

Information for Support Group Leaders

SupportLink, a newsletter to assist brain injury support group leaders, is published by TBI Project STAR at Carolinas Rehabilitation. TBI Project STAR also provides services for the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina Family and Community Support Office in Charlotte.

This Issue:

Page 1
BIANC Update

Page 2
TBI Advisory Council
Update/Advocacy Today

Page 3
Brain Injury Awareness
Month

Page 4
Brain Injury Ombudsman
Program

Page 5
Upcoming Events
ID Card Information

Page 6 & 7
Regional Updates

Page 8
Brain Injury Websites
Conference Call
Information

Page 9
SupportLink Email

Page 10
Research Opportunity at
Carolinas Rehabilitation

Page 11
Group Leadership
Challenges and Rewards

Page 12
Building Support for
Support Group Leaders

Brain Injury Association of North Carolina Update By Sandra Farmer, President

The good news during 2009 is that we saw some major accomplishments for brain injury in North Carolina. The North Carolina legislature passed two legislative initiatives that should bring more support for services for people who need long term care. As I mentioned in my last letter, one bill requires the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse to develop licensure rules and regulations for residential providers who work with people with brain injuries. The new rules will allow providers to develop services specific to the needs of people with brain injuries instead of trying to work with rules geared toward people with developmental disabilities or other needs.

The second initiative requires the Division of MH/DD/SAS to write a TBI Medicaid Waiver that will allow Medicaid funds to be spent in community based settings instead of institutional settings. This will allow people with brain injuries to receive services at home or in residential placements instead of nursing homes.

The other good news is that the designated TBI funds managed by the Division of MH/DD/SAS were not cut during the 2009 budget revisions. This is remarkable during the current economic situation and indicates that there are loyal supporters for brain injury in the state legislature and at the Division of Mental Health.

The bad news is that the economic situation does not look good for next year and possibly for the one after that. This means that we will need to continue to fight to keep the funds that we currently have and really fight to get additional funds for the new TBI Medicaid Waiver and to support the residential provider bill.

During 2010, the Brain Injury Association will keep you updated on new legislation and bills that will affect services for people with brain injuries in North Carolina. It will be extremely important for you to contact your local representatives to let them know about your needs for services.

Thank you for your support that allows us to provide support to others.

Sandra Farmer

You can contact Sandra at sandra.farmer@bianc.net or by phone at 1-800-377-1464

Brain Injury Family and Community Support Offices

Asheville	1-866-890-7801
Charlotte	
TBI Project STAR	1-877-962-7246
Greenville	1-800-697-3115
Raleigh	1-800-377-1464

You can contact the Family and Community Support Office nearest you for resource information, or visit the BIANC website at www.bianc.net

Governors Advisory Council on Traumatic Brain Injury Update

By: Marilyn Lash, Chair, Statewide TBI Advisory Council

It's never too late – or too soon – to advocate.

First of all, thanks to all of you who spoke up during the General Assembly's recent Session. Your phone calls, e-mails, letters and personal meetings with our state legislators made a real difference. That personal contact and personal story are most often what's remembered after all the reports are read, speeches given, and numbers analyzed. This was a tough budget year as you all know so it was more important than ever to have your voices heard.

Now that the Legislature has finally passed the state budget and gone home for its recess, it's tempting to think that our work is done. But the opposite is true. This is the time for us to put together our plans, map out a strategy, and gather information to prepare for the new Legislative Session that will start in May, 2010.

That's exactly what the Council's Legislative Committee is doing right now – putting together a strategic plan for brain injury services and funding in North Carolina. I ask that you take some time to plan as well. Please think about how you can be an effective voice and advocate for the funding that is needed to support and deliver the services for individuals with brain injury all across our state.

For information on the Governors Advisory Council On Brain Injury visit the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services/Mental Health/Developmental Disability and Substance Abuse Brain Injury Page at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/tbi>

Advocacy Today - Support Groups as Advocates

There is power in numbers. That is the premise from which legislators approach legislation. While each legislator may have personal interests and passions, he or she is also well aware of the power that organized groups can yield when Election Day rolls around. Politicians know that in order to ensure re-election they must listen to constituents' voices and make the concerns of their electorate their own.

