



Press Release

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Ambassador Program Increases Awareness of Brain Injury on Cape Cod

The statistics tell a sobering story of the prevalence of traumatic brain injury in our country, but the personal stories of two women from Cape Cod are capturing the attention of civic groups in southeastern Massachusetts. Sharyn Lindsay and Tracy Tarvers, Ambassadors for the Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA), recently spoke at the **Hyannis Kiwanis Club**. Ambassadors are volunteer speakers who have either sustained a brain injury or have a loved one with a brain injury. They all tell their stories to increase awareness and help others avoid this devastating tragedy.

“Sharyn and Tracy are both strong and brave women who taught us that even after a tragedy happens, you can never give up,” said Brian D Morrison, Vice President of the Hyannis Kiwanis Club. “The night was very inspiring.”

Sharyn Lindsay of **Wellfleet** spoke of her son Caleb, who was once a successful young businessman, until a skateboarding accident nearly took his life in 2007. Caleb, who was 25 years old at the time, was holding onto the side of a friend’s truck while sketching on his skateboard. The board caught under the rear tire, lifting Caleb up in the air, and he landed on his head.

“He didn’t have a scratch on his entire body, but his head was split open like a ripe cantaloupe. Caleb was not wearing a helmet,” said Sharyn. Caleb was first given a 7 percent chance of living and spent six months in the hospital. Once out of the hospital, physical, occupational and speech therapy became the norm of the week’s events. Caleb is blind in one eye, deaf in one ear, and has lost his short-term memory. He has also lost most of his friends, but the hardest part for Sharyn is “that Caleb remembers who he was before the accident and cannot quite figure out how to return to that person”.

“I am speaking to you today in the hope that I am able to help even one other human being avoid the pain we have lived each day since Caleb’s accident. Then I will feel something good has come out of his tragedy. I have set my intention to no longer let brain injury be the silent epidemic.” Sharyn, who was recently honored with a first place Toastmaster’s prize for the Cape Cod region, is described as “inspirational.”

Tracy Tarvers of New Bedford wheeled herself in front of the audience and spoke very candidly about her accident thirteen years ago that left her a quadriplegic. Tracy, who lived and worked in **Truro** at the time of her accident, always wore a seat belt except this one time. She was hit from behind on Route 6 and suffered a spinal cord injury and a traumatic brain injury in the accident. Tracy spent seven months in recovery at Spaulding

Rehabilitation Hospital and spoke of how quickly she was “shut off, closed down, left without the ability to live a normal life.” Although she still needs assistance with all aspects of her daily living, her life has changed in a positive direction. She has written a book, paints, writes poetry, and volunteers at schools. She speaks in BIA-MA’s Brains at Risk Program as well as for the Ambassador Program.

“I would give anything to have simply put my seatbelt on that day. Do yourself a favor and wear your seatbelt,” Tracy urged. “You will be doing a great service informing all others how wearing a seatbelt could prevent them from having to maneuver for the rest of their lives with the use of a wheelchair.”

The Ambassador Program focuses on injury prevention and education for all ages, and is tailored to individual audiences. Each Ambassador’s story is unique and puts a personal face on the issue of brain injury. If your organization is interested in having Tracy and/or Sharyn speak, please contact Kelly Buttiglieri, coordinator of BIA-MA’s Ambassador Program, at 508-475-0032 or email kbuttiglieri@biama.org.

The Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts (BIA-MA) is a private, non-profit organization that provides support to brain injury survivors and their families, offers programs to prevent brain injuries, and educates the public on the risks and impact of brain injury. The Association also advocates for funding for support services and for legislation to prevent brain injuries, including seat belt and helmet laws. For information and resources about brain injury on Cape Cod, contact BIA-MA’s southeastern regional office at 1-888-607-7678 or email biamase@biama.org. You may also www.biama.org.

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