged from "boring" to "interesting." Several were bored with the schedule, routine, and structure that is now needed to manage living with a brain injury. Others found life more interesting because they were going places and meeting people they would not have met if not for the injury. Several family members and caregivers said the experience has been eye-opening in regards to the changes in behavior and personality of their loved one and the challenges they face. Many said they value life more and are grateful for being alive, now knowing how quickly life can change in an instant.

Amie Harvey and Nadine Barton volunteer through the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire (BIANH) to

- continued on page 2



*Brain Injury Support Group facilitators
Amie Harvey (on left) and Nadine Barton*

co-facilitate the support group made possible in thanks to a partnership between BIANH and LRCS. Amie is a Certified Brain Injury Specialist (CBIS) which is obtained through a voluntary national certification program for professionals working in brain injury services. The program provides professionals and staff the opportunity to learn more about brain injury, to demonstrate their understanding in a written exam, and to earn a nationally recognized credential. Amie is employed as a Resource Coordinator at LRCS and within her current caseload are five individuals with brain injury. She has worked with 10 different individuals with brain injury while working at LRCS over the past four years.

“Brain injury is known as the silent epidemic,” said Amie. “You can't see it, like a broken leg or someone using a wheelchair, and lots of times people don't know that an injury has occurred and has affected the individual. In the video we watched recently, the wife of an individual with a brain injury said she wished people could know somehow so they would be more patient and understanding of her husband's disability.”

Amie continues, “Brain injury occurs through trauma or can be acquired, such as a result of a stroke or aneurysm. Major side effects can result in personality changes, affecting behavior and self-regulation. Research is showing that with continuous therapies and a lot of hard work, new connections can be formed in the brain and slow, steady progress can be made over the course of many years.”

Want to learn more? Amie suggests visiting brainline.org. According to the website, “BrainLine is a national multimedia project offering resources about preventing, treating, and living with TBI. BrainLine includes a series of webcasts, an electronic newsletter, and an extensive outreach campaign in partnership with national organizations concerned about traumatic injury.” Support may also be found at the closed Facebook Group “TBI Survivor Support/My Friends Who Know” (you'll need to send a request to join and then be accepted to participate in a group discussion viewable only to those in the group).

Volunteers are being sought to drive support group members to and from the meetings in Laconia. If you are available to drive, or for more information about the

group, please contact the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire at 225-8400. The group is open to all and individuals are welcome to join regardless of frequency of attendance. ■

Quick Facts About Traumatic Brain Injury

Brain injury is unpredictable in its consequences. Brain injury affects who we are, the way we think, act, and feel. It can change everything about us in a matter of seconds. The most important things to remember:

- A person with a brain injury is a person first
- No two brain injuries are exactly the same
- The effects of a brain injury are complex and vary greatly from person to person
- The effects of a brain injury depend on such factors as cause, location, and severity

2.4 million people sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI) each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Injury Prevention, the leading causes of TBI are:

- Falls (35.2%)
- Motor vehicle-traffic crashes (17.3%)
- Struck by/against events (16.5%)
- Assaults (10%)

(from www.biausa.org)

What is the difference between an acquired brain injury and a traumatic brain injury?

A **traumatic brain injury (TBI)** is an injury to the brain caused by an external force after birth. Common causes of a traumatic brain injury include gunshot wounds, motor vehicle crashes, assaults, or falling and striking your head.

An **acquired brain injury (ABI)** includes all types of traumatic brain injuries and also brain injuries caused after birth by cerebral vascular accidents (commonly known as stroke), and loss of oxygen to the brain (hypoxic brain injury).

Family Support Council Update

By Susan Michaelis Gunther, FSC Chairperson

Congratulations to the Family Support Council (FSC) for receiving an award at Lakes Region Community Services' (LRCS) Annual Celebration! Although the FSC has several goals, over the past two years it frequently helped advance employment opportunities for adults. The FSC's efforts, along with other deserving individuals and organizations, were publically acknowledged in April.

Thank you Deb Nugent!