Brain injury support groups, are for the most part, made up of persons with brain injury, their family members and professionals who work with them. Could there be a better or more qualified group of voters than the members of our North Carolina Brain Injury Support Group Network to be the voice of brain injury!?

SupportLink often informs support group leaders and others about pending legislation and issues that impact brain injury funding and services. Some past communications have asked for specific actions, such as emailing, writing, or calling a legislator. The steps needed to follow up and be part of the broader lobby for brain injury are usually explained and made simple by the references provided in SupportLink. However, there is another way support group leaders and members can help build support for future legislation favorable to brain injury services and supports:

Legislators who hear the term brain injury rarely have knowledge of the reality of living with brain injury. Without a story to relate the idea of brain injury to, the impact of having a brain injury does not register on the legislator's radar as a need that must be addressed. Local support groups are in a unique position to influence their elected officials by educating them on brain injury and putting a face and a name with the term brain injury.

With the holiday season just around the corner and the legislature between sessions, it is the perfect time to schedule a visit with your elected officials. Many have office hours in their districts and they will be looking for opportunities to interact with their constituents. This is a great opportunity to meet with legislators in person and to ensure that next time brain injury is part of proposed legislation, government officials will have in mind that someone in their district is affected by brain injury.

All state legislators have web pages accessible through the North Carolina General Assembly Homepage. By using this link to your district's legislators, you can find contact information for their regional or local offices. You can contact officials through the email link provided. However, it is even better to use a personal phone call, to set up an in-person meeting with the politician, or to invite the legislator to come visit one of your support group meetings. Keep in mind that the individual may be very busy and may have limited time to spend with you and/or your group, so be prepared to make your case quickly and poignantly. You want the legislator's radar to bleep loud and clear next time brain injury is mentioned.

To locate contact information for the elected officials that represent your district, visit the NC General Assembly Website at www.ncleg.net/. Click on House and Senate to access member lists for Senators and Representatives and to see the area served by that legislator.

March is just around the corner...START NOW TO PLAN FOR BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

March is just around the corner! Now is the time to start planning awareness and educational events in your community.

Support Groups across the state can play an important role in getting the word out about brain injury and how it impacts individuals and families. Below we have included some ideas to help your group get a head start on planning for Brain Injury Awareness Month.

Materials for promoting brain injury awareness can be downloaded from the Brain Injury Association of America website at www.biausa.org or from the Centers for Disease Control website at <http://www.cdc.gov/TraumaticBrainInjury/> . You can also contact your regional Brain Injury Family and Community Support Office for additional information.

- Contact your local cable provider and ask to do a scroll on the information channel. Some cable providers have a local information channel that scrolls information on events and other information. You can put in information about brain injury and your support group.
- Set up a display at a local mall or other location where there are lots of people.
- Put a Brain Injury Fact Sheet in the local Church bulletins. (There is a great brain injury fact sheet on the BIAA website at www.biausa.org)
- Contact local radio and TV stations and request that they promote brain injury awareness. Offer to write the scripts or to go on a talk show to discuss brain injury.
- Organize an event such as a walk or run. Make sure the local media knows your plan and is present when it occurs. If you are interested in holding a Walk & Roll-a-thon in your area, contact BIANC at 1-800-377-1464.
- Ask local newspapers to do a special interest story or write a letter to the editor yourself.
- Contact local schools and arrange to hand out fliers on bike safety or other brain injury prevention materials.
- Schedule an appointment to visit your local and state legislators to discuss the impact of brain injury on survivors, families and communities.
- Put up posters and other informational materials in public places, such as grocery stores, malls and restaurants.
- Contact your local town council or county commissioners and ask for a proclamation that March will be recognized as Brain Injury Awareness Month.
- Organize your group to go participate in the BIANC Walk & Roll-a-thon nearest you.

Whatever your group chooses to do during Brain Injury Awareness Month, no matter how large or small, it is important to realize that the loudest voices in creating awareness and educating toward prevention are the voices of those who have experienced brain injury first hand.

