

HEADWAY

ONLINE NEWSLETTER

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ISSUE #99, Spring 2026

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42ND ANNUAL BRAIN INJURY & STROKE CONFERENCE

by Sarah Kilch Gaffney

BIANH's 2026 Brain Injury & Stroke Conference will take place on Wednesday, May 13, 2026, at the Grappone Conference Center in Concord. Rick Willis, President and CEO of the Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA), will deliver his keynote, "Creating a Brighter Future Together," and additional sessions will include the topics of integrated care for brain injury and substance use disorder, current trends in stroke rehabilitation, yoga nidra and guided meditation for brain injury, and many more.

Since 2022, Rick Willis has been the President and CEO of BIAA. Rick lives in Dallas, TX, with his wife Terrie, an Occupational Therapist, and they are the parents to three adult children Alex, Sophie and Isaac. A graduate of the University of Tennessee, Rick has nearly 30 years of leadership experience in the nonprofit world. He has championed efforts to advocate for the removal of barriers to access and care for the brain injury community, as well as raised awareness around brain injury as a chronic

condition. Rick sits on the National Health Council's Special Committee on Health Equity and is a representative of BIAA in the National Academies Forum on Traumatic Brain Injury.



The Willis Family

As the voice of brain injury in the United States, BIAA's mission is to improve the quality of life of people affected by brain injury across their lifespan through advancing prevention, awareness, research, treatment, education, and advocacy. In his current role, Rick spearheaded BIAA's reunification with the United States Brain Injury Alliance to create a broader, stronger community of survivors, caregivers, advocates, and professionals. Rick's exposure to and involvement in different models to

advance community outcomes has helped him to see and understand how the power of a community can change the landscape for a disease or chronic condition, and he brings this knowledge and experience to his work with the brain injury community.

---Continued

Rick's keynote will give an overview of BIAA's advocacy work, legislative priorities, resources and educational opportunities, and ways to stay connected. The presentation will also look at the power of community and how by working together we can change the future for individuals living with brain injury. Rick's presentation will also cover the resources BIAA has to offer that are available and accessible to the New Hampshire brain injury community and beyond.

BIAA is leading the way for brain injury support and advocacy, and Rick shared, "So many people with brain injury don't know about BIAA and don't find us until years after their injury, but I want to make sure people know they are not alone. There is a beacon and a community, a tribe and a home."



Rick also wants everyone in the brain injury community to know that their story is important. During Brain Injury Awareness Month, which occurs every March, BIAA is encouraging survivors and caregivers to share their stories via the "My Brain Injury Journey" platform. Stories can be shared any time of year, and you can

learn more and share your brain injury story [here](#).

We hope you'll join us on Wednesday, May 13, to hear Rick's powerful keynote and connect with the New Hampshire brain injury community.

After Rick's keynote, the conference will offer five different tracks of four sessions each, broken up by breaks and lunch. To review the conference brochure or to register, [click here](#). For questions, please contact Renee Fistere at renee@bianh.org.



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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE -



Staying Safe on the Slopes

by Jonathan D. Lichtenstein, PsyD, MBA

While the ski season in New Hampshire is winding down, we all know that skiing and snowboarding are thrilling ways to enjoy the season. Despite this, they also come with real risks to your brain.

How Common Are These Injuries?

Traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) are among the most serious injuries that happen on ski hills every year. Studies suggest that head injuries account for roughly 15-20% of all ski and snowboard injuries. Sadly, they are the leading cause of death and serious disability in snow sports. Snowboarders, especially beginners, tend to fall backward and strike the back of their head, while skiers more often experience high-speed collisions. Children and teenagers face particularly high risk. These numbers are a real reminder that a fun day on the mountain can turn serious very quickly.

What Does a Brain Injury on the Slopes Look Like?

A brain injury doesn’t always mean someone is knocked unconscious. In fact, most snow sport brain injuries are concussions, where the brain gets jostled inside the skull. Signs to watch for include headache, confusion, dizziness, memory problems, nausea, or simply “not feeling right” after a fall or collision. If you notice any of these signs in yourself or someone with you, stop skiing immediately and seek medical attention. It is best practice to not return to the slopes the same day, and wait until being cleared by a licensed healthcare provider before doing so.

Prevention: The Most Important Step

The single best thing you can do is wear a properly fitted helmet — every single run, every single day. Research consistently shows that helmets reduce the risk of severe head trauma, especially during high-speed collisions with stationary objects. Make sure your helmet meets current safety standards and fits snugly without wobbling.

Beyond helmets, these habits make a real difference:

- Know your limits: most injuries happen when people ski or ride terrain that is too advanced for their skill level.
- Stay in control: always be able to stop or avoid other people and obstacles.
- Take lessons: proper technique dramatically reduces fall risk.
- Rest when tired: fatigue is a major factor in end-of-day accidents.
- Follow trail signs: closed runs are closed for a reason.

If an Injury Happens

If someone takes a hard hit to the head, treat it seriously. Keep them calm and still, call ski patrol immediately, and do not let them talk themselves into continuing. When in doubt, get checked out. After any concussion, a gradual and medically guided return to activity is essential before getting back on the mountain.

Winter sports are a wonderful part of life here. With the right precautions, you can enjoy every run while keeping your brain safe for all the seasons ahead.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE -



How Does Brain Injury Compare to Other Health Conditions?

by Steven D. Wade, Executive Director

Recent data from the Federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC_NIH) compare the percentage of adults in the United States with various health conditions. It is interesting how brain injury compares. If you combine traumatic brain injury (TBI) with loss of consciousness (LOC) and stroke, 21.3% of adults in the US with acquired brain injury as a health condition:

22.8%	Mental Illness
21.9%	Substance Use Disorder
18.2%	Traumatic Brain Injury w/ LOC
14.7%	Diabetes
5.5%	Heart Disease
3.1%	Stroke
21.3%	Acquired Brain Injury

NEW BRAIN INJURIES IN THE U.S. EACH YEAR	
Pediatric TBI	➔ 5.2 million Emerg. Dept (ED) inpatient/outpatient
Adult TBI	➔ 12.6 million (ED) inpatient/outpatient
Military TBI	➔ 19,167
Stroke	➔ 795,000
Brain Tumors	➔ 90,000
Dementia/Alzheimers	➔ 500,000 to 1 Million

For children, brain injury is not low incidence, rather it is low identification. Despite there being over 1,000 pediatric brain injuries in New Hampshire each and every year, less than 100 students in total, are identified or receive services through the brain injury coding under special education (IDEA_ABI code).