For the past five years, Deb Nugent has served as one of two State Family Support Council delegates. Meetings are held in Concord six times a year, and delegates share news of their Council and discuss matters important to families statewide. Deb will remain on the FSC but is stepping down from the State Council. Thank you, Deb, for representing the FSC at the state level.

Social activities for adults

Session two of the adult cooking club was excellent. Participation nearly doubled, and assisting and watching the cooks prepare a meal was rewarding and, at times, entertaining. Personal pizzas, topped with an assortment of vegetables, or meats, or just plain cheese, were the main dish, accompanied by a really good fresh salad. Each pizza was unique: square, round, crescent-shaped, everything on top, or sparsely covered. The cooking club scheduled for June had 10 people signed up. The menu was summerlike: chicken salad, pasta salad, and green salad. Matt Fink taught us his favorite cookie recipe so we had freshly-baked cookies for dessert. Contact Social Activities Coordinator Jen Reera at jreera@yahoo.com or 387-0261 to reserve a spot for upcoming cooking club sessions.

May 14 was movie night at a local theater where a small group went to see *The Amazing Spider-Man 2* and the animated movie *Legend of Oz: Dorothy's Return*. If you are over 18 and like to hike, keep Saturday, June 21 in mind. An easy-level hike in the Laconia or Meredith area is in the planning stages and will be guided by an experienced hiker.

Family Support Conference:

The annual State Family Support Conference was held at Attitash on May third and fourth. Several

Region III families attended, some for the first time. "For some reason," explained Karen McDowell, "the pace of this year's conference seemed a little more relaxed. I actually met a very nice woman who resides out of state in a community where I used to live. We talked about our kids, schools, services, the differences between two states. It was a very valuable connection for me to make." Karen witnessed Region III families connecting with each other and meeting new people. Even Karen's son, who sometimes has difficulty warming up to new people, enjoyed the atmosphere and made some new friends.

Patti Gray described the conference as "an inspiring experience. My husband, son, our daughter Sara, Sara's direct support professional, and one of Sara's friends joined us this year, making it a family celebration in tune with the 'Celebrating Families' theme. We loved seeing our daughter enjoy herself socially, attend the workshops she had chosen, and

continued on page 4



The Down Syndrome Team poses in front of the van purchased by the Family Support Council. The van has provided rides to the dance in Plymouth, to a pen pal dinner in Concord, and has been used by LRCS staff. ■

Family Support Council

Susan Gunther, Chair - 293-7371
Joel Fisher, Vice-Chair and State Delegate
Valerie Lemay, Secretary
Denise Colby, State Delegate
Irene Chapman ■ Angela Currier
Elliot "Spike" Davis ■ Ginger Donaldson
Patricia Gray ■ Lynn Hilbrunner ■ Cheryl Larose
Debra Nugent ■ Linda Wallace ■ Nancy Ward

explore more steps toward her independent life. It was gratifying to see our son hang out with the girls and lend a hand wherever he was needed. The varied workshops and the fellowship with our peers gifted us with a wealth of information and opened our hearts once again to the possibilities that lie in all of us.”

Denise Colby attended the conference with her husband Syl. They took advantage of a weekend away to network and look for additional resources for their son. “One of the highlights was listening to keynote speaker Jon Fenley. His words were very moving and inspiring.”

Fenley, president of People First of NH, experiences a brain injury that occurred as a result of a childhood brain tumor that required many surgeries to remove. Fenley spoke about his journey and growth as a self advocate.

“Syl and I also enjoyed having lunch with our Region III families,” said Denise. “There was a strong presence this year by Region III families, two exhibitors, and our council members.”

The conference is usually held the first weekend in May each year, and details are mailed out in January or February. Think about going next year, especially if you have never attended. ■



The Gordon Family - Family Support Conference 2014



Donka, Danielle, and Sara - Family Support Conference 2014

Mark your calendars:



2014 Lakes Region Uncorked Fundraiser Set for November 1st

Building on the enthusiasm of last year's first Lakes Region *Uncorked* tasting event, Lakes Region Community Services is eagerly anticipating *Uncorked 2014* which will be held on Saturday, November 1 from 6:00 to 9:00 pm. The first *Uncorked* was more than a successful fundraiser. It was an enjoyable and educational social event.