Keep an eye on the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina website at www.bianc.net for the schedule for the annual Walk & Roll-a-thon events.

Help for Families New Ombudsman Program is designed to help persons with brain injury and their families connect to services

“A what?” This is the question most people ask when they hear the word ombudsman. It is not your everyday sort of word; few people have ever heard it, used it, or know what it is. When North Carolina was awarded a Federal grant that includes establishing a Brain Injury Family Ombudsman Program over the next four years, BIANC and Project STAR understandably had to do some research before starting to develop the program and recruit volunteers to serve in the role. Simply stated, an ombudsman is an advocate who can use his or her own knowledge and experience to help others locate resources and obtain needed services.

The plan for this new ombudsman program in North Carolina has been developed. Now, volunteers are needed. Below are the guidelines for the Brain Injury Family Ombudsman Program. This information, along with a volunteer application, is available on the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina website at www.bianc.net

North Carolina Family Ombudsman Program

The Brain Injury Family Ombudsman is a volunteer position requiring from 6 to 12 hours per week. Volunteers will be provided workspace and supervision at the closest Brain Injury Family and Community Support or Resource Office.

Position duties and responsibilities:

The Ombudsman

- Will serve as an additional resource beyond the BIANC Family and Community Support Offices by assisting families and people with TBI who are having difficulty accessing resources
- Will consult with BIANC Family and Community Support Offices to identify barriers for families and people with TBI in finding resources, information and support
- Will support BIANC Family and Community Support Offices by providing advocacy, consultation and conflict resolution on behalf of families and people with TBI who are encountering barriers in accessing services, funding and resources
- Will provide outreach activities aimed at greater understanding of TBI in the community, especially in nursing homes and the public school system
- Will assist the Family and Community Support Offices with the development of educational presentations for use in community outreach and advocacy training
- Will work with the BIANC Family and Community Support Offices to collect and input information into a data collection system to track inquiries, concerns, issues and outcomes
- Will serve as a liaison between the brain injury community and the Brain Injury Legislative Advocacy Committee of the Governors Advisory Council
- Will work closely with the TBI Advisory Council and the Lead Agency (NCDHHS/DD/SAS) to help implement the Call for Action Position Paper developed by the Advisory Council

Special Considerations/skills needed for the position

- Able and willing to donate 6 to 12 volunteer hours per week
- Must provide references of character
- Preferably a family member of a person with TBI or a TBI survivor with the ability to follow through on a detailed multi-step process and follow-up
- Good interpersonal and communication skills
- Must complete required training program
- Basic computer skills
- Ability to organize, publicize and conduct legislative advocacy efforts to benefit persons with brain injury
- Willingness and ability to help develop presentations and train others
- Willingness to travel to other locations across the state for meetings, trainings, etc
- Provide own transportation

If you are interested in applying to serve as a family ombudsman, please contact your regional Brain Injury Family and Community Support Office listed below or BIANC.

Brain Injury Family and Community Support Offices

Asheville
68 Sweeten Creek Road
Asheville, NC 28803
1-828-277-4868

Charlotte
1100 Blythe Boulevard
Charlotte, NC 28203
1-877-962-7246

Greenville
202 E Arlington Street Ste. T
Greenville, NC 27834
1-800-697-3115

Raleigh
Cameron Village Mall
Raleigh, NC 27605
1-800-377-1464

Triad Brain Injury Resource Center 336-6874702

Upcoming Events



You are invited
Christmas Celebration 2009
Saturday, December 5, 2009
11:00 am until 3:00 pm
Siler Presbyterian Church Fellowship Hall
6301 Weddington Monroe Road
Wesley Chapel, NC 28104

Hosted by: The Union County Area Brain Injury Support Network
The Charlotte Area Brain Injury Association
For additional information and directions please contact Peggy Philbrick:
peggy.philbrick@carolinashealthcare.org or at 704-355-4354



SAVE THE DATE
BIANC Presents
FAMILY CAREGIVER CONFERENCE
WITH
AL CONDULUCHI
FEBRUARY 19, 2010

Watch for information on location and other details

Brain Injury Survivor Identification Card

Recently, several support group leaders have asked about how to order TBI Survivor Identification cards for members of their group. In the past, these could be ordered directly from The Perspectives Network (TPN). The address to order the cards has changed. Now the cards can be ordered from NeuroLaw.

