

# THE BRAINY BUGLER

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## CHIRS at the OBIA Conference!



CHIRS had a large presence at the OBIA conference. We presented on many different subjects including Toastmasters, Mindful Art, and Ethics.



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## CHIRS at the 2015 OBIA Conference

### My Time at the OBIA Conference

In November 2015 I had the opportunity to go to the OBIA (Ontario Brain Injury Association) Conference held in Niagara Falls, Ontario. I gave a speech on the CHIRS Toastmasters Chapter. It was wonderful! I saw the Falls on the American side from my room in the hotel we stayed in. I also got to meet a whole bunch of different people at the conference who do a variety of things having to do with brain injury. It was a real joy to experience this. One that I will not forget!

*Shayna B.*



I had the pleasure of attending and presenting at the 2015 ABI Provincial Conference presented by OBIA in Niagara Falls.

I co-presented on behalf of CHIRS on our Toastmasters group and on exploring the use of bio-feedback and meditation. We were fortunate enough to showcase 2 of our clients in these presentations. Shayna was involved with the presentation on Toastmasters and Chris was involved with the presentation on bio feedback and meditation. They both showed exceptional speaking skills and did CHIRS proud.

We also had 2 presentations from our clinical team. One was on navigating everyday ethics and the other was on substance use and brain injury. Both were well received by the attendees at the conference.

Presenting at this conference gave me the wonderful opportunity to represent CHIRS, practice my speaking skills, and network with other professionals in the field. Overall a great experience for all who attended.

*Denise B.*



## Articles of Interest

### My Head Exploded, and Saved My Life

It's true. My head exploded with a huge gunshot sound, near the left side of my head, so loud that it startled me from a sound sleep. I woke gasping for air, not from fright, but because I had been suffocating. I caught a glimpse of myself in a wardrobe mirror a few feet away. The nightlight showed me that I was on all fours. I was gasping for air, gasping for life itself! And I looked terrified. I had never seen my skin that pallor before. It took a good 15 minutes for my breathing and my heart rate to normalize. I got out of bed and I kept walking around, doing this and that, anything to avoid falling sleep.

The next morning, I called my doctor for an urgent appointment. I was in his office two hours later. I told him about what happened. And also that the same thing happened once before, many years ago when I was in long-term care. The neurologist there said, "Your brain rescued itself." My GP nodded his head and said, "That's right. Way too cryptic, but right." He asked for my medication list. He searched the details of my epilepsy drugs and fentanyl, using his laptop. Then he turned to me and explained that I had experienced "Exploding Head Syndrome".

First he discussed my medication profile. For various reasons, I take a super potent pain killer called fentanyl. It is 100 times stronger than morphine and almost 50 times stronger than heroin. I also take two anticonvulsants, one for Temporal Lobe Epilepsy and the other for Frontal Lobe Epilepsy. My doctor pointed out that all three of those drugs are "respiratory depressants". He said that they must have stopped my breathing and my brain couldn't fend off their chemistry. So it did the most dramatic thing it could to wake me up and get me breathing again. That "gunshot" did the job.

It's thought that Exploding Head Syndrome is a "modernized" remnant of our tree dwelling ancestors. To evade nocturnal predatory animals, they dozed among the tree branches. If they transitioned from dozing to sleep, they could fall. As well as getting injured by fall impacts, they could also fall prey to the very predators they dwelt in trees to avoid. So, as a survival adaptation, they evolved with hypnagogic jerks. Those jerks would startle them awake and save them from falling. Hundreds of millions of people world wide experience hypnagogic jerks. Just as they start falling asleep, their bodies give small abrupt jerks to save them falling from their nice, flat, safe mattresses. As I said, it's an ancestral remnant. It will probably disappear some generations down the road of human evolution.