42ND ANNUAL BRAIN INJURY & STROKE CONFERENCE -

2026

BRAIN INJURY & STROKE Conference

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

GRAPPONE CONFERENCE CENTER
CONCORD, NEW HAMPSHIRE

REGISTER TODAY!

ONLINE REGISTRATION PREFERRED -

<https://p2p.onecause.com/42bisc>

See schedule on next page for available sessions.



Keynote Speaker - Rick Willis
Creating a Bright Future Together

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

Abramson, Brown
& Dugan

A T T O R N E Y S



Rehabilitation Hospital
of Concord

New Hampshire Bureau of
Developmental Services



Specialized Supported Residential Programs
for Individuals with Brain Injury, Spinal Cord Injury
& Neurological Disorders



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE UPCOMING BRAIN INJURY & STROKE CONFERENCE

Conference at a Glance

DISCLAIMER

The session presentations offered are intended to provide the latest information about services, therapies, and/or treatments available for brain injury and stroke survivors. It is for informational purposes only and should not be construed as an endorsement on the part of the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire.

Level of Knowledge for Attendees: BEG - Beginner INT - Intermediate ADV - Advanced
 Topic is geared towards: PRO-Professional SUR-Survivor/Family ALL- Everyone

Sessions approved by ASHA are highlighted in yellow

8:15 Welcome 8:30-9:30 Keynote - Rick Willis, President & CEO, BIAA - <i>Creating a Bright Future Together</i>					
	Track A - SLP	Track B	Track C	Track D	Track E
Session I 9:40-10:40	<i>When Words Fail: Using Singing as Communication Therapy</i> Allison W. Pollard, MT-BC BEG/ALL	<i>It Doesn't Have to be This Complicated: Integrated Care for TBI and SUD</i> Annette Escalante, MSW, MLADC ADV/ALL	<i>Rehab Team Collaboration to Achieve Primary Stroke Center Certification</i> Laura Bashour, OTR/L, CSRS Marabeth DeAngelis MA, CCC-SLP Brionne Turcotte, PT, DPT BEG/ALL	<i>The NeuroRehab Tangram: "The Interface of 'Me', ABI, Mental Health & Substance Use"</i> Thomas W. Brown, BS, CBIST BEG/ADV/ALL	<i>Microglial Cells in Recovery from TBI: Good or Bad?</i> Steven C. Pike, PhD BEG/ALL
10:40-10:55 -----Break-----Please visit Exhibitors-----					
Session II 11:00-12:00	<i>From Last Resort to Language Recovery Support: Integrating AAC to Aphasia Intervention</i> Szu-Han Kay Chen, PhD, CCC-SLP INT/ALL	<i>The World's First Prescription Music Product: Innovations in Stroke Rehabilitation</i> Brian Harris, MA, MT-BC, NMT/F, FACRM BEG/ALL	<i>Recovery and Healing After a Brain Injury</i> John Crampton, PsyD, LCMHC BEG/ALL	<i>Personal Intervention: "Building Individualized Behavior Plans"</i> Thomas W. Brown, BS, CBIST BEG/ADV/ALL	<i>Survivors Panel</i> Rene Camerato Crystal Carmen Moderators: Nicola Beauregard, PT, DPT, MSHA Nina Hopkins, OTR/L, NDT BEG/ALL
12:10-1:10 -----Lunch-----Please visit Exhibitors-----					
Session III 1:15-2:15	<i>I CHEWS: Transforming Dysphagia Management Through Informed Shared Decision-Making</i> Kate Phelps, MS, CCC-SLP Serena Jaskolka, MS, CCC-SLP Keri Miloro, MS, CAGS, CCC-SLP, BCS-S BEG/ALL	<i>Current Trends in Stroke Rehab</i> Alyssa Leslie, MOT, OTR/L ADV/PRO	<i>What Is Brain Health & How Does It Relate to Neuroplasticity</i> Therese O'Neil-Pirozzi, ScD, CCC-SLP BEG/ALL (80 min presentation)	<i>Hypersomnia (sleepiness) and Brain Injury: Diagnosis and New Treatment Options</i> Carolyn D'Ambrosio, MD, MS ADV/ALL	<i>Hidden Pain: Cognitive-Communication Challenges in Pain Assessment after Stroke</i> Joanne Morello, PT, DPT, CSRS Elizabeth Barbin, MS CCC-SLP, CBIS BEG/ALL
2:20 - 2:40 ---Break---Please visit Exhibitors			---Break-----Please visit Exhibitors---		
Session IV 2:45 - 3:45	<i>Navigating Neurogenic Recovery: Optimizing the Continuum of Care</i> Collean Combs, MS, CCC-SLP Amy Ramage, PhD ADV/PRO	<i>"Hold Me, Thrill Me, Stick Me, Chill Me: Approaches to Spasticity Management"</i> Donald Tower, DO ADV/PRO		<i>Yoga Nidra Guided Meditation for Sleep & Emotional Well Being after Brain Injury</i> Ellie Spriet, OTD, OTR/L, CKTP, RYT200 BEG/ALL	<i>Post Rehab Recovery: Activities and Resources for Ongoing Cognitive and Communication Skill Development</i> Gina England, MA, CCC-SLP BEG/ALL

JOIN US FOR A WALK BY THE SEA !

40th ANNUAL WALK BY THE SEA & PICNIC

Saturday, June 13, 2026
Check In Begins at 11:00 AM
Walk Begins at 12:00 Noon

Hampton Beach State Park (South Beach)
Campground & Pavilion
Route 1A (Ocean Boulevard), Hampton Beach, NH

Come join our Walk by the Sea along Hampton Beach. It is the one time during the year when the whole brain injury community comes together to celebrate our accomplishments and share a fun day at the shore. This annual event helps us to continue our efforts to create more public awareness about the “silent epidemic” and ultimately fulfill our mission.

Create a team as a family, small group, or a large business team.