The card identifies the bearer as a person with brain injury and gives information on brain injury, thus easing the accessibility of this knowledge in the case of an emergency.

Survivor Identification Cards from TPN can be ordered by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to:

NeuroLaw/TPN
Attn: ID Cards
1426 East Joppa Road
Towson, MD 21286-5982

All orders must include the stamped self-addressed envelope or they will not be filled. Complete ordering instructions and other information about the cards can be found on the Perspectives Network website at http://www.tbi.org/html/id_cards.html

From East to West...happenings across the State

Down East

By: Sandie Worthington

Things have been happening in Greenville this fall.

The effort continues to reorganize resources in the Family and Community Support Office. There was a Road Race for persons with disabilities in Greenville at which a hospital representative exhibited for BIANC. Approximately one hundred people attended this event. Sandie Worthington exhibited at the Disabilities Resource for Employment Fair in Greenville, which was attended by approximately forty persons. Efforts to educate the community about brain injury continue.

Equally important is educating service providers for persons with brain injury. Susan Fewell and Sandie Worthington led a BI 101 Training Workshop for local health and mental health employees in Rocky Mount.

Down East Survivors local support group is no longer meeting, but plans are in the works to organize an educational support group for survivors, family members, caregivers and professionals, with a target date of January. For information, contact the Greenville Family and Community Support Office. 1-800-697-3115

The Greenville Family and Community Support Office is in need of volunteers. If you would like to be considered for a volunteer position, contact Sandie Worthington at 1-800-697-3115.

South Central

By: Peggy Philbrick

With the Holiday season fast approaching, planning is underway for the Annual Christmas Celebration that is hosted by the Union County Brain Injury Support Network and the Charlotte Area Brain Injury Association. This annual event is open to persons with brain injury and their families from across the state. With attendance in 2008 topping one hundred and seventy five, the preparation has been stepped up to include a more aggressive fundraising campaign to support the ever-expanding invitation mailing list. When the statement, "everyone is invited", is made, it means exactly what it says. Everyone is invited. The Union County Support group started this annual event twelve years ago as a small Christmas Party for the group members and their immediate family members, but from there it has grown into a statewide event with persons from Asheville to Wilmington attending for the past several years.

This year's entertainment will include the return of Willie Mack Helms, a favorite from past Celebrations. Willie Mac, who is blind, will play his guitar and sing. David Moliss will once again play his Autoharp, and the gospel group, The Siler Boys, will perform songs of the season.

Making this annual event fun for all and making sure it can be free for those who attend is one of the main goals of the host groups. If there are members of your support group who would like to attend just let us know. All are welcome. For additional information contact Peggy Philbrick peggy.philbrick@carolinashhealthcare.org or Barbara Westphal at wwestpha@bellsouth.net

Food at Camp Carefree was perhaps a little tastier this year due to the volunteer cooks. Roger and Barbara Abernathy, Barbara Westphal, Peggy Philbrick from Project STAR and the Brain Injury Family and Community Support Office in Charlotte, along with others, rose to the challenge of providing meals for many adult campers.

The volume of food purchased, prepared, and consumed boggles the mind. When asked if he would be willing to do it again, Roger Abernathy responded, "Where and when?" Roger, who is the main cook for the annual Christmas Celebration says, "it was a whole lot more intense than preparing the food for the Christmas party, it was worth every muscle ache and all of the joint pain." All of the volunteers assure us that they are ready and willing to do it next time. Thank you, thank you, to those who fed the masses at Camp Carefree!



Ed Jones poses with Santa. From the smile, we bet he got what he wanted last year.

Does your group have upcoming events or reports of things you have done? Let SupportLink know and we will include your news in the next edition.

Central

by: Susan Fewell

The Triangle area held a daytime picnic at Pullen Park on October 10 with a potluck lunch. We had many survivors and family members and friends at the picnic and we cooked hot dogs on an outside grill. There were lovely healthy cabbage and bean salads and cup cakes with spider rings on the top decorated for Halloween. It threatened to rain but held off until after the picnic. There were arts and crafts birdhouses and sun catchers to paint and lots of conversation. What a great way to spend a Saturday with friends.