“We received extremely positive feedback from sponsors, vendors, local supporters, and guests,” commented Joanne Piper Lang, LRCS’ Development Director. “*Uncorked* is a celebration of what we have right here in the Lakes Region and the state of New Hampshire. The locally-crafted wines, mead, ciders, and beers showcased at *Uncorked* are some of the best you will find anywhere. Guests have a fabulous time learning how wines are made, appreciating how to taste the products and enjoying delicious food—all while supporting a wonderful cause.”

To accommodate this growing event, this year's *Uncorked* will be held at the Laconia Country Club.

Lakes Region *Uncorked* features local producers of high-quality, hand-made products gathering together to offer a truly unique tasting venue and experience. Guests can also participate in wine education and cooking classes, and a silent auction with a variety of quality items donated by businesses and local artisans. Because of the generous support of corporate sponsors and the local community, *Uncorked* ticket sales directly benefit the individuals, children, and families throughout the Lakes Region who receive supports and services from LRCS.

Ticket prices will remain the same this year - \$50 in advance and \$60 at the door, space permitting. To be on the list to receive notification when tickets go on sale, please send an email to: uncorked@lracs.org and include “ticket sales” in the subject line.

“*Uncorked* is a great opportunity for civic leaders, community members, business people, and the non-profit sector to connect with one another while supporting the agency,” said LRCS Executive Director Christine Santaniello. ■

4th Annual Autism Center Walkathon enjoys beautiful day on the WOW Trail and raises \$10,000

Even though rain was predicted, Mother Nature smiled on us again this year, contributing to the success of the 4th Annual Autism Center Walkathon. More than 100 people took to the WOW Trail, and although donations are still coming in, this year's event has raised at least \$10,000. Funds raised for the Autism Center help to increase access for children and parents in need of its services.

Thank you to the Region III Family Support Council for sponsoring and staffing lunch following the walk. This year, we moved the lunch outdoors, where volunteers grilled and served hot dogs and refreshments to the participants as they enjoyed the beautiful day.

Thank you to our business sponsors: Syl Lapierre Masonry, Kara Financial, Peanuts Auto, and Right Angle Construction. And finally, thank you to all of the individuals and families, LRCS employees, community members, and friends who volunteered, walked, and raised money. Your efforts played a vital role in the Walkathon's success.

Located in the Family Resource Center at LRCS' Main Office in Downtown Laconia, the Autism Center's mission is to create a learning environment that helps parents to advocate, encourage, educate, and support his or her child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. The center's programs primarily serve children ages birth to 5. ■



Families and friends joined together to participate in the 4th Annual Autism Center Walkathon in Laconia.

Save the Date!
4th Annual Miles for Smiles 5K
Tuesday, Sept. 9th, Downtown Plymouth

Proceeds from the race help to fund dental care for adults with developmental disabilities. Dental services for adults with developmental disabilities are not covered by Medicaid, leaving many unable to access the care they need for good oral health.

Interested in running, volunteering, or being a sponsor? Watch the agency's Facebook page and website, www.lrcs.org, for more information as it becomes available. Questions? Contact Laurie Vachon at 996-3976 or lauriev@lrcs.org.



Participants of all ages joined in during the 4th Annual Autism Center Walkathon

LAKES REGION COMMUNITY SERVICES

Engage. Empower. Inspire.