Prizes given to: the largest team, the most creative team name, the most money raised by the day of the Walk, and the team with the most energetic spirit.

Interested in sponsorships? Please call for more information 603-225-8400

Register: <https://walkbythesea.org/>

BRAIN INJURY ASSOCIATION
OF NEW HAMPSHIRE





Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire

BRAIN MATTERS 2026

Thursday, April 16, 2026, 8:30 - 10:00am EST

Virtual Training: *Calming a Brain on Fire: Managing Migraines Post-Brain Injury*

Presenters: Physical Therapists From Maine Strong Balance Centers, South Portland, Maine

Cost: \$25.00

Register: <https://p2p.onecause.com/bm2025/event/04vtcbfmm>

Clinicians will share information regarding the pathophysiology leading to migraines and how this relates to brain injury and post-traumatic headache. They will discuss the signs and symptoms of migraines and the different subtypes of post-traumatic headaches. They will provide evidence supporting the role of physical therapy in rehabilitation for individuals with migraines following brain injury, treatment strategies for this population, and examples from clinical care.

Learning Objectives: Discuss the connection between brain injury and migraines and distinguish the subtypes of post-traumatic headache. Identify the diagnostic criteria of migraine. Describe the benefits of physical therapy for brain injury survivors with migraines.

Thursday, May 21, 2026 8:30 -10:00am EST

Virtual Training: *A Return to Driving After Brain Injury*

Presenter: Amanda Scamman, COTA/L, CDI, CDRS, is a New Hampshire-licensed Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant, Certified Driving Instructor, and Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist

Cost: \$25.00

Register: <https://p2p.onecause.com/bm2025/event/05vtrdabi>

This presentation is designed for individuals recovering from a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and the professionals who support them. Returning to driving after a TBI does not have to be overwhelming, but it is essential to undergo a thorough evaluation to determine whether driving is currently a safe and appropriate goal. Depending on the severity and complexity of the injury, some people may need targeted rehabilitation or other interventions before they can safely resume driving. A Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) can guide you through this process, assess your readiness, and help create a personalized plan to work toward returning to driving.

Tuesday, June 9, 2026 3:00-5:00pm EST

Virtual Training: *Stroke and Brain Injury 101 - An Introductory Presentation on the Early Characteristics of a Stroke or Brain Injury*

Presenter: Gina England, MA, CCC-SLP

Cost: Free

Register: <https://p2p.onecause.com/bm2025/event/06vtsbi101>

The Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire has created this webinar to help individuals navigate their way through the early days of a Stroke and/or a Brain Injury. This webinar is designed for patients, families, and caregivers. The content of this two-hour webinar covers a basic introduction to the functions of the brain as it relates to the location of an individual's stroke or brain injury and the subsequent changes in abilities/ behaviors that can be anticipated. Additional content that will be addressed includes the following: • General behavior management guide lines • The most commonly observed cognitive deficits • Changes in communication skills • The primary rehabilitation goals in the acute (early) stages of recovery • Resources for family/caregiver support • Handouts that can be printed and reviewed for permanent access to essential information.

NORTH COUNTY INDEPENDENT LIVING -- SPRING FORWARD

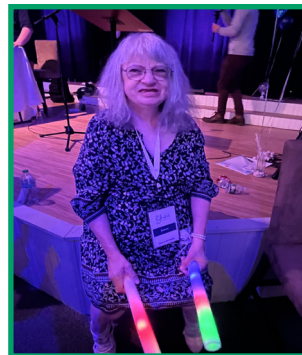
As we move past this snowy, frosty winter the residents have kept busy with many activities and are looking forward to the nicer weather to get outside. This winter residents enjoyed visiting the Ice Castles in Woodstock, NH, the Ice Sculptures in Jackson, NH, bowling, yoga, billiards, and recreation nights making crafts or playing games. Super Bowl gatherings took place in a few of the residences; everyone had fun, although the team of choice--the Patriots-- did not win.

Tom, accompanied by staff, had a wonderful Boston weekend excursion trip in March of which he attended a Celtic's basketball game, toured the sights of Boston, and attended a Queen tribute band concert all while staying at "THE MONTY" a luxurious restored brick building resort in the heart of downtown Boston.



Patrick and Brian obtained employment at the local Market Basket in North Conway, they both enjoy their positions and appreciate receiving a paycheck, while also being dedicated employees. Ron obtained employment at Sea Dogs Brewing Company.

The Barrington residents continued to enjoy going out to play billiards, making trips to Hampton Beach, attending concerts at the Rochester Opera House, and visiting the Sports Hub in Somersworth. Karen participated in the "Night to Shine" and had a blast. Jim volunteered to deliver flowers for Valentine's Day!



North Country Independent Living

2541 White Mountain Hwy, Building #3, North Conway, NH 03860
 Website: nciinh.com

Programs and Specialty Services

- Supported Apartment Living
- Supported Residential Care/Long Term Care
- Community Residence Program
- Day Support Program
- Behavioral Consultation
- Employment Services

Program Description

North Country Independent Living (NCIL), family owned and operated since 1994 understands the various needs for specialized services and programs. NCIL designs programs for each individual based upon their strengths, abilities, goals, and where they may be in the rehabilitative process.

We pride ourselves in creating compassionate, meaningful living situations that provide individuals the opportunity to regain a sense of self-esteem and the potential to become as independent as possible in the least restrictive environment, while enjoying all aspects of community inclusion. Our residences and individuals have been embraced by the local communities who view NCIL as a community partner offering volunteering, employment, and recreational opportunities for the people we serve. We are extremely proud of our reputation and the individuals that we are entrusted with.

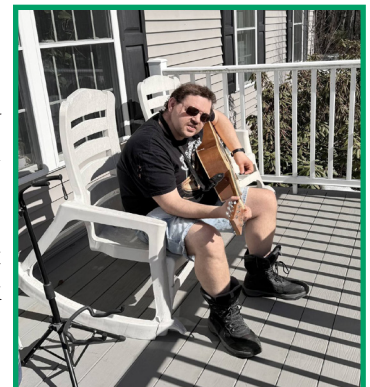
Referrals:

Freddi Gale, CBIS, Executive Director
 603-356-0282
 fgale@ncilnh.com



Resident Highlight:

Nick H. has been a resident of NCIL for many years, he currently resides at the "Westside" residence where he is involved with cooking, planning activities, music, and volunteering. He participates in Jen's Friends climb against cancer, Valley Clean-up Day, Meals on Wheels, completing the NCIL interoffice mail route and he assists at the Conway Fire Rescue department. In his spare time, he plays his guitar, enjoys attending the Fryeburg Fair, and takes part in the annual BIANH Walk by the Sea & Picnic at Hampton Beach. Nick is a remarkably busy guy and is always up for a new adventure!



