



*It was empowering for me to stand up in group and publicly say "I have depression" without fear of any judgment or repercussions.*

*~ DBSA group participant*



Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance

**Greater Houston**

[www.dbsahouston.org](http://www.dbsahouston.org)

## 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

OFFERING FREE SUPPORT TO HOUSTON



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As the incoming president of Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Greater Houston (DBSA), it is a privilege to report on the remarkable success that our organization has achieved in 2011 under the leadership of Will Penland. DBSA offers free support groups to individuals suffering from a mood disorder. These groups are also open to family members and friends. Individuals with depression or bipolar disorder often feel isolated, misunderstood, and overwhelmingly discouraged and hopeless. Consequently, the mission of DBSA is to help people who are struggling with these difficult symptoms to experience connection and empowerment in a setting defined by safety and compassion. In 2004, DBSA sponsored five support groups in the Houston area. Today, we oversee 73 groups in 42 locations. DBSA is currently the leading provider of support group services for those with mood disorders in the Greater Houston area including groups in Brazoria, Fort Bend, Harris, Galveston, and Montgomery counties. Our work would not be possible were it not for the commitment and generosity of our donors who enable us to offer a sense of hope to hundreds of hurting individuals every year.

**Unique Populations** – As a part of the program described above, DBSA has reached out to the community by offering services to special populations. These groups, because of unique facilitation needs, are overseen by DBSA program staff and are led by paid professionals. In 2011 DBSA sponsored groups for adolescents, caregivers, the homeless, women recovering from addiction and abuse, runaways, veterans, seniors, and those who are incarcerated. Reaching out to those who are especially vulnerable has long been a goal of DBSA, and we continue to look at community needs in the hope that we might expand our services to those suffering in unique ways.

**7's for 7** – DBSA was tremendously honored to be the recipient of over \$15,000 in proceeds from the inaugural 7's for 7 Lacrosse Tournament held in Houston on January 8-9, 2011. Hosted by his friends, the event was held in loving memory of Drew Webb, son of DBSA board member Dorothy Webb and her husband, Hall. Drew, a two-time High School All-American, was valedictorian at Episcopal High School where he set multiple lacrosse scoring records wearing jersey #7. He was the first Houston lacrosse player recruited by an NCAA Division I team. He attended Cornell University and earned four varsity letters. In addition to honoring Drew's generous, caring spirit, the tournament's goal is to raise awareness of depression and other mental illnesses in athletes. DBSA is incredibly grateful to the Webb family and the Friends of Drew Webb for selecting our organization as the tournament's designated charity.

**Fundraising** – Development committee chair, Phyllis Selber; Board President, Will Penland; and DBSA Development Director, Christina Wilkerson were exemplary in their outstanding efforts to reach new donors. DBSA is also grateful to Blake Williams who chaired our first Annual Fund campaign. His commitment was inspirational to all board members, and his dedication to this initiative has set a precedent for future years. In addition to overseeing the committee's fundraising effort, Phyllis poured tireless energy into the development of plans for DBSA's inaugural luncheon event which will take place in September 2012. Goals for this event include educating the community about mood disorders and reducing the stigma associated with these diagnoses.

**Special Recognition** – The core of DBSA's mission is to bring hope and healing to the participants in our groups. Currently, there are 89 facilitators who carry out that mission. We are so grateful for their dedication and passionate support of participants. In an effort to help people understand the nature of group involvement, DBSA created a video using some of our facilitators. We are especially thankful to those individuals for their openness and willingness to demonstrate what a group experience is like. The video, which is posted on our website, was created by Gotham Image Works and would not have been possible were it not for the efforts of DBSA's Communications committee chaired by Elke Laughlin. We are deeply indebted to Gotham and Elke for their excellent work.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to move to new office space in 2011. Keith Kimmick, chair of DBSA's Community Outreach committee, was instrumental in making the transition occur as smoothly as possible. He was able to engage the help of Pioneer Services who donated furniture for our new offices as well as assisted with the move itself. Thanks to the efforts of Keith and Pioneer, we are enjoying wonderful new space.

In addition, to those mentioned above, DBSA is unbelievably fortunate to have committee chairs who selflessly commit their time and energy to our mission. We are so grateful for the leadership skills of Clyde Buck, chair of the Audit committee; Martin Debrovner, chair of the Finance committee; Linda Condon, chair of the Public Education committee; Peggy Roe, chair of the Program committee; Jan Redford, chair of the Nominating and Governance committee; and Fred Dunlap, chair of the Legal committee.

Finally, the successes of 2011 have occurred under the skillful guidance of Will Penland as our President. He has led our organization with clear-eyed vision, openness to new ideas, skillful decision-making strategies, and deep compassion for those we serve. His energy has never flagged, and it has been clear to all those touched by Will's devotion to DBSA that he believes in the hope and healing that underpins our mission. We are truly honored and privileged to have had Will at the helm of our organization in 2011.

