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Q1: Staff person submitting this nomination.

Name:	Kathy Kroll
Title:	Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist/Volunteer Coordinator
Hospital/System:	New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland
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Q2: Name of Volunteer Program.

Brain Injury Voices

Q3: Program Category: Select one of the four program categories.

In-Service Hospital Volunteer - programs that designed and implemented innovative services to address needs or challenges within the health care organization.

Q4: Provide the date the program was implemented.

04/20/2010

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Q5: Provide a brief description of the program, including its goals and outcomes. (600 words max)

Brain Injury Voices (www.braininjuryvoices.org) is an innovative volunteer group meeting numerous needs at New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland (NERH-P). Their mission is three-fold—to educate medical professionals about brain injury from the survivor point of view, to advocate for the importance of brain injury rehabilitation services, and to support other survivors through peer mentoring.

Brain Injury Voices grew out of the NERH-P brain injury support group in April 2010 as a way for former patients to “pay it forward” and make a difference. Since that time they have volunteered nearly 5000 hours as educators, advocates and mentors, impacting hundreds of NERH-P patients. That number is even more impressive considering that all ten members of Brain Injury Voices are brain injury survivors who cope daily with the many symptoms of brain injury, including memory loss, mental fatigue, difficulties with attention, concentration and information processing, paralysis and sound/visual sensitivities. Their injuries may have left most of them unable to return to their former professions, but as a volunteer group they have pooled their talents to benefit patients, families and staff at NERH-P.

As educators, members of Brain Injury Voices give regular lunch-n-learn presentations to staff at NERH-P, including inpatient & outpatient clinical staff, RN's, LPN's, CNA's and student nurses. They help staff understand brain injury symptoms and their impact from an “insider” perspective and offer their feedback as former patients on what kinds of treatments and strategies were most effective. Each spring, Brain Injury Voices has organized and delivered a “standing room only” evening educational workshop for patients and families at NERH-P focused on strategies for living successfully with brain injury. This proved so successful that in 2013 the evening workshop was expanded into a day-long conference titled “From Surviving to Thriving” with tracks for both survivors and family members.

As advocates, Brain Injury Voices' members want both state and national policy makers and the general public to recognize that although rehabilitation services like those provided by NERH-P are costly and time intensive, they are absolutely crucial for survivors' recovery process and truly change lives. They regularly present to the state Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Council, have brought Congressional Office representatives to NERH-P to learn more about the importance of rehab therapies and have been featured in television, radio and online media, increasing awareness of brain injury and NERH-P.

As peer mentors, members of Brain Injury Voices meet with both inpatients and outpatients at NERH-P and use their personal experiences as survivors to validate, motivate and inspire. They have a unique and valuable authority, the authority that comes from having “lived it”. After meeting with a mentor, patients are more willing to try new strategies and are more invested in their therapy. Brain Injury Voices has also taken over facilitating the NERH-P brain injury support group, which includes current outpatients and survivors from the community. Under their leadership, the group has grown from a handful of attendees meeting once a month, to 20-30 survivors and family members at each of two monthly meetings. A third monthly meeting will be added soon. Each new member receives a “survivor to survivor” packet created by Brain Injury Voices, including a brochure of Voices' best advice and strategies, information about peer mentoring and lists of brain injury books and websites. When survivors attend a support group run by their peers, they are more hopeful that their life, although changed, can indeed be meaningful again after brain injury.

As educators, advocates and peer mentors, Brain Injury Voices has inspired staff and patients and had a tremendous impact at New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland.

Q6: Describe the role of volunteers in planning, developing, implementing and maintaining the program. (400 words max)

Brain Injury Voices volunteers share responsibility for all aspects of the program, from planning activities to evaluating outcomes.

Planning: Voices volunteers are entirely responsible for setting their program goals based on the needs of survivors, families, New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland (NERH-P) staff, and community. All program activities further their mission to educate, advocate and support. Within the limits of their abilities, members choose projects to carry out, set goals, establish timelines, delegate responsibilities and conduct fund-raising for each activity.

Development: Members of Brain Injury Voices are solely responsible for carrying out program development activities, including: making contacts within NERH-P and the community; preparing program content and activities; creating educational materials and developing evaluations for each activity.

Implementation: Voices members use compensatory strategies to successfully implement their numerous program activities. These strategies include using expanded timelines for planning and development, sharing responsibilities among group members, and providing quiet rooms for rest breaks during workshops. These strategies allow Voices members to inspire other survivors to continually raise their rehab expectations and to maximize their impact beyond what any one individual could accomplish. In addition to their regular program activities, Brain Injury Voices has raised funds to purchase supplies for art classes and to support music therapy at NERH-P; to offer survivor scholarships to the statewide professional brain injury conference; to pay for veterans with brain injuries to attend Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation's annual Veterans No Boundaries programs; to create a brain injury lending library at NERH-P; and to develop and distribute caregiver support packages for NERH-P patient caregivers.