Warmer weather and sunny days means young people and adults are out on their bikes. Here are some general guidelines to follow.

TIPS FOR YOUTH

BIKE SAFETY

Biking is fun, healthy, and a great way to get around and be independent. But your bike is a vehicle, not a toy!

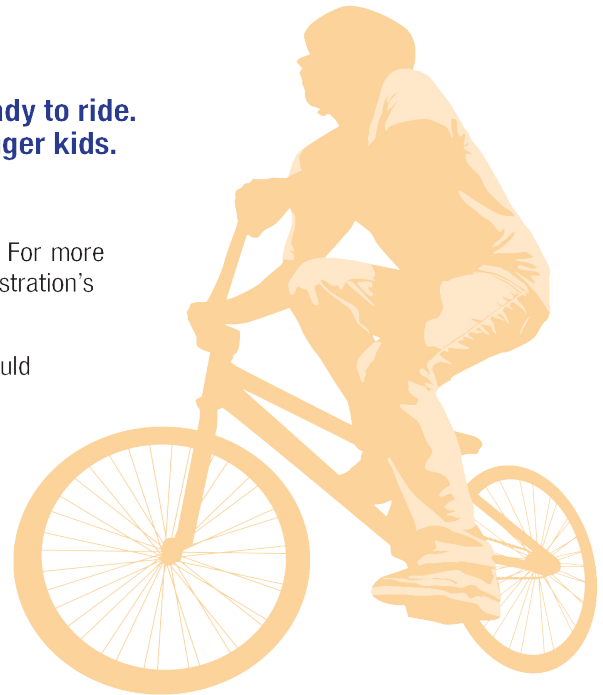
Some bike crashes can cause serious injuries and most are related to the behavior of you (the bicyclist) or the motorist. There are a number of things you can do to prevent a crash, and protect your brain if a crash occurs.

Safe Riding Tips

Before riding, make sure you and your bike are ready to ride. You can be a “Roll Model” for your peers and younger kids.

Remember to:

- **Wear a Bike Helmet.** Protect your brain, save your life. For more information see the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's *Fitting Your Bike Helmet*.
- **Adjust Your Bike to Fit.** Stand over your bike. There should be 1 to 2 inches between the rider and the top tube (bar) if using a road bike and 3 to 4 inches if using a mountain bicycle. The seat should be level front to back, and the height should be adjusted to allow a slight bend at the knee when the leg is fully extended. The handlebar height should be at the same level with the seat.
- **Check Your Equipment.** Before riding, inflate tires properly and check that the brakes work.
- **See and Be Seen.** Whether daytime, dawn, dusk, foul weather, or at night, make yourself visible. Wear neon, fluorescent or other bright colors when riding, to make yourselves the most visible to others. Also wear something that reflects light, such as reflective tape or markings, or flashing lights. Remember, just because you can see a driver doesn't mean the driver can see you.
- **Control Your Bike.** Ride with two hands on the handlebars unless signaling a turn. Place books and other items in a bike carrier or backpack.
- **Watch for and Avoid Road Hazards.** Look for hazards that may make you crash, such as potholes, broken glass, gravel, puddles, leaves, and dogs.
- **Use Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication.** This includes eye contact with drivers, turn signals, pointing to road hazards for bicyclists behind you, and stating “passing on your left,” or “on your left.”
- **Avoid Riding at Night.** It's harder for other road users to see bicyclists at dusk, dawn or nighttime. Use reflectors on the front and rear of the bike. White lights and red rear reflectors or lights are required by law in all States.



ATTENTION SURVIVOR ARTISTS!

NOW ACCEPTING
SUBMISSIONS



Northeast Rehabilitation
Hospital Network

Healing Through Art

Expo at Northeast Rehab Salem & Portsmouth



Photography



Painting



Drawing

Who Can Participate

ALL Brain Injury Survivors Living in NH/ME/MA

- Traumatic, Non-Traumatic & Stroke -

Now Accepting Artwork - Ongoing Submissions -

Artwork will be displayed for patients and visitors to enjoy and will be rotated every 2 to 4 weeks.

Submission Checklist

Each piece of submitted art must be:

- A photograph, painting or drawing
- No larger than 12" x 14"
- Matted, Framed or on a Canvas
- Labeled with your name

Email us to arrange a drop-off day and time*
ArtExpo@Northeastrehab.com

* Artists will need to sign a form saying it's okay to include their artwork in the exhibit. We'll work with artists to set up a time to drop off and pick up their artwork.

KREMPELS BRAIN INJURY CENTER

Portsmouth 5k and Seacoast Half Marathon to benefit Krempels for 2026

Post Concussion Group back for Spring!

Let's Run for Brain Injury! The Portsmouth 5k returns in May, The Seacoast Half Marathon in October supports Krempels for 2026, and the Post Concussion Syndrome group returns this April.

Spring is here! After a long and cold winter, luckily, it's almost time to strap on your running shoes to support survivors of brain injury at the Portsmouth 5k in May. After that little warm up, we hope you'll join us again in October at the Seacoast Half Marathon! Krempels is honored to have been selected as this year's beneficiary of the half, a race that routinely raises over six figures for its nonprofit partners. Additionally, new for 2026, Krempels is excited to bring back our public brain injury support group that was developed from last Fall's Post Concussion Pilot Group.