Lakes Region Community Services Office
and Family Resource Center - 524-8811
719 North Main Street, Laconia, NH

Chris Santaniello, Executive Director - LRCS
581-1500

Family Support Services

Laurie Vachon, Director of Family Support
996-3976
Karen McDowell, Family to Family Coordinator
581-1544

Region III Towns Served

Alexandria/Alton/Ashland/Barnstead/Belmont
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Ellsworth/Gilford/Gilmanton/Groton/Hebron
Holderness/Laconia/Meredith/New Hampton
Plymouth/Rumney/Sanbornton
Thornton/Tilton/Wentworth

Medicaid Care Management Conflict Resolution Hotline

The NH Department of Health and Human Services encourages those with ongoing, unresolved conflicts with their Managed Care Organization to call the hotline number that appears below. Members of the Governor's Commission on Medicaid Care Management have also urged anyone with questions or concerns to contact them at Commissioner Don Shumway's email address:

Don.shumway@crotchedmountain.org

**DHHS Medicaid Care Management Hotline:
1-800-852-3344, ext. 4344**

Choose the menu option for Medicaid care management

Know Your Rights - Visit Disability Rights Center's web page on managed care grievances and appeals

As a member of a Medicaid managed care plan, you have the right to file a grievance or an appeal if you are dissatisfied with your plan in any way. To find out more, visit the Disability Rights Center of New Hampshire's web site:

<http://www.drcnh.org/MMCappealsgrievances.html>



NH's Services & Supports

Department of Health and Human Services

Give your feedback on new state website NHservicesandsupports.org

The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services is pleased to announce the release of a new community long term services and supports website for NH citizens,
www.nhservicesandsupports.org.

The website was developed through the Balancing Incentives Program (BIP) with the goal of providing a user-friendly, central location where consumers can access information about community long term care services and supports throughout the Granite State. Take the survey and use the link on the home page to let the state know your thoughts by filling out a quick survey.

Looking for some summer fun? Reserve a pass today!

Trying to fill up your summer vacation days with affordable fun? Families receiving services from Lakes Region Community Services have access to passes that entitle them to free and/or reduced cost admission to the Children's Museum of New Hampshire in Dover and the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center in Holderness. **To reserve passes, contact the Family to Family Coordinator at 581-1544 or karenmc@lrsc.org.**

Children's Museum of NH

Thanks to several grant programs and generous donations, the Children's Museum of New Hampshire is able to make the museum experience accessible and inclusive regardless of economic status. These Funded Membership passes are valid during regular museum hours. The passes are not valid for groups of 10 or more.

The museum is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays, 12-5 p.m. The museum is generally closed on Mondays, but does open Mondays during the summer. It is open on most holidays and during school vacations. For more information, visit childrens-museum.org.

Squam Lakes Natural Science Center

The Family Support Council funds a Community Non-Profit Member Pass to the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center. The pass is available to families and individuals receiving services from LRCS. It is valid for two free trail admissions, plus up to four additional discounted trail admissions at \$8 each.

The passes are valid every day from May 1 to November 1. The science center is open from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Last admission is at 3:30 p.m. For more information, call 968-7194 or visit nhnature.org. ■

Common Man Hospitality Advancement Mentoring Program graduates first class

The first group of interns has graduated from a program created through a partnership between Lakes Region Community Services and the Common Man.

Michelle Fugure and Jessica Avery from Interlakes High School participated in an internship in Laundry Services at Foster's Inn. They were mentored by Foster's employees Arlene Roy and Hannah Regan-Casey. Sara Boissonault and Pauline Donaldson participated in an internship at Foster's Rise and Shine Café. They were mentored by manager Alison Hill.

Jason Lyons, Jennifer Tower, and Liz Braley of the Common Man met with Laurie Vachon and Wendy Robb of LRCS to develop a 10-week internship program, with the goal of offering a training experience in the hospitality field for individuals with disabilities. The internship started in March and concluded with a ceremony in May. Interns grew to love working at the Common Man and were very appreciative of the guidance they received from Foster's Kitchen Manager Tony Bomba. LRCS and the Common Man will work in partnership to host another internship program in the spring of 2015. ■

*Your attitude is like a box of
crayons that color your world.
Constantly color your picture gray,
and your picture will always be
bleak. Try adding some bright
colors to the picture by including
humor, and your picture begins to
lighten up.*

- Allen Klein



To follow us on Facebook, find the Lakes Region Community Services Facebook page, look for our logo, and click "like."



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Plymouth 42 Main St.,
Plymouth, 536-3178

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Kilntimeartstudio@gmail.com

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