BIANC encourages support groups to plan recreational events in your local area. Invite other support groups to your event. BIANC may be able to help with the cost as a support group grant or a Regional Recreational Event. Find a park with a shelter or an inside space you can schedule for an event and let us know how we can help.

The Triad area plans to host their 2nd annual Recreational event in High Point on Saturday evening, November 7, called the Fantasy Ball. Participants dress up in costumes as someone they would like to be and come prepared for fun and education. Peggy Nelson and Kitty Barringer and their local planning team have been working on food, program, decorations, tickets and all the trimmings for another night of fantasy and fun. All the local support groups are invited as well as community partners who work with the Triad Brain Injury Resource Center in High Point.

Our BIANC Retreat week-end in September at Camp Carefree was a safe and fun-filled event with over 170 folks participating during the week-end. The Pilot Clubs of NC helped to fund this year's event. There were arts and crafts, OT students helping to make banners, Survivor Talk sessions, fabulous food, horseback riding, exercise with Kacky Hammond and team building and recreation activities by IQUOLIOC from Jacksonville. Bingo was popular during free periods and there was a dance Friday night and a Bonfire Saturday night with an inspirational service and slide show on Sunday morning. We hope to see YOU at next year's camp in 2010 as a camper or as a volunteer.

Jamie Pierce is the newest employee of BIANC. Jamie will join the staff in the Raleigh office and assume the duties of Training Coordinator as of November 9, 2009. Welcome Jamie!

The BIANC staff now includes:

Sandra Farmer - President

Jonna Roy - Business Manager

Susan Fewell – BIANC Statewide Training and Outreach Coordinator

Brittney Batchelor -Assistant Outreach Coordinator/ Day Program Coordinator

Karen Harrington – BIANC Asheville Family and Community Support Office

Sandie Worthington – BIANC Greenville Family and Community Support Office

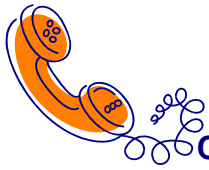
Peggy Philbrick – Project STAR - Charlotte Family and Community Support Office

Out West

by: Karen Harrington

Western North Carolina is glowing with beautiful fall colors and everyone has been outside enjoying them! The air is crisp and everyone is much more energetic. It has been a busy summer and everyone is looking forward to the holiday seasons and being able to spend time with family and friends.

Do you have ideas to share with other support group leaders? Would you like SupportLink to feature your Support Group in an upcoming edition? Do you have great fundraising ideas? All contributions are appreciated. Contact us at 704-355-1502 or 1-877-962-7246 or email us at peggy.philbrick@carolinashealthcare.org



Speak-up

**BIANC Support Group Leader
Conference Calls... a great way to
Share Information**

The Support Group Leader teleconference calls were started over a year ago to offer support group leaders the opportunity to call in and talk for free with support staff at BIANC, staff from the Family and Community Support Office, and other support group leaders.

Participation in the calls is voluntary on the part of support group leaders. So far participation has been less than hoped for. We heard feedback during the regional support group leaders meetings indicating that in some cases the scheduled time of the calls was not convenient to many of the leaders. In order to give those who cannot be available from noon until one o'clock the opportunity to participate, the schedule has been adjusted to try to reach more leaders.

Every fourth month the conference call will be held in the evening. BIANC hopes that group leaders will be able to participate in the conference calls at least three times per year.

Watch for the schedule for the date of the calls. To join the call dial **1-888-346-3659 Enter Pin 2784**

We look forward to having you call in to share your successes and concerns with other group leaders.

Become a BIANC Member

If group members would like to become members of BIANC and cannot pay the full membership price they can join for the \$5.00 reduced rate for survivors and family members. Membership numbers are important as they increase the legislative influence of BIANC. Group members can become a member of BIANC for one year and will receive information from both BIANC and the Brain Injury Association of America.