Navigating Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Concussive Syndrome: Coming **April 14th through May 19th**, join us for this new, open-to-the-public, discussion-based group. Every Tuesday during the 6-week program, staff from the Krempels Brain Injury Center will cover topics such as: brain injury fundamentals, symptom management strategies, validation & understanding, and sense of community. Individuals living with PCS or a new Traumatic Brain Injury are invited to participate so they can share their experiences and strategies with one another and our professional staff facilitator(s). In our last session, one participant, who was five years post-injury, commented that the experience of understanding and acceptance they felt from peers and staff was more healing than any treatment they have received since their injury. They added, "Just the fact that a place like Krempels exists gives me more hope than I have had in a very long time." Participation in the group was at capacity throughout and overall, was a successful endeavor that will inform future efforts. This program is offered at \$100 for the full 6-week program. Sliding fee options are available. Contact Heidi Savage, OTR at 603-570-2026 extension 221 for more details.

Portsmouth 5k: Join us in Portsmouth on Memorial Day Weekend, **Saturday, May 23rd**, for a flat and fast 5K! Hosted by Marathon Sports at the legendary Paddy's American Grill, this legacy road race is a community-wide fundraising event for the Krempels Brain Injury Center. Post-race festivities will feature snacks, a post-race pint, and wonderful company. Registration is open now at www.raceroster.com, just search, "Portsmouth 5k."

Seacoast Half Marathon: Join us on **Oct. 25, 2026**, for the 2026 Seacoast Half Marathon. The scenic course winds through the historic coastal communities of Portsmouth, Rye, and New Castle offering stunning views of New Hampshire's Seacoast. In a race calendar crowded with corporate, for-profit events, the Seacoast Half is the only purely local, purely charitable race of its kind — and has raised nearly \$2 million for

worthy area nonprofits. Register now for early bird pricing at www.seacoasthalfmarathon.com.

As always, to learn more about Krempels Brain Injury Center, or to inquire about participating in our program, please visit our website at www.kbicenter.org or call 603-570-2026.



Live your best life after brain injury.

See what's next and how to become a member today at www.kbicenter.org

Krempels

Brain Injury Center

"WE GET IT"

Who knows better what it's like living with a brain injury than someone already living with a brain injury? For 25 years, our community has offered opportunities for members to support and advocate for one another, as well as share strategies. This is a community that values each individual and can be a place of hope, joy and connections for you.

OUR MISSION

To improve the quality of life of people living with brain injury through evidence-based programming, shared experiences, and support in a welcoming community.

WHERE

In person Monday, Wednesday and Friday in Portsmouth, NH
Online every Thursday

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Scan below or call 603-570-2026

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER



64 North Main Street, Suite 2, Concord, NH 03301-4913
 advocacy@drcnh.org - drcnh.org - (603) 228-0432 - (800)
 834-1721 voice or TTY - FAX: (603)-225-2077

The Systems Review Committee of the Quality Council* will convene a series of meetings to review the system designed to protect individuals with developmental disabilities and traumatic brain injuries from abuse and neglect. These meetings are public and are being held in response to recent reports by the NH Bulletin regarding abuse and deaths within the system.

Meeting Location: NH Commission for Human Rights, 57 Regional Drive, Suite 8, Concord, NH 03301

Remote Zoom Link:
<https://zoom.us/j/2912498426?omn=98079309122>,
 Meeting ID: 291 249 8426

**Topics and speakers are TENTATIVE. Meeting Dates are CONFIRMED.

Date: Thursday, April 23, 2026

Time: 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Topic: Certification of Enhanced Family Care Homes, Adult Protective Services, Legal Requirements to Report Abuse, Abuse Registry

Invited Speakers:

- Michael Springman, Director, Adult Protective Svcs.
- Greg Martin, Adult Protective Services Legal Counsel
- Jay Kurinskas, Compliance Officer, Health Facilities Administration, Community Residence Unit
- Kelly Keefe, Unit Chief, Health Facilities Administration, Bureau of Licensing and Certification

Date: Thursday, May 28, 2026

Time: 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm

Topic: Complaints and Sentinel Event Investigations

Invited Speakers:

- TBD, Complaint Investigator/Director, Office of Client and Legal Services (OCLS)
- TBD, Clinical Administrator on the Sentinel Event Review Process
- TBD, DHHS Office of the Ombudsman
- Adult Protective Services, Legal Requirements to Report Abuse, Abuse Registry

Questions for Speakers:

1. What is your role in protecting people with developmental disabilities from abuse and neglect?
2. What are the barriers to keeping people in the BDS system safe? What are any barriers reporting and acting on complaints of abuse or neglect?
3. In your view, what are the gaps in the system? How could the system be improved?
4. What is your responsibility to make sure people with disabilities and families understand their rights? How do you make sure all interested parties know what to do if they observe abuse or neglect?
5. In your view, who is ultimately responsible for making sure the BDS system keeps people safe? Do they face any barriers that have not been discussed?
6. Are there gaps/areas for improvement in NH laws and rules to address these issues?

Time for public comments will be limited.

The Systems Review committee welcomes comments in writing. Submit comments to nhcasdqc@gmail.com. Comments submitted to the NH Developmental Services Quality Council are public records. Please be cautious about sharing confidential information. To request accommodation, please email nhcasdqc@gmail.com at least 7 days in advance of the meeting. Attempts will be made to accommodate late requests.

*Disability Rights Center – NH is a member of the Quality Council.

**Listening session dates have been set through the month of August. For additional dates and the most up-to-date information regarding topics and speakers, visit the Quality Council website.

INSIGHTS

Life Perspectives From a Brain Injury Survivor David A. Grant *Life After Brain Injury - An Unexpected Outcome*



March was Brain Injury Awareness Month, my 16th as a brain injury survivor. My social news feed and LinkedIn updates were overflowing with posts, comments, graphics, and other content by others acknowledging and actively participating in this month-long event. Years ago, in my youthful naivete as a brain injury survivor, I assumed that the national mainstream media spotlight would shine brightly on those affected by brain injury. While there may be media coverage outside of those within the brain injury community, it's largely a siloed happening. Step outside of the brain injury community, and you'll hear a whole lot of crickets. This is neither good nor bad, it just is.

Looking back on my own life, until my life became defined by brain injury, I had never heard of Brain Injury Awareness Month. Started in 1980 by the National Head Injury Foundation (which later became the Brain Injury Association of America), a month dedicated to awareness had been around for just over 30 years before my own head injury.

For several years after my injury, the goal was simple: I wanted to be the person I was prior to my injury. I wanted to be "the old me." Brain injury old timers all said the same thing, that recovery was lifelong, but I was determined to be different. I was going to recover completely. Time, frustration, and eventually radical acceptance have shown me that impossibility.

