



Celebrating March Brain Injury Awareness Month

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators

During March, the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) is featuring stories about the impact of brain injury on individuals and families, as well as State resources and initiatives developed to provide supports and assistance. This week, NASHIA features the story of Karen Keating -- mother and advocate. Have a story to tell? Send to Susan Vaughn at publicpolicy@nashia.org.



The Impact of Brain Injury on Family and Significant Others

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) not only affects the individual who receives it, but also impacts family members and friends who are often the caretakers after an individual sustains a TBI. Whether its a spouse, a partner, a parent(s), a sibling, another relative or friend, the person involved with the individual will find his or her role changes as he or she personally handles the impact of brain injury with regard to his/her loved one and how to proceed to help. Many will face his or her own grief or sense of loss with regard to the changes in the survivor. Yet, they may find increased responsibility for providing financial and emotional support to other family members and to the survivor. Recovery can take time. Families and significant others are generally the primary caregivers once rehabilitation is completed. It is these personal experiences that lead many to become advocates for funding, resources and assistance from private and public community, State and federal agencies and organizations. They, along with individuals with brain injury, are at the forefront in efforts to educate policymakers about the array of needs and issues that impact individuals, family, significant others, and caretakers after an individual sustains a brain injury in order for life to resume and function as normally as possible for all. This week's Spotlight highlights such an individual.



Meet Karen Keating -- Parent and Advocate!

Meet **Karen Keating**, family member, NASHIA member, Brain Injury Association of North Carolina (BIANC) member/employee and advocate extraordinaire. This week, Karen shared her story during the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force's Awareness Day Briefing held Tuesday. As a "fixture" at Awareness Day held each year in March in Washington, D.C., you may wonder what motivates her to make this journey every

year and to work so passionately in her State.

In 2002, Karen was working in an Asheville cardiologist office when she received a phone call informing her that her youngest son had been involved in a car crash and had sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI). "It was a whole new world," Keating says. "He was in a coma for ten days. When he woke up, his left side [was] paralyzed and the physicians couldn't tell me if and when he woke up what his cognitive function would be."

After receiving therapy, her son graduated with his high school class -- but his future was unclear. To help, Karen sought out assistance and guidance from the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina. She attended an open board meeting and was asked to become a board member. At that time, the support advocacy resource organization for individuals with brain injury and their families had offices in Charlotte, Raleigh and Greenville, but nothing west of Charlotte. Karen told BIANC officials that if they established an office in Asheville, her place of residence, she would quit her job and open it — which they and she did. Karen is now the community development coordinator for BIANC.



If you know Karen, she continually talks about the needs of all families -- their worries for now and for the future. *Who is going to provide supports to enable individuals to live independently when there is no one else; who is going to help caregivers who are often under such stress emotionally, physically and financially; who is going to help a person to get back to school or work after a brain injury ---* all the questions and worries that individuals and their families may have some point in time. Karen takes these issues to State policymakers as the State pursues ways to address these concerns. Thank you Karen!



Unmasking Brain Injury Project

Karen is also a strong supporter of the **Unmaking Brain Injury Project**, which a number of State government agencies, providers and state associations/alliances are participating in to promote awareness of the prevalence of brain injury; and to give survivors a voice and the means to educate others of what it's like to live with a brain injury. This traveling exhibition is a strong learning experience for everyone, students, parents and everyone in-between. The project was created by Hind's Feet Farm, North Carolina, and is partnering with the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina, which is the point of contact. Click [here](#) for more information.

Nebraska Promotes "Uniting for Brain Injury Awareness"



The Nebraska Brain Injury Advisory Council staff printed table tents, "I'm Uniting for Brain Injury," for members of the Advisory Council. Pictured above are front row center, Nancy Coffmann, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and

Visually Impaired; back row left to right: Kristen Larsen, Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; ML Lehman, Educational Unit #16; Heather Leschinsky; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Carla Lasley, Nebraska VR; and Keri Bennett (far right), NE Brain Injury Program Director and member of the NASHIA Board of Directors. Taking the picture was Nancy Noha, who designed the "I'm Uniting for Brain Injury" table tents/logo.

National Association of State Head Injury Administrators | PO Box 1878, Alabaster, AL 35007