**Martha Hanson, Ph.D.**

*“As a participant sitting in group and listening to other people share their feelings and experiences, things started to resonate with me. I began to understand my illness, and I am learning how to live a rich life with my mood disorder.”*

*~ DBSA group participant*



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**THE COMMITMENT OF DBSA**

**OUR MISSION:**

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance Greater Houston (DBSA) sponsors free support groups that assist in the recovery of individuals with depression or bipolar disorder.

**OUR VISION:**

With support groups provided by DBSA, all persons with depression or bipolar disorder can enhance their recovery from these treatable illnesses.

**OUR GOAL:**

DBSA will be the leading provider of free, well attended, effective support groups throughout the Houston metropolitan area. This support will include collaboration with community resources to enhance the recovery of individuals with depression or bipolar disorder while incorporating families and friends in the recovery process.



## 2011 DBSA PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

In 2011, DBSA had a productive year as we continued to offer free support groups throughout the greater Houston area. Our program goals involve two types of support groups, those open to the public at large and those offered to specific populations that are particularly vulnerable to depression and bipolar disorder. We try to service groups in major geographic areas so that participants can find a group relatively close to home or work. We are the largest provider of support group services for the mentally ill community in Houston, and there is a vast need for more of these services.

The following characteristics of DBSA have contributed to the success of our goals:

- We fulfill a need not addressed by the mental health community.
- We address depression and bipolar disorder, two of the most common mental illnesses in our community and in America today.
- DBSA has refined the support group model and adapted it to diverse groups of individuals, such as adolescents, prisoners, and veterans.
- We have both volunteer peer facilitators and professional facilitators, depending on the nature of the group. All undergo training and are well qualified.
- We have a hands-on Board of Directors, professional Program Staff, and generous donors who support our efforts.

Among the diverse populations that we serve, one of the most effective support groups is the one that addresses adolescent mental health problems.

### Adolescents

Our Adolescent Groups were first developed through collaboration with Communities in Schools (CIS). The number of high school age students who are struggling with depression and bipolar disorder is much higher than generally expected because the symptoms of the illnesses are often expressed through behavioral difficulties, irritable demeanor, self-medication with alcohol or drugs, or extreme isolation. Students are referred to the CIS program, and DBSA professional facilitators provide support groups on individual campuses. The results have been so gratifying that other high schools that do not have a CIS program have contracted with DBSA to provide support groups on their respective campuses. We are now providing services to nine high schools in HISD, with some locations servicing several groups. Many students have not yet received a diagnosis, but CIS or the school counselor can help them in accessing the treatments they need. What a blessing that our collaborative efforts are reaching these young people before the struggle with mental illness overwhelms them and their caregivers.

### Public Education

One of the DBSA goals this past year was to expand public awareness and education throughout the community. Removal of the stigma of mental illness has been the primary focus of this goal. We received a "City of Houston Proclamation" for our work in this mental health field. Our staff and volunteers from the DBSA Board of Directors made presentations or maintained information booths at over 30 locations throughout the community. These requests came from schools, corporations, breakfast and service clubs, mental health professional organizations, churches, and neighborhood centers and hospitals. We are grateful to have such capable professional staff and Board volunteers to make this dream of public awareness become more of a reality.

### Research/Evaluation

DBSA conducts a Participant Satisfaction Survey on a regular basis in order for Program Staff to monitor the quality of the group experience and to determine improvements that can be made in the delivery of services. A five point self-report scale is used to measure variables with 5 being the highest score and 1 being the lowest. Areas surveyed include knowledge gained, social contact, medication adherence, illness management, and quality of life. In the latest survey conducted, the overall average response was 4.26 out of a possible 5, a reassurance that the groups are succeeding at helping those experiencing depression or bipolar disorder.

This past year, DBSA also conducted an in-depth Exit Study that examined, through interviews of regular attendees and newcomers, the range of causes for leaving groups. The answers, when compiled in a final report, demonstrated that the causes were diverse. The regular attendees often attended according to a pattern such as every two or three weeks or according to when they felt the need. Newcomers also left for various reasons- a group particular to their age, a family only group, transportation difficulties, or relocation. The ones who left rated their experiences in the group with a high score –an average of 4.10 for Newcomers and 4.39 for Regulars (out of a possible 5.0). The Program Staff will continue to focus on seeing that each participant feels such a benefit from attending the group that he or she will return. The improvement in personal recovery benefits the most from continued attendance.

DBSA continues to grow, to examine the support group program carefully, and to reach out to the community. We want to help in the early awareness of adolescent mental illnesses, to reduce the stigma of having a mental disorder, and to serve those who are engaged in the struggle to manage and recover from depression or bipolar disorder.

With gratitude, **Jan Redford, Ph.D., Interim Executive Director**

## FACILITATORS

DBSA's success over the past seven years is due the dedication of the facilitators. The DBSA Board and Staff depend on these individuals who run each of the support groups weekly throughout the year. Their commitment to the participants is what makes the work of DBSA possible. Thank you to the following volunteer and professional facilitators.