Maintenance: Regular Voices meetings, facilitation of twice-monthly Brain Injury Survivor Support Groups at NERH-P, and participation in hospital functions such as annual Rehabilitation Week celebrations and compliance with volunteer protocols help Voices maintain relationships within the group, NERH-P, and the larger survivor community. Members rotate responsibility for facilitating support groups, ensuring that at least two members are present for each meeting to provide back-up. Voices uses technology when applicable, including Skype to allow members with transportation challenges to participate in meetings, email reminders for support group meetings, and maintaining a website at www.braininjuryvoices.org to provide information about the group's programs and accomplishments and video links to their seminars.

Q7: Describe how this program is unique and/or innovative.(400 words max)

Brain Injury Voices' presence at New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland (NERH-P) complements the work of the entire treatment team by adding the unique perspective of survivors who have "lived it". Voices is special because the program envelops the lives of brain injury survivors from their inpatient stays through their outpatient treatment and then supports them as they make their way back into the community. Its particular uniqueness is that the program was created and is staffed and run totally by survivors of brain injury. The program is innovative in that it gives former NERH-P patients who can no longer work the opportunity to remain productive members of society and to assist other survivors to reach their post injury potential. To that end, members of Brain Injury Voices do the following: facilitate and train future facilitators; mentor and teach others to mentor; educate themselves and teach others to educate; advocate for others and support them in their endeavors. Members of Brain Injury Voices serve as role models and offer hope to NERH-P patients and survivors in the community that progress can continue and a productive life is possible.

Another unique and innovative aspect of the Brain Injury Voices' program is that it is self-sustaining. Since 2012, Voices has raised approximately \$10,000 to support projects that benefit patients, families, NERH-P and the community as a whole. Projects have included: offering scholarships in 2012 & 2013 for members of the NERH-P brain injury support group to attend the statewide Maine Brain Injury Conference; creating a lending library of nearly 100 books related to brain injury and stroke; planning, producing and assembling caregiver gift packets for families of inpatients; purchasing supplies for an innovative outpatient art class run by Voices; supporting musical activities at NERH-P; conducting weekend diversionary activities for inpatients, including bingo and therapy dog visits, with more activities in the planning stages and subsidizing veterans with brain injuries to attend the Veterans No Boundaries program run by Maine Adaptive Sports and Recreation. Brain Injury Voices will continue to respond to identified needs at NERH-P and to develop innovative programs to meet them.

NERH-P has provided a "home base" for Brain Injury Voices to create a model program that other institutions could replicate. It is a program of service that is possible for all hospitals to adopt with practice, forethought and a desire to be innovative.

Q8: Describe how the program benefits the service recipients, the health care organization and/or the community. (400 words max)

The service recipients of Brain Injury Voices include inpatients, outpatients and families at New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland (NERH-P). By virtue of who they are and the programs they offer, Brain Injury Voices benefits brain injury survivors and their families by:

- Serving as role models in using strategies taught by rehab therapists
- Fostering hope that progress is possible & life can be good after brain injury
- Validating issues by talking “survivor to survivor” & providing a safe forum to share
- Increasing patient motivation to continue therapies
- Providing group socialization & decreased isolation
- Offering opportunities for creative expression through art and music
- Providing education and resources about brain injury symptoms and coping strategies

Brain Injury Voices benefits the healthcare organization, New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland (NERH-P) by:

- Augmenting therapies
- Educating staff to the survivor’s perspective and offering feedback on treatment
- Educating staff to a higher level by helping them learn to better interpret behavior to meet their patient’s needs
- Serving as a public relations tool keeping NERH-P and its unique programs in the public eye
- Marketing NERH-P as a top provider among its HealthSouth peers

Brain Injury Voices benefits the community by:

- Raising the profile of brain injury survivors through media exposure, public speaking, and advocacy
- Increasing community knowledge about brain injury through education, advocacy and peer support programs
- Providing resources & information through brochures, caregiver packets, workshops, and a website
- Advocating for rehabilitation & transportation services by testifying before state councils, contacting congressional representatives and state & federal agencies
- Providing in-service training on brain injury for community groups, agencies and educational institutions
- Raising funds to benefit community groups serving people with brain injuries

PAGE 5: Contacts

Q9: Chief Executive Officer of the nominated hospital/system.

Name	Jeanine Chesley
Title	CEO
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Q10: CEO Support.

Checked box confirms that your CEO supports the submission of the nominated program.

Q11: Administrative Assistant to the CEO.

Name	Deb McNally
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Q12: Name of the volunteer or auxilian who will be representing the program at the AHA Annual Meeting, May 5, 2014.

Name	Carole Starr
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Q13: Volunteer Service Professional/Manager.

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