I asked my doctor a bit facetiously, "A loud bang, a gunshot, woke me to get me breathing again? Are our brains really that smart?" He looked at me very directly and said, "Our brain stems are." He told me that our brain stems join our spinal cords to the bottom of our brains, in that hollow place at the bottom of the back of our heads. A part of it monitors our heart rate and our breathing. He carried on, saying that I heard that gunshot on the left side of my head because the left temporal lobe is wired for communication. Speech is left sided. Our brain stems can send signals to the left temporal lobes if they need to. A brain dying from lack of oxygen is a pretty pressing need. So, he said, my brain stem "spoke up" via my left temporal lobe. Some people are startled awake by a voice screaming their name. Some hear crashing symbols. And yes, some hear loud sharp bangs, like gunshots. And finally, he quoted a phrase from a psalm in the Bible. "We are fearfully and wonderfully made." I was moved by what, and how, he said it all. He stirred in me a new appreciation for the complexity, and the wisdom, of the human brain.

*Richard P.*



## Save the Date!

**CHIRS ANNUAL FAMILY PICNIC**

**Saturday June 4<sup>th</sup> 11am-3pm**

**Danish Lutheran Church**

**72 Finch Ave West**



## Articles of Interest

### BIST RUN

BIST (Brain Injury Society of Toronto) has an annual run to raise funds for their organization. CHIRS and BIST share a large number of the same clients and goals, and the event has many CHIRS staff and clients participate in the run each year. Judy Moir, the Chair of BIST had this to say about the 2015 event. "I just wanted to say thank you to everyone who came out to the BIST Run this year. We had been talking about making this our last year because it looked like registration was really down and fundraising was slow. But it turns out we are just a tardy lot. We ended up with over 400 registered and raised over \$30,000 with individual fundraising alone (that doesn't include sponsorship or registration fees). By way of comparison— last year we collected \$14,000 in fundraising. So a very big thanks to everyone who made this possible! The Super Hero theme was a big hit, with even a lot of dogs getting into the act."



## St. Georges has a new ride! Make that TWO new rides!



We are just "head over wheels" over our new vehicles. Last month we were pleasantly surprised with the arrival of two new vehicles. We got an (almost) new shiny blue Honda Civic with all the bells and whistles, and in true CHIRS fashion, a lovely Honda CRV. The clients love to drive around town in style in our new vehicles. Happy motoring from your friends at St. Georges  
*Stephanie D.*

Let the good times roll at St. Georges!



## Articles of Interest

### My Trip to Cuba

My husband and I went to Cuba in January. It was a nice time of year to go. My husband Alan's brother and sister-law were already there and welcomed us. We went to the local market a couple times, hung out on the beach and sat by the poolside. We listened to a lot of Spanish music, played some frisbee in the ocean and heard a lot of people speaking Spanish but I had no idea what they were saying! Every night there were shows in the outdoor theatre. Alan and I watched only two them. Everywhere we went people were so nice! On the Thursday we went on a sea fishing trip for four hours. But I got very sea sick and I missed the catch of the day. They got a big fish. Alan was always a trooper! I recovered with some extra sleep and lighter meals. Overall it was a great holiday!

*Lorraine M.*




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### Fern Resort

A few head injured clients have had the opportunity to stay at Fern Resort on the beautiful Lake Couchiching near Orillia, Ontario. My son, parents and I went there for 16 or so summers, giving us the privilege of being referred to as Fern Alumni. This past Thanksgiving weekend my mother decided to treat my siblings and I and our families for three days of fine food, lodgings, games and entertainment. It is the kind of place where eating is always held in the dining room – three meals per day with the option of having a barbecue lunch by the poolside. Looking back I can see that my enjoyment of food certainly hampered me looking great in a Speedo, but at the same time I decided that it was a time to give thanks which I give three times daily at meal times. There was swimming, golf, tennis and a bocce tournament that I participated in and I made it all the way to the finals. I was content with my team being finalists and I certainly owe lots of thanks to the East Bocce program for helping me to tune my skills. On Saturday night there was a pumpkin decorating contest and my nieces Amanda & Alex won first prize for the most Fern-like design. Fern is famous for its rolls and honey and the pumpkin was decorated to look exactly like the rolls and honey display, which is prominent around the resort.

*Quizzy*



# Annual Holiday Party!



# Annual Holiday Party!



# TOASTMASTERS

## THE MIX

The word passion has always been more than just a word to me. Passion is a mindset. It is the vital component of my life. Over the years I have learned that if I don't have passion for something there is a very good chance that I will not follow through with it. But if the passion burns inside me then I will fight slippery sidewalks, blistering winds, sleepless nights and throbbing head colds to make sure I get to where I have to be.