But what if I told you I could be better than my old self in ways I never saw coming?

Many years ago, my wife Sarah said something that has stayed with me. "You and I were decent people before your injury, but we never served a greater good." That has all changed.

Most of my writing revolves around the day to day challenges that come with living with a brain injury, but today I'm going to break stride and do something I don't usually do. Today it's time for a victory lap!

Based on the success of a smaller, private online social community to serve those at my local brain injury support group, I was left wondering if there might be a greater need. Being in the company, both in person and online, of other survivors was a veritable game changer. I was no longer alone. In early 2013, I started what I envisioned to be a smaller open-to-all Facebook community for those affected by brain injury. By the time the first year had passed, the group had grown to a couple thousand members. By January of this year, after 13 years, the social communities numbered over 55,000 members. No one was more surprised than me.

In 2024, we became a New Hampshire based 501(c)(3) non-profit, positioned a passion driven board, and continued to

refine our mission. Last year, member engagement on social numbered just under 5 million, making the group one of the most active groups of its kind worldwide. Our growing number of volunteers have made the unimaginable, well... imaginable. Our organization hosts fifteen support groups a month, all virtual. This has opened the door for members who simply do not have access to local support. They all know our organization as BIHN, short for the Brain Injury Hope Network.

Day by day, as we move forward, we see the lives of those we serve uplifted. Isolation ends, friendships are formed, and person by person, hope grows.

I used to think that my injury was the worst thing that could have happened to me. Today I see it as the best thing. With my injury came hardships unimaginable to the "old me," but like fire tempers steel, those difficulties shaped me into the person I am today.

Walt Disney once said, "Let's not forget that this all started with a mouse." As I look at what has come to pass, I can't help but think that this all started with a cyclist being struck by a car. And the rest, as they say, is history.

TALK SAVES LIVES

An Introduction to Suicide Prevention

AFSP's signature education program, *Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention*, provides participants with life-saving knowledge and confidence critical to preventing suicide. This presentation will cover what we know about this leading cause of death, the most up-to-date research on prevention, and what we can all do to help save lives. Participants will learn the common risk factors for suicide, how to spot the warning signs in others, and practice examples for how to engage. Join us to learn how to keep ourselves, our loved ones and those in our community safe. When it comes to suicide prevention – talk truly can help to save lives.

Date

04/07/2026

Time

12-1pm

Location

Virtual

RSVP

[Register here](#)

Scan to Register



This presentation is brought to you by the AFSP New Hampshire Chapter in collaboration with the New Hampshire Suicide Prevention Coalition.

afsp.org/TalkSavesLives



SEIZURES AFTER BRAIN INJURY

One of the problems that may occur after a brain injury is seizures. Although most people who are living with a brain injury will not experience seizures, it is good to understand what a seizure is and what to do if you have one. Most seizures happen in the first several days or weeks after a brain injury. Some may occur months or years after the injury. About 70-80% of people who have seizures are helped by medications and can return to most activities. Rarely, seizures can make you much worse or cause death.

WHAT ARE SEIZURES?

During a seizure there is a sudden abnormal electrical disturbance in the brain that results in one or more of the following symptoms:

- Strange movement of the head, body, arms, legs, or eyes, such as stiffening or shaking.
- Unresponsiveness and staring
- Chewing, lip smacking, or fumbling movements
- Strange smell, sound, feeling, taste, or visual images
- Sudden tiredness or dizziness
- Not being able to speak or understand others

Symptoms of seizures happen suddenly and are uncontrolled. Seizures usually last only a few seconds or minutes, but may continue for 5-10 minutes. The individual may have a bladder or bowel movement, bite their tongue or the inside of the mouth. Afterwards, the person may feel drowsy, weak, confused, or have a hard time talking to/ understanding others. After a severe seizure (longer than 2 minutes) it may be harder for the individual to stand, walk, or take care of his/herself for a few days.

Conditions that could increase the risk of having a seizure include:

- High fever
- Loss of sleep and extreme fatigue
- Drug and alcohol use
- Chemical changes in the body such as low sodium or magnesium, or high calcium

SEIZURES AND BRAIN INJURY

Early post-traumatic seizures: This seizure occurs in the first week after a brain injury. About 25% of people who have an early post-traumatic seizure will have another seizure months or years later.

Late post-traumatic seizures: This occurs more than seven days after a brain injury. About 80% of people who have a late post-traumatic seizure will have another seizure.

Epilepsy: Having more than one seizure is called epilepsy. More than half of the people with epilepsy will have this problem for the rest of their lives.

The cause of the brain injury can help doctors understand how likely more seizures will occur.

- 65% of people with brain injuries caused by bullet wounds have seizures.
- 20% of people with closed head injuries that cause bleeding between the brain and the skull experience seizures. A 'closed head injury' means the skull and brain contents were not penetrated in the injury.
- Over 35% of people who need 2 or more brain surgeries after injury experience late post-traumatic seizures.
- Over 25% of people with bleeding on both sides of the brain, or who have a blood clot removed by surgery experience late post-traumatic seizures.

MEDICATIONS TO TREAT SEIZURES

Medications that are used to control seizures are called anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs). These drugs may be used for other problems, such as chronic pain, restlessness, or mood instability. Consult a doctor about which drug to use, based on the type of seizure(s), age, health conditions, and side effects from medications. Side effects of AEDs usually improve after taking the medication for 3-5 days.

Some common side effects of AEDs are:

- Sleepiness or fatigue
- Worsening of balance
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Trembling
- Double vision
- Confusion

Blood tests may be necessary to ensure proper medication is being administered or whether the medication is causing additional health concerns. Although these drugs rarely cause birth defects in newborns, tell your doctor if the individual may already be or may become pregnant.

WHAT IF THE MEDICATIONS DO NOT WORK?

If seizures continue for the individual, he/she may be referred to comprehensive Epilepsy Center for more tests and to be seen by a specialist (Epileptologists or Neurologists specializing in epilepsy) to see if further treatments are necessary.

