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**BRAIN WAVES RHODE ISLAND PRESENTS**

**THE OCEAN STATE'S NINTH ANNUAL BRAIN FAIRS**

**During International Brain Awareness Week**

***A Cerebral Celebration***

**Pawtucket, RI (February 6, 2024)**—For the ninth year, Brain Waves Rhode Island ([BWRI](#))--formerly Brain Week Rhode Island--returns with its annual celebration of International Brain Week, a global campaign to increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research. Young, old, and in-between are invited to immerse themselves in the mysteries and intricacies of the brain during BWRI's Pawtucket Brain Fair, on March 9, 10am-2pm, at Hope Artiste Village, 1005 Main Street, Pawtucket. Each year, BWRI also collaborates with the Brown Brain Fair, which will take place on Saturday, March 16 at Brown Engineering Research Center, 345 Brook Street, Providence, 10am-2pm. These special events invite the community to learn about basic science, brain health, interact with brain science labs, familiarize themselves with community resources and experience the thrill of discovery. Both events are free of charge and open to the public.

Dr. Victoria Heimer-McGinn, Co-Chair and President of BWRI, said, "We've had a very busy year. We obtained our status as a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) organization, we rebranded to Brain Waves Rhode Island to better represent the work we do year-round, and we added new members to our board of directors." She continued, "BWRI's mission has not changed. We continue to present programs that will inspire and empower more people to choose science as a career, especially people from communities that are underrepresented in the sciences." Heimer-McGinn is an Assistant Professor at Roger Williams University, where she and her students study how neuropsychiatric conditions like bipolar disease affect cognition. In 2019 she received the Next Generation Award from the international Society for Neuroscience in recognition of her contributions to public neuroscience education and outreach.

The Brain Fairs, BWRI's flagship events, feature engaging, interactive brain-themed exhibits and cerebrally stimulating talks by experts who will present some of the most current brain research,

treatments for disorders, and community resources. Parents, teachers, teens, and younger children will have a chance to touch real human brains, measure brain waves, learn about brain-related health conditions like addiction, and much more. There will be 40+ tables with interactive games and fun activities for people to learn about basic brain science and brain health, meet scientists and clinicians, learn about local colleges and programs, and pick up information about community resources available to them. Since 2016, BWRI's Brain Fairs have attracted 600-800 visitors per event, with demographics ranging widely in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and educational background.

At the Pawtucket Fair, there will also be activities led by volunteer students and teachers from Rhode Island schools, including Brown, Roger Williams, Bryant, Hope High School, Bayview Academy, Central Falls High School, Gordon School, Shea High School, and Wheeler. There will also be workshops hosted by local businesses, a traditional Puerto Rican carnival parade, free face painting, and a chance to make brain art.

As a Latina scientist who grew up in Puerto Rico, Heimer-McGinn is passionate about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in science. She remarked, "We hope to inspire young people from all walks of life, so that we can help diversify our workforce. Diversity in science doesn't just benefit "the diverse," it benefits all of us because it brings new perspectives, new scientific questions, different angles to explore, and ultimately, more answers and discoveries."

Dr. Kristin Scaplen, Co-Chair of BWRI said, "I love any opportunity to bring neuroscience out of the lab into our local community and get students excited about their most precious commodity—their brain." She added, "This year we have so many great things happening--from our name change to a new pilot program that allow schools to incorporate brain science activities and experiments into their curriculum. This program will give students an opportunity to showcase the work they have done in the classroom at the Pawtucket Brain Fair. We intend to expand this program to include more schools over the next couple of years." Scaplen is an Assistant Professor of Neuroscience at Bryant University and an Adjunct Professor of Neuroscience at Brown University. At Bryant Dr. Scaplen runs a lab powered by undergraduates that studies how the brain changes in the context of alcohol addiction. She and her work have been featured on [GBH News: All Things Considered](#) with Arun Rath and numerous news outlets.

Since 2016, BWRI has highlighted the wonders of the human brain and the wealth of neuroscience research happening in the Ocean State. Through BWRI, specialists in many fields are brought together to make brain science and brain health accessible for everyone. In addition to the Brain Fair, BWRI provides free in-classroom BRAINY visits to K-12 schools in Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls throughout the months of February and March. Since its inception, BWRI has actively been to more than **30 schools, reached more than 4,000 students, held more than 50 events, and created more than 20 online resources for participants.**

Heimer McGinn concluded, "Brain Waves RI aims to help people understand their bodies better (***the brain is part of the body!***) so we can live happier, healthier lives." She added, "Importantly, it aims to help people understand how research can save lives and bring us better quality of life."

### ***About Brain Waves RI***

*Since 2016, Brain Waves Rhode Island (previously named Brain Week Rhode Island) has had one mission, to make brain science accessible to everyone. We aim to share the wealth of neuroscience research that supports what we know about brain health, and in doing so highlight the work that is happening in the Ocean State. Our efforts bring together experts across disciplines and promote a growing biomedical economic sector that holds great promise for Rhode Island's future. Brain Waves RI aims to (1) increase public awareness of the progress and benefits of brain research, (2) educate people about brain health, (3) educate and inspire the next generation of neuroscientists, and (4) showcase the wealth of neuroscience activity and advocacy in Rhode Island.*

*All photos are by Justin Case.*



*Pawtucket Brain Fair 2023*



*Pawtucket Brain Fair 2023*



*Central Falls Science Class, Pawtucket Brain Fair 2023*



*Pawtucket Brain Fair 2023*



*Brown Brain Fair 2023*



*Victoria Heimer-McGinn, Co-Chair and President, Brain Waves RI*



*Kristin Scaplen, Co-Chair, Brain Waves RI*