For additional information about BIANC membership, contact the Raleigh Family and Community Support Office.
1-800-377-1464

BRAIN INJURY WEB-CONNECT...

www.brainline.org

This site has information on brain injury and features videos and articles that educate about TBI.

www.familyvillage.com

Family Village is a global community of disability-related resources. This site has links to all sorts of information by specific diagnosis. Check out the Brain Injury resources.

www.caregiver.com

Family Caregiver Alliance offers links to many websites that offer caregiver support and a chance to sign up for a weekly online newsletter.

www.familiesusa.org

Families USA offers information on legislation and other issues of concern for persons with disabilities.

www.birf.info

Brain Injury Resource Foundation – a site that offers general information as well as information on healthcare services and advocacy issues.

www.headinjury.com

Head Injury Hotline is a site that offers links to many information sites and other resources.

www.tbiguide.com

Traumatic Brain Injury Survival Guide by Dr. Glen Johnson

www.lapublishing.com

Visit Lash & Associates updated website and enjoy the new blog page and other great information

If you find websites that you would like to share please send us the information. We will include them in Support Link.

Peggy Philbrick 704-355-4354 or
peggy.philbrick@carolinashealthcare.org

SupportLink E-mail

SupportLink often receives emails from support group leaders asking for information. The email below is from a group leader.

“Peggy,

I have a question. What are some techniques support group leaders can use when one person in the group wants to dominate the group meeting by talking about himself, his perspective, and his needs the entire time.”

SupportLink Response:

Hi,

This is something that group leaders often struggle with. It can be frustrating to facilitators and group members alike, and sometimes difficult to handle tactfully.

It is important to remember that the support group meeting may be the only social opportunity some people have. A person who has no other social outlet may be more likely to use the support group as an opportunity to express their opinions. There are several interventions that group leaders can try in order to solve the problem. Here are a few suggestions:

- Listen closely for an opportunity to interrupt the monologue and redirect the conversation to include the group. A tactful way to do this is to simply hold up a finger, tell the person who is dominating the conversation to “hold that thought” and ask another group member for their input. Continue to control the conversation by directing it to other group members by name. This intervention can convey a strong message when it is used consistently.***
- Interrupt the individual and politely ask them to allow others the opportunity to share. A simple statement such as, “We really appreciate your input, but let’s see what the other group members have to share with us. We will come back to you later.”***
- It may become necessary to address the individual in private about the situation. This needs to be done in a manner that recognizes the individual’s feelings. Some suggested lead-ins to this type of discussion could be; “I know you have a lot of experience with brain injury and that you want to share your ideas and experiences...” or “I do appreciate your willingness to share information with the group, but we really need to allow others the opportunity to talk more during the meetings.”***
- In case one if the above interventions fail, it is important to remember that you are facilitating a group and that the group as a whole is more important than one individual. While it should be used as a last resort, telling the individual that the support group may not be the best avenue for them to express their thoughts may become necessary. If the problem reaches this point, it is best to address the person in a private conversation. Perhaps suggest that a counselor, family member, or legislator may be the better person to speak to about the extensive issues being expressed. Reaffirm the goals of the group setting with the individual. It may become necessary to ask the participant to leave the support group; however, this tactic should only be used as a last resort.***

As the facilitator of the group, leaders need to try to handle things professionally. While addressing difficult situations may be uncomfortable, it is a part of group leadership. If a leader is unsure of how to handle a situation within their group, asking a co-leader for help may be necessary. They may also want to contact their regional Brain Injury Family and Community Support Office for advice.

Do you have a question about group facilitation or leadership? SupportLink will try to answer your questions. Just send us an email at peggy.philbrick@carolinashhealthcare.org

Supporting support group leaders in North Carolina is a goal of Project STAR, BIANC and all of the Brain Injury Family and Community Support Offices. If you prefer to talk to someone in person, call the Family and Community Support Office in your region.

Having trouble with cognition or emotions since your traumatic brain injury (TBI)?

Find out more about participating in a research study that includes 9 free treatment sessions!

Participants will be paid for their time.



You may be eligible if you*:

1. Have had a moderate to severe TBI.
2. Had your TBI at least one year ago.
3. Are between 18 and 65 years old.
4. Have options for reliable transportation.

