INSIDE—
• Note to Self
• Making the World a Better Place
• Brain Injury Awareness Month
• Kevin Kling on Unmasking
... and More
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Experts in brain injury prevention, research and recovery.

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Mission
The mission of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance is to raise awareness and enhance the quality of life for all people affected by brain injury.

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Editorial Policy
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Welcome Mind Matters readers,

We recently received a message on our Facebook page that put forth an interesting question: *what can I do to give back during Brain Injury Awareness Month?*

This started a conversation among a lot of the staff. You might think that after all these years we’d be able to produce a simple and straightforward answer to that question, but there is no one answer. Not because there isn’t a lot to give, but because there is so much.

Each of us is capable of giving in our own personal ways and with our own personal abilities. Giving can range from throwing a gala fundraising event to checking in on a neighbor. The brain injury community has needs ranging all along that spectrum. And, as we always say, everyone has something to share.

If you’re comfortable with words, you can write something to share on social media: a personal story or experience with brain injury. Or, write a letter to your local paper about brain injury and the importance of brain injury awareness.

If you have an online crafting group, consider making Unmasking Brain Injury masks and sharing them on social media along with your brain injury story. It’s a good way to get the conversation started and help people to understand your experiences.

Speaking of Unmasking and giving back, we have two features this issue celebrating the fifth anniversary of our Unmasking Brain Injury in Minnesota project. Hannah Sipe and Karyn Roesler are two mask makers with a passion for giving back. See how two different people in two different circumstances have used their talents to connect with their communities.

Also, join us for a look back at Unmasking, from its inception to today. It’s been an incredible and fruitful project that we hope to continue in the future.

And finally, if you’re looking to give back to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance, remember that your donation is always accepted and appreciated. Just visit braininjurymn.org/donate to give what you can. Every dollar counts and every gift helps.

Thank you so much for reading,

*David King*
This was written as an assignment for a writing class. The assignment was: “Write a letter to someone who has recently passed.” I wrote to my pre-injury self.

I’m glad that semi-truck ended your life. Many see it differently, but I know the truth. I know the paths you were on. I know where they would have led you. Life had been too easy for you. Yup, you heard me. Life had been too easy for you, ever since day one.

You invested zero effort and got huge returns. You enjoyed school because it was fun. Other people studied, you got good grades. Even in high school, your junior year, you got straight F’s first semester and straight A’s the second, all to show off what a game it was.

You lettered in football and then quit the team before the end of the season, twice. You got your prom date pregnant, twice. You committed federal level felonies against your school, twice.

You were seventeen, renting a house, raising a family and taking night classes. After six months you walked away. A few years and cool adventures later you got a job in a factory and were suddenly making stupid amounts of money. Then you married the most wonderful woman in the world.

You knew it would not last. You knew it could not last. You couldn’t keep putting out zero effort and getting fantastic returns. It was starting to catch up to you. You were unbalanced. It is not good to live that way. Life was a high stakes game of roulette that you kept on winning.

When that semi-truck hit you, it was a metaphor. You were finally stopped cold by a metaphor. The balance swung back. And now, I am here putting Humpty Dumpty together again. With none of the innate talents that made your life so easy. My life is fraught with incommensurate results for herculean efforts. You would never have lived this life if this is what it meant to be you. I tried to walk away once, like you, but it didn’t work for me. Apparently, that is not my fate. I chose to turn around and face the music.

But you want to know what? I did it. I overcame it. Me. Pathetic little me. A hint and a whisp of you. I have done what you never could have. I have gotten further than you ever would have. Don’t you dare take pride in me! You died when that truck hit you. You laid down and died. I rose and went on to do what you could not. After ten days in a coma, I rose. I faced a world where nothing, absolutely nothing, came easy. I dangled from a noose and every molecule of air I breathed was by sheer unmitigated will.

No, I do not miss you. Your time was up.

Go on. Go…(sigh).

I got this.
As a teenager, Hannah Sipe had to deal with the fallout of multiple concussions that not only took her away from the sports she loved but also isolated her from her friends and her developing social life. Despite all of this, she was determined to continue with school and to obtain a degree in physical therapy.

But life has a way of going in unexpected directions.

Today, Hannah is still firmly committed to the idea of helping others. As a child, these values were instilled in her by her family and her church. A good life is a life worth sharing, and so, despite her disability, Hannah was fully prepared to give back.

And her presence in the Minnesota Brian Injury Alliance speakers bureau and at Alliance events really demonstrated her dedication to that ideal. It was rare to not see Hannah attending a Walk or an Unmaking event. Eventually, she became more than a presence as she started her own fundraiser “Cranium Carnival” to try and get her peers more engaged in brain injury awareness.

But, gradually, Hannah’s health began limiting her participation. Starting with her leg, Hannah began losing muscle strength in her limbs. Doctors were puzzled as to the cause, but Hannah found herself having to pull back from many of her activities as she worked on maintaining her physical strength. Soon, her wheelchair became a common presence as it assisted her in navigating the world.

