

**Brain Injury Voices**  
**New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland**  
**Portland, ME**

Jeanine Chesley, CEO

*Brain Injury Voices is an innovative volunteer group meeting held at the New England Rehabilitation Hospital of Portland (NERH-P) whose mission is threefold -- 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.

As educators, members of Brain Injury Voices give regular lunch-n-learn presentations to staff at NERH-P. Each Spring, Brain Injury Voices has organized and delivered an evening educational workshop for patients and families focused on strategies for living successfully with brain injury. This proved so successful that it was expanded into a day-long conference.

As advocates, Brain Injury Voices’ members want both state and national policymakers 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.

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”. Mentors encourage patients to try new strategies and invest in their therapy.

For additional information, contact:

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