Please call Sheri at 704-355-9629 or Dawn at 704-355-4211 for more information.

* Other aspects of participant eligibility will be assessed at screening

It's A Hard Job, but Someone Loves to Do It!

One of the most challenging aspects of being a support group leader is keeping the meeting content fresh and interesting for those who attend. This can be time-consuming and exhausting work, especially if the group is very diverse. It can also be difficult to address the needs of newcomers while keeping the meetings interesting for those who have attended for a long time.

Not only is it important to keep members of the group excited, but it is also equally important to keep yourself, as a group leader, excited and motivated. This can sometimes be more difficult than keeping the group engaged.

In past editions of SupportLink, we have talked about sharing the responsibility with other group participants. This is a great way to involve other group members and to encourage group ownership. In this edition we will look at ways to make the job easier and to reduce the time required for the month to month mechanics of planning and conducting meetings.

There are many websites devoted to facilitation of various types of support groups. From groups that help with bereavement and chronic disease to those that deal with building stronger business relationships and self-image, much information is available. In reading through some of the information on these sites, SupportLink found some helpful suggestions for maximizing the time spent on planning and preparing for group:

- **Preplan:** Determine long term goals for the group and develop a personal action plan that is concise and easy to follow. Knowing what needs to be done, and when, can make the tasks easier, especially if the action plan is in the form of a checklist. Checking off tasks as they are accomplished gives a clear picture of overall progress and often makes the job less daunting.
- **Time Management:** Do routine tasks in blocks of meetings rather than on a meeting to meeting basis. For example, if you set aside a block of time to contact potential speakers and arrange speakers for six months during this allocated time, rather than try to scramble from month to month to get speakers, you will not face the uncertainty of trying to find someone willing to come speak on short notice.
- **Keep a routine:** Hold the meeting on the same day and time each month if possible. Varying routines can add stress. Consistency and routine makes things easier to manage and minimizes interference with other priorities in the life of the facilitator.
- **Learn to say NO:** Group members may want changes made to accommodate their schedules or may insist on individualized attention. Even though it would be wonderful to grant the wishes of everyone in the group, leaders must remember that the needs of the entire group must be considered, not just those of one or two members.
- **Build Consensus:** A good group functions like a democracy in that everyone has a voice. Include group members in discussions of what the program content should consist of. Even if there is no one in the group who can carry through on a plan of action, awareness and agreement are needed to enhance the sense of belonging among group members. Once the facilitator has consensus, arranging the meetings to meet the needs and wishes of the group becomes less stressful.

Facilitation of a brain injury support group is a hard job, but a job where the rewards can be great. Thank you's are sometimes few and far between, but there is one common thread among the leaders of the brain injury support groups in North Carolina - they are dedicated to making a difference in the lives of persons with brain injury and their families. Who could ask for more?

SupportLink would like to thank the Support Group Leaders across North Carolina. The service you provide to the persons living with brain injury and their families is invaluable. You do make a difference.

Do you feel Supported in your effort to Support Others?

Project STAR really wants to know how you feel about the support you receive from us and what supports you feel are lacking.

During the next few months, many of you will be asked to participate with helping us create a “culture of excellence” for North Carolina Brain Injury Support Group Leaders. Your input will help us understand what group leaders need in the areas of support, information, and ongoing dialogue with the Family and Community Support Offices, BIANC and Project STAR. The information we collect will be used to enhance the system of support for brain injury support group leaders across the state.

The state of North Carolina has a large number of support groups compared to many states in the nation, and that number is growing as the need increases. Behind the large number of groups and the excellent quality of the North Carolina Support Group Network is the great leadership provided on a local level by the group leaders. It is no small feat that many of the groups have been in existence for a decade or more.

Group leaders are definitely VIPs, and it is with great pride that BIANC and Project Star extend a THANK YOU to all group leaders and others in the group who play important roles in making the support groups successful.

Project STAR



Carolinas Rehabilitation

Uncompromising Excellence. Commitment to Care.

Contributed articles do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Project STAR or Carolinas Rehabilitation, and are wholly the opinion of the contributing author.

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