Suddenly, Hannah found herself a college junior having to completely reevaluate her future.

“I really did want to finish out my Exercise Science degree,” she says. “But due to muscle weakness, it became clear that was not really an option anymore. And I had a midlife crisis at 20 years old. And went crying to my advisor and said, ‘I don’t know what I’m gonna do with my life!’ I talked with my advisor, my parents and everybody in my life to figure out what I wanted to do. And the thing that just kept jumping into my mind was child life. So it seemed obvious that is what I should change to. But unfortunately, St. Kate’s [St. Catherine University] does not have a Child Life program. So I had to build it from the ground up and tell them what classes I wanted to take and why and how they could help me in the future as a child life specialist.”

Having created a major from the ground up, Hannah then spent an extra year and a half completing her degree. Upon graduation, however, Hannah found her life moving in yet another unexpected direction.

A crafter all her life, Hannah launched an Instagram blog, Coping Through Craft (instagram.com/coping.through.craft), with the intention of reviewing crafting supplies as a person with a disability.

“Craft products are quite expensive,” she says. “You can easily drop $500 getting a few products or tools. I know I have bought products that I can’t use, because they just aren’t made for somebody with a disability. And so I really take the time to look at these products, try these products, think about how somebody with a different disability than me would get on with using them. And then I post those reviews so hopefully people don’t buy products that they can’t use and waste that money.”

Without planning on it, Hannah had created a resource that people really needed. And as word of her blog grew, so did her followers. Hannah began hearing from more and more people about their experiences with inaccessible crafting supplies and finding more needs to address.

“What I hear a lot from people is, ‘We do need this.’ ‘I wish there was a stamp who showed somebody who also uses

I recently designed some stamps with inclusive images and made my first card with them. I have not been able to find any stamps with people with disabilities represented, and I strongly believe that everyone deserves to be represented so I decided to do it myself.

By Phil Gonzales, Public Awareness Associate
a walker, because all these stamps are people standing and I can’t stand.’ Or, ‘What tools do you use for this because I can’t do this technique, because I can’t find an accessible tool.’ And that’s really where I get the gratification from rather than seeing my followers grow.”

In addition, Hannah began blogging about her passion for adaptive climbing at Coping Through Climbing (instagram.com/coping.through.climbing). These two blogs started attracting more and more followers as people saw their interests and abilities reflected back at them.

“A lot of my child life major was psychology,” Hannah says. “And I feel like that helps me a lot in my blogs, just to kind of understand the mental process of coping and coping mechanisms and just trying to kind of listen to what people are saying, rather than to assume what they’re saying.”

Hannah doesn’t only review crafting supplies, she is also a card maker who tries to put a bit of herself into each card she makes. In a way, it’s an extension of the mask she made five years ago.

“Coping Through Craft really started at the Unmasking Brain Injury event,” she recalls. “It was therapeutic for me to kind of put my thoughts and feelings on my mask. And it could be whatever I wanted. Whatever I felt in that moment was right. There’s no wrongs in crafting or art. And it was just so therapeutic to me and I really wanted to help other people find that as well.”

And what does Hannah mean when she uses the word “cope?”

“I would say it’s something that helps you both understand and accept the situation that you’re in,” she says. “But that doesn’t mean that you have to accept it right then. Coping mechanisms help you leave the world of acceptance because it’s healthy for us to have pity party days; to have days where we just want to cry and lay in bed in a dark room. I’m all for those. I have those! I just had one the other day where I just said to my parents, ‘Can I have a pity party tonight?’ And they said, ‘Absolutely.’ And so, yeah, you don’t have to accept it all the time. And that’s where your coping mechanisms do come into place. They help you get back to that world of acceptance; of understanding; of dealing with this situation that you’ve been given.”

Hannah’s parents agreed to let Hannah take a year off to build her blog into a business. She hopes to be able to focus on developing crafting adaptive tools for adults, since most adaptive crafting tools are designed for children. And, many aren’t built to the standards of non-adaptive tools. She also wants to design more inclusive stamps because “I feel like everybody should be represented and deserves a chance to be represented.”

In addition to all of this, Hannah recently got engaged to be married to her fiancé Paul with a date set in 2022.

No matter what life has thrown at her, Hannah continues to take her own life experiences, her education and values and put them towards something she’s always worked towards: making the world a better place.

“I feel like that a lot comes down to the school I went to as well,” she says, “St. Kate’s is a liberal arts school, and I was taught to think critically and to fill the need that we see in the world and to be the change we wish to see. And so I love putting those critical thinking skills in place. I mean, I paid a lot of money for them, so I might as well!”
The Minnesota Brain injury Alliance took a major role in putting together the 2021 Brain Injury Awareness Month Campaign for our United States Brain Injury Alliance chapters with a relevancy to our current world.

2020 was a year of sudden isolation around the country. Now, in 2021, we’re able to reflect on not only the things we lost, but also the things we’ve learned from these unfortunate circumstances. The concept of the 2021 Annual Campaign is to focus on the positives of our altered world, without ignoring the difficulties people have faced. While the pandemic exposed many of the weaknesses in our systems, it also revealed many of the strengths in our communities.