The MIX Community Club is one of those places where I have to be. The MIX is a dance that takes place on the last Friday of the month at a Community Living building, which is not far from St.Clair and Warden. I have been going for ten years and while I couldn't give you an exact date of when I first went, I can vividly recall my thoughts of the first time I attended. Here was a place that I could express myself and be me. It reminded me that people come in all shapes and sizes and that in this place everyone was accepted – no exceptions. The MIX reminded me to think beyond just myself. The MIX was the first time that I realized that I had to talk for people who couldn't. It was the first time that I realized that I had to be someone's voice. Specifically, I remember a man named Dougie. Dougie used to sing O Canada before our events. He sang it poorly and off key but it was from the heart and it represented everything that the MIX was about. He would get everyone to stand up and we would all sing with him. When he finished singing the crowd would always break into applause. About six years ago we had a big event at City Hall called CITY MIX. It was a big deal and we had a number of musical acts. When we were planning the schedule, one of the organizers was against having the event started by Dougie singing O Canada. I felt it was wrong and I told him so. The other organizers agreed with me and Dougie was allowed to sing. You should've seen his face, beaming with pride as he looked out at the audience from that big stage. It was the first time I had used my voice to help someone out and it felt great!

The MIX has made me feel great. It filled me with passion. People who come to the MIX come from a variety of different group homes on that Friday to have a chance to come out and be entertained rather than be stuck at home with nothing to do. It is a place where people can look forward to attend and it takes a lot of people to make it run. It wasn't long after I started going to the MIX that I realized that I wanted to be part of the team that helped make it possible. At the start it meant going to a lot of rather dull meetings but it was worth it. For the last seven years I have been the Director of Operations. I make sure that the chairs are put out and put away, that our signs are up and that the stage is set when we have a band playing.

I used to be a bit timid when I was around people with intellectual difficulties of various types. I wasn't sure how to be around this population. When I spoke with some people they were hard to understand, some couldn't even speak. But as I continued to attend I learned how to connect with everyone. With some people I just needed to figure out their accents, some people we just connected with a smile. And of course everyone danced. Dancing is my passion. I am a person who loves to dance. There is a feeling I get when I am sharing a love for dancing with other people, high fiving, shaking hands, saying hi that is a feeling beyond comprehension. Being at the MIX is all about passion. It is about advocating for people, making sure the space is set up and dancing amongst everyone no matter what their shape or size is. It has been ten years of passion at the MIX and I can tell you with certainty that I am here to stay!!!

*Rob A.*





## Articles of Interest

### Sunny Days

Justin Trudeau's Liberal government has been in power for 100 days. This is hard to believe as time now seems to march ahead. Quickly, it shows the decisions Canadians wanted changed. A change to the left of centre puts worry on the mind of the majority of the Canadians (including mine).

The Trudeau government has a massive to do list - to undo the damage inflicted on the country after years of cutting taxes and cutting public programs. There has been a significant movement in the policies towards climate change and aboriginal reconciliation. There are several policies/law changes in terms of legalizing marijuana, the euthanasia law, and reaching the income tax system.

Thus, by being a liberal philosopher I agree with the government's direction. I would argue that the government might want to increase taxes on big corporations and somehow increase royalties from excavation on crown land.

I wish the new administration all the best and hopefully the Liberals move forward on the big agenda items.

*Andrey B.*

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### Yoga at CHIRS

A volunteer Yoga instructor ran a workshop to give a relaxing experience to some of our CHIRS members. Thanks Christina for your hard work!