SAFETY ISSUES

In most states, individuals who experience seizures must notify the Department of Motor Vehicles. The individual may have their license withheld. Laws vary from state to state; consult with the Department of Motor Vehicles. Other safety issues:

- Never swim alone.
- Do not climb ladders, trees, roof tops, or other tall objects
- When eating, let others know what to do if you start to choke or have a seizure

CAREGIVERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

Family members or caregivers should watch closely to see what happens during a seizure to be able to explain to medical professionals. They should make a diary of date, time, length of seizure, and incident description.

The majority of seizures are short and do not involve significant injuries. However, it is important for caregivers to know how to best protect the individual from hurting him/herself during a seizure.

- Loosen tight clothing, especially around the neck.
- Make sure the person does not fall. Hold him/her steady as possible, whether in a chair, sofa or bed. If he/she is standing, help to get him/her to the ground safely.
- Turn the head so that if nothing in the mouth, even spit, will block the throat
- Do not put anything into the mouth.
- Keep checking the pulse.
- Listen for breathing at the mouth and extend the individual's neck if the breathing seems difficult.
- If the seizure lasts more than 3 minutes, call 911.
- Notify doctor's office of the seizure.



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PUBLIC HEARING ON *UNMET NEEDS*

PLEASE JOIN US! - via Zoom or in person

Survivors, family members, caregivers, friends, and service agencies are encouraged to attend this Public Hearing to provide personal and professional input for unmet needs for individuals living with a brain injury or spinal cord injury.

The information provided at the hearing will be submitted in a report to the Governor and the Legislature in order to provide recommendations to better meet those needs.

DATE: **Wednesday, June 24, 2026**

TIME: **4:30—5:30 PM**

IN-PERSON LOCATION: **Dept of Education—Walker Building
2 South Fruit Street, Room 100
Concord, New Hampshire**

Light refreshments will be provided.

VIRTUAL LOCATION:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81816175959?pwd=pabZchLIwBCQ6rbgko9XqmRH5CazkG.1&from=addon>

Registration is required for anyone attending in person as well as via Zoom



For more information or questions, please contact Erin at (603) 225-8400 or erin@bianh.org

Public announcement provided by:
New Hampshire Brain & Spinal Cord Injury Advisory Council

c/o Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire
52 Pleasant Street—Concord, NH 03301
603-225-8400



Co Host:
Disability Rights Center
64 North Main Street, #2, Concord, NH 03301
603-228-0432



Spring Has Entered the Chat



Okay, I'll admit that's a little cheesy. But when you live in New England, springtime is a big deal. It means hope, renewal, communing with nature, and longer days. Not to mention the opportunity to open all the windows and doors to move out all of that stale winter air. With this time of renewal, getting outdoors is a wonderful way to lift our spirits and is good for our overall health, but it's also important to be safe. Below are some tips for enjoying spring safely.

Walking is probably the most popular spring activity. I get a burst of energy when I think about getting outside for a walk. Seeing the tulip buds and hearing the birds chirping just does something for my soul. As things begin to thaw, it's important to watch what the ground is doing. Hazards such as ice, flowing water, and slick mud can show up unexpectedly. If you are walking a familiar path, it can be helpful to visualize your route before you venture out, reflecting on any potential hazards from the previous season. Watch your step, whether you are on grass or pavement. It is also important, as always, to pace yourself. You may feel energized to go for a long walk, but if you have been minimally active for a few months, you may need to give yourself some grace. Take your time, take breaks often, and if you are out for a walk, head home before you think you need to. Being proactive can prevent burnout.

Visiting friends, family, and neighbors is one of my favorite activities, no matter the season. One of the most treacherous things for me is stairs. Stairs take so much work! There is the mental focus coupled with the physical coordination of so many moving body parts; a true challenge. Keep an eye on stairs for potential ice, patches of dirt, slippery steps, unsteady or missing handrails, etc. You may need to navigate them with two feet on a step, or have someone provide an arm for support. Stairs can also be a great way to get in a challenging exercise.

Biking is not my go-to activity, but it certainly is for my co-founder, David. In springtime, it's important to check the daily weather, including temperature fluctuations. Temperature swings can happen and create ice in shaded areas. Also, dirt and salt build up on roads and can gather in piles that may cause loss of traction or control. No matter the season, be sure to wear appropriate protective gear, follow traffic laws, and be aware of your surroundings.

Dress in layers. I truthfully believe this is the key to living in New England in general. The weather this time of year can be unpredictable. It could be twenty degrees at nine in the morning, but seventy by two o'clock. It's better to remove a sweat-shirt halfway through a walk than to be freezing and a half mile from home. Also, wear shoes with good traction. Slippery shoes are truly dangerous on uneven terrain.

Regardless of the activity you choose, use safety precautions and pace yourself. If you are completely run down the day after your walk, take a day or two to rest, then shorten the distance at your next walk or choose a less challenging path. Movement is healthy for us in so many ways, but when you are navigating life after brain injury, it takes a little extra planning.

To learn more about the Middle People Project, please visit www.middlepeopleproject.org.

*Team MP: Jenn Williams, David A. Grant, Sarah Gaffney
This installment was written by Jenn Williams*

BISHOP'S CHARITABLE ASSISTANCE FUND

If you are under 22 or over 60 years of age and in need of financial assistance the Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire may be able to help. Through a \$5,000 grant received from the Bishop's Charitable Assistance Fund (BCAF) eligible and approved applicants may receive up to \$500.00. Some of the items/services that we will consider funding are: rent, food, oil, home modifications, assistive technology, specialized equipment, medical/dental, and transportation. All approved requests are awarded one time only. Once BCAF funds have been dispersed, applications or requests for funds will no longer be accepted. Please contact the BIANH office for an application -- 603-225-8400.