Belinda Alman	Orine Davis	Alex Lederman	♥ Judy Rodriguez
Rex Alman	Katrina Dowdell	★ Gary Levering	Bill Rudolph
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Katrina Brauer	Christina Garcia	Buzz Owen	Joceil Southward
Mary Ann Brauer	Brent Hancharyk	Sandra Parish	Angie Stephens
Andy Brazda	★ Martha Hanson	★ Walt Parmer	Ken Sumner
Christina Brazda	Phil Hanson	Marilyn Patterson	Pat Sumner
Brittany Burch	❖ Bryan Howell	Nikki Perry	Sharon Throckmorton
Joseph Carleson	Sarah Hyde	Kayla Pickney	Faye Walker
★ Cat Chapman	Nancy Kahn	Michelle Plamondon	Cheryl Weiss
Mamta Chhabra	Danny Kennedy	♥ Freddie Porras	★ Ted Weiss
★ Linda Condon	Tom Kennedy	Catalina Prebish	
Roberta "Bobbie" Culbertson	Kendra Kornegay	Allison Price	
Shannon Cutshaw	Neil Krenzke	Chuck Pyle	
★ Lois Davis	Mary Kuskowski	Jim Rice	

★ *These facilitators are also DBSA Board Members*

♥ *Winner of 2011 Big Heart Award*

❖ *Winner of 2011 Rookie of the Year*

## DBSA Greater Houston

### Financial Information

January 1 – December 31, 2011

#### Source of Funds

Contributions:	
Corporate	\$ 9,434
Foundations	528,125
Individuals	182,859
Total Contributions	720,418
In-Kind Donations (Goods)	28,402
Interest on Accounts	523
Other Revenue	8,688
Total	<u>\$ 758,031</u>

#### Use of Funds

Personnel:	
Payroll Expenses	\$ 307,521
Contract Facilitators	113,067
Other Contract Labor	97,996
Restricted and Unrestricted Reserves	70,884
Rent and Facilities	36,975
Marketing, Printing, and Postage	55,454
Insurance	8,052
Office Expenses	28,040
Volunteer Support	3,402
Education and Training	1,058
Fundraising	2,901
Legal and Accounting	32,681
Total	<u>\$ 758,031</u>

# HOLDING on to HOPE

We are grateful to the following donors who generously supported our organization in 2011.

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## SHANNON CUTSHAW

My name is Shannon Cutshaw. I have bipolar II. In addition, I have rapid cycles – two days of depression followed by two days of mania.

I was diagnosed in 1997 with bipolar II. At the time, it was truly an eye opener for me and my husband. It also hit close to home. My mother suffers from classic bipolar disorder but is undiagnosed. I

grew up with all the severe ups and downs of my mother’s illness.

I always knew I was not “normal.” In fact, I am positive I have had a bipolar disorder since childhood. Recently, my younger brother was diagnosed as having the same illness. He was diagnosed but proceeds without a treatment plan in place. For me, this is a very difficult family issue.

With the help I received after my one and, hopefully, only hospital experience, I found I was able to develop a keen awareness of the triggers that control my moods. If there is a positive side to a hospital experience, I learned that anyone with any illness needs to be acutely aware of the moods they experience and to be responsible for owning them. These words came from the inpatient group therapist and made me realize I was in need of owning up to the fact that I could help myself more.

One of the outpatient suggestions was to find a therapist and doctor that would be better suited to my illness. It was also mentioned that I should go to a DBSA support group. At the time, my son was little and finding a sitter was going to be costly. We waited patiently to find a group close to home. Sure enough, a new group was formed to meet in my church. My husband and I went for the first time – I was nervous and unsure of what this group was or how it worked. We now have been attending regularly. Through these DBSA meetings, I have learned I don’t have to put up with a less than average therapist and doctor. It took a while, but I am now on my third psychiatrist and third therapist. I seem to have found the combination that works for me.

Our facilitator asked me if I would train to become the lead facilitator of our group. I was nervous and scared. However, I was honored and flattered to be considered for that leadership position.

I went through the training, and now I enjoy functioning as the lead facilitator. I love going to meetings every week. We all know, however, that some of us come back to group needing support to get back on track again.

I love it when the diagnosis and treatment become an “aha!” moment. The light bulb comes on, and you or the person you are trying to help finally “gets it” and knows how to go about getting help.

DBSA plays a big part in my life. I love the information on the website, the training sessions that are offered, the personal attention in group meetings, and the staff that is always helpful. I consider DBSA a major part of my personal support team.

As a facilitator, DBSA has helped me to become a person I never thought I would be. I am comfortable in my skin, bipolar and all, and with trying to help others. Normally, I am very shy, but never at DBSA meetings. Although I am a facilitator, understanding my illness and how to cope with it are essential for everyday life, and I feel that due to my experiences or the experiences of others in the group, I can offer hope when participants are struggling.



*“The hope, joy, and compassion of a DBSA group are strong, and most of us are able to hang on to the support we receive until the next week comes around.”*

*~ Shannon Cutshaw*



Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

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