### Debut

Wanda always knew how to adopt the spotlight, but this spotlight meant shining without Frank's help. So, could she still manage without his influence, Frank wondered? Would her soulful sounds translate to independently performing before this, the greatest audience she'd ever seen? This entire performance began when she and a few drinking buddies began making promises. "We'll sing in the All-Star Game" said Wanda. With surprise Frank shot Wanda a look of disbelief. "Remember our performance at the talent show?" she asked. "What about it?" replied Frank. Once explaining the video was made of that performance it was later submitted by Wanda as entry into a contest to perform at halftime of the All-Star Game. "When will we know?" asked Frank? "I checked the computer this morning and our tape was chosen as the best performance from 200 entries," informed Wanda. "What now?" "We get the honour of singing at halftime!" "I guess I ought to practice, for can I solely thrive in this colossal spotlight," sighed Wanda. Wanda had gone from singing and dancing duets in a city wide talent show to performing independently at the All-Star Game. "I was asked to give the name of the song we'd perform, but I changed the performance from a duet to a solo." "Aside from applauding yourself, have you any plans for a pre-performance party?" asked Frank. "No plans, just reveling in this opportunity," says a contented Wanda. "It's go time!" said Frank to a startled Wanda. After twenty minutes of belting out hits Wanda felt the crowd's restlessness, so she said "One more!" Then a seamless exchange of the microphone meant the audience now hung on Frank's words, "Solos are overrated." he says.

*Zia L.*



# Out and About



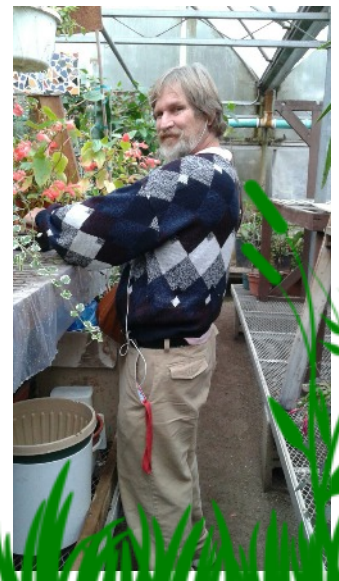
## BIST/CHIRS Hallowe'en Dance!



Lots of hard work by the BIST members and the CHIRS Mentors made for another successful dance!  
See you at the next one!



The CHIRS Greenhouse Group hard at work.



# The Mentor Page

## The Annual CHIRS Club Holiday Party



## The Mentor Appreciation Dinner

Super heroes, and roast beef and lots of fun had by all!  
Thank you Mentors for being our super heroes and for all you do for us!



# THE BACK PAGE

## COOKING CLUB'S FAVOURITE RECIPES

### Red Lobster Cheddar Bay Biscuits

Prep Time 10 minutes Cook Time 10 minutes

Yield 10 biscuits

*These copycat biscuits are unbelievably easy to make in just 20 minutes, and they taste a million times better than the original!*

#### Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour  
1 tablespoon sugar  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
2 teaspoons garlic powder  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, optional  
1 cup buttermilk  
1/2 cup unsalted butter, melted  
1 1/2 cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese

#### For the topping

3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley leaves  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

#### Instructions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone baking mat; set aside.

In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, garlic powder, salt and cayenne pepper, if using.

In a large glass measuring cup or another bowl, whisk together buttermilk and butter. Pour mixture over dry ingredients and stir using a rubber spatula just until moist. Gently fold in cheese.

Using a 1/4-cup measuring cup, scoop the batter evenly onto the prepared baking sheet. Place into oven and bake for 10-12 minutes, or until golden brown.

For the topping, whisk together butter, parsley and garlic powder in a small bowl. Working one at a time, brush the tops of the biscuits with the butter mixture.

Serve immediately.



## Voyage

The bald eagles

Launch from the bleached

Pole trees and

Soar up and up over

The head of the photographer below.

Sixteen in all.

Click, click, click

She captures them oblivious

And smiles to see them free and together

Before turning away for the long trek home oblivious

To their sharp eyes on her

watching her walk on the hard, skittery sand  
into her future.

*Shireen J.*

*Author, Concussion Is Brain Injury*

[www.jeejeebhoy.ca](http://www.jeejeebhoy.ca)



## Soup Days!

The Health and Wellness committee created a monthly 'soup days' day for Fall and Winter. Staff brought in soups to share in hopes of having something healthy to eat and more interesting than the usual sandwich! It has been a great success so far and we look forward to Salad Days in the warmer weather!