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- Tom T. Northeast Rehab Patient







"I have to give it to them... they're all so good. The entire team. They all cared so much."
- Jenna N. Northeast Rehab Patient



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SEACOAST BRAIN INJURY SUPPORT GROUP

beginning Tuesday, February 3, 2026

Meeting the 1st Tuesday of the month
12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

NEW LOCATION

HCA Healthcare, Portsmouth Regional Hospital
155 Borthwick Avenue, West Building, 3rd Floor, Room #351
Portsmouth, NH

for additional information, please contact BIANH - mail@bianh.or or call 603-225-8400

New! A 6-week program offering from Krempels Brain Injury Center

Navigating Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Concussive Syndrome

- Brain injury fundamentals
- Symptom management strategies
- Validation & understanding
- Sense of community

Tuesdays, 1:00PM - 2:15PM
April 14th - May 19th

Community Campus
100 Campus Drive
Portsmouth, NH

\$100 for 6-week program

For more information or to register, please contact
Heidi Savage, OTR
(603)570-2026 X221
heidikbcenter.org



SUPPORT GROUPS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

Revised Spring 2026 —Times and places may change without notice—please call in advance

VIRTUAL SUPPORT GROUPS

The Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire will be hosting two monthly online support groups that will be held through the ZOOM Virtual Platform and six in-person support groups. All are welcome to attend.

Virtual Statewide BIANH Brain Injury Caregivers Support Group, Caregivers Only

Meets the 4th Tuesday of the month, 6:30 – 7:30 PM

To Join Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84489789058>

IN PERSON SUPPORT GROUPS

Concord Brain Injury Support Group – Meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month, 6:30—7:30 PM
Granite State Independent Living, 21 Chenell Drive, Concord, NH

Conway Brain Injury Support Group –Meets the 1st Monday of the month, 6:00—7:30 PM
Journey Church, 15 Hutchins Drive, Conway, NH

Greater Atkinson/Derry Brain Injury Support Group - Meets the 2nd Tuesday of the month, 6:00—7:30 PM
Community Crossroads, 8 Commerce Drive, Unit 801, Atkinson, NH

Keene Brain Injury Support Group – Meets the 3rd Sunday of the month, 1:30—3:00 PM
Southwest Community Services, 49 Community Way, Keene, NH (use door facing the Food Co-Op Building)

Manchester Clubhouse Brain Injury Support Group – Meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm
Manchester Clubhouse, 60 Rogers Street, Suite 204, Manchester, NH

Peterborough Brain Injury Support Group –Meets the 1st Tuesday of the month, 6:00—7:30 PM
Monadnock Community Hospital, Conference Rooms 1 & 2—452 Old Street Road, Peterborough, NH

Seacoast Brain Injury Support Group - Meets the 1st Tuesday of the month, 12:00—1:00 PM
HCA Healthcare, Portsmouth Regional Hospital, 155 Borthwick Avenue, West Building, 3rd Floor, Room #351, Portsmouth, NH

If you have any questions, please contact BIANH — mail@bianh.org or call at 603-225-8400. Visit www.bianh.org for any calendar changes.

APHASIA:

Exeter: Aphasia Support Group for the Seacoast of NH
Meets the first Thursday of the Month, Meeting Time: 11:00 – 12:00 PM
Exeter Hospital, Conference Room 1 North, 5 Alumni Drive, Exeter, NH
Contact: Kate Phelps at 603-778-6548, kphelps@ehr.org

Nashua: St. Joseph Hospital Outpatient Rehab Clinic, 75 Northeastern Blvd, Nashua,
2nd Tuesday of the month, 4:00 PM —5:00 PM
Contact: Lesley Renzi
Phone: (603) 595-3076, ext. 63608

BRAIN INJURY & STROKE

Concord: Encompass Health Rehab Stroke Support Group, 1st Wednesday of the month, 10:30 – 11:30 AM, Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital at Concord.
Contact: Nick Allard, 603-226-9840

Dover: VIRTUAL Wentworth Douglass Hospital Stroke Support Group. 3rd Thursday of every month; 2:00-3:00 PM. Call or email Lindsey to receive the Zoom link.
Contact: Lindsey Wyma Phone: (603) 609-6161 x2731
Email: Lwyma@mgb.org

Durham: UNH Occupational Therapy Department, Hewitt Hall, Room 139, Durham, NH. Meets Tuesdays; 12:30—3:15 PM
Contact: Dr. John Wilcox, OTD for semester start up
Phone: (207) 314-3180 or email john.wilcox@unh.edu

Kennebunk, ME: Currently Suspended - 1st Tuesday of the month, 3:00 PM, Upstairs small conference room, RiverRidge Neurorehabilitation Center, 3 Brazier Lane, Kennebunk, ME—Phone: (207) 985-3030 ext: 326

Lebanon: VIRTUAL Stroke Support Group, 1st Friday of even-numbered months (Feb, Apr, Jun, Aug, Oct, Dec), 10:00 —11:30 AM, DHMC Aging Resource Center, Lebanon, NH **Contact:** Jennifer Larro, Aging Resource Center Phone: (603) 653-3460

Nashua: St. Joseph Hospital Stroke Support Group
Meets the first Wednesday of the month, 6:00 – 7:00 PM
St. Joseph Hospital Inpatient Rehabilitation Unity Community Road
Email: gmorris@covh.org

Portsmouth: VIRTUAL Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital Stroke Support Group, Meets the Second Tuesday of the month, 4:15-5:00 PM. Registration at StrokeSupportGroup@northeastrehab.com

Portsmouth: Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital at Pease Stroke Support Group, Meets the Third Wednesday of the month, 4:00- 5:00 PM, Northeast Rehabilitation Hospital, 1st Floor, Pease, Portsmouth
Contact: Strokesupportgroup@northeastrehab.com

Salem: Virtual Northeast Rehab Mild Brain Injury Support Group; Meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month, 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Email: bcapobianc@northeastrehab.com to RSVP

BRAIN TUMOR:

Derry: Appointment Only Due to COVID-19.
Contact: Urszula Mansur
Phone: (603) 818-9376

CAREGIVER:

Portsmouth: Portsmouth Regional Hospital's Caregivers Support Group, Meets the last Wednesday of the month, meeting time: 5:00 – 6:00 PM, Main Hospital building, classroom 4, 333 Borthwick Avenue, Portsmouth
Contact: PRHPSTROKESUPPORT.NH@HCAHEALTHCARE.COM

Wolfeboro: Granite VNA, Caregiver Connection Series
Harmony Coffee House, 21 Central Avenue, Wolfeboro, NH
Meets January 12, February 9, and March 9. 10:00 – 11:30 AM,
Phone: 800-924-8620, ext. 85664

2026 DONORS

Thank you to all of our members and donors. This list reflects donations received from January 1, 2026 to present.

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