Survivors talked about the impact the pandemic has had on them, but in a positive way. How, for some, the world slowed down so they could catch up. Classes were online, they could work from home at their own speed and take on a job they might not be able to do in person but could do by phone.

As isolating as brain injury can be, many people found themselves uniquely prepared for a world in which life had slowed down to a more adaptive pace; where large crowds were suddenly discouraged; and where meetings and classes no longer required exhausting and stressful travel times and medical appts became telehealth. Brain injury recovery also encourages people to seek the positive in every new challenge. How has the world of social distancing impacted people in your brain injury community? What positives have we found in the world of COVID-19?

We don’t want to diminish the impact social distancing has had on people, or any other negative outcomes of the pandemic. Rather, we want to celebrate resiliency, innovation and community. We want to say, “Yes, we’re in a bad situation and here’s what we’ve done to make it better. Here’s what we’ve learned about ourselves. Here’s the silver lining in this dark cloud.” Check out our Facebook and Twitter pages to hear stories about individuals and how they “Celebrated Resiliency” and please let us know your story about how COVID-19 impacted you in 2020 and how you celebrated resiliency.
Part of the fifth anniversary of Unmasking Brain Injury in Minnesota involved catching up with some of the participants in the original round of mask making events. One of those participants was local storyteller Kevin Kling who created his mask at Clay Squared in Northeast Minneapolis.

“I think there was so much to that mask project, and using the arts, because the arts get behind our mirrors that we hold up as protective devices. The arts slip behind that, they get past the sentries, and they bring forth what’s hidden in that world. And I think that that is one of the crucial elements to the arts.

“One of the things they talk about with post traumatic stress is that we never leave the first day it happened. And one of the things about storytelling they found is, every time you tell a story, you change it, whether you know it or not. And what we’re doing is we’re slowly making that story, something that’s in our own vernacular, something we can handle. It really is a coping mechanism. And any time you suffer any kind of loss, whether it’s a part of a limb, or a person, any loss, you have to go through a grieving process. And people think of grieving as being stuck. And it’s just the opposite. It’s actually movement. You’re actually moving toward the day you can handle it. But it is a difficult process. But I think storytelling is really a way of moving through the process, of creating a way that you are in control of something that wants to control you.

“I had a therapist tell me, she said, ‘You’ve already done a lot of the work just because you’re a storyteller. And the fact that you’ve been able to tell this story has already moved you ahead in many ways.’ And, I do feel that way. A lot of times, we come to a point where we’re trying to recover something of ourselves that is lost. One of the most profound days I remember was going to the Mayo Clinic, and the doctors there telling me, ‘We won’t be able to bring your arm back. We’ve done everything we can.’ And I couldn’t believe how I left feeling light. It didn’t destroy me. In fact, it was a completely opposite experience. Because now I knew who I was, and who I could go into life as. Now, my life was moving forward. I wasn’t trying to go back and recover something that I was. And I think that’s an important thing, to know when that mask was. It’s a really important reference, because that’s where you were at that time. And I think to be able to go back and look at that mask and say, “No, that’s not who I am now,” is huge in a person’s development.

One of my favorite myths is that of Hephaestus. He’s one of the seven, you know, main Greek gods and Hephaestus shattered his legs. He was thrown off Mount Olympus as a baby and dragged himself into the underworld and created things. He created the chariot that Apollo used to go across the sky and Cupid’s arrows and all these things. And because of that he was reinstated as a god. So he was reinstated through his craft, and the arts literally brought him out of hell. And I think that’s the same with anyone with any form of disability is that when you can create it brings you up out of the trappings and the shadows.”

Kevin Kling on UNMASKING

By Phil Gonzales, Public Awareness Associate
In 2007, Karyn Roesler first began experiencing the effects of Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome or WKS.

“I started forgetting things,” she says.

And then, one day on the phone with her sister, she started exhibiting behaviors that her sister mistook for stroke symptoms.

“Wow. And off I went!”

Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome is named for two overlapping pathologies: Wernicke encephalopathy and alcoholic Korsakoff syndrome. Both were discovered and named in the 19th Century. As Wernicke encephalopathy frequently results in Korsakoff syndrome, the two became intertwined and are now referred to primarily as Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome.

Basicallly, due to regular consumption of alcohol to the neglect of proper nutrition, the brain receives far too little thiamin—a necessary vitamin for brain functioning—and begins to atrophy, resulting in ocular and mental impairment and, if left undiagnosed and untreated, permanent impairment or death.

Karyn was sent to Vinland Center for detox and treatment. It was there she learned she had WKS and began the slow process of weaning herself from her alcohol addiction and addressing the damage it had done to her brain.

“I went to live with my sister for a while afterwards,” she says. “And we got all the medical stuff straightened out, all the things that I’ve been letting go for so long. And then I got into Sojourn.”

Sojourn is an organization that provides care for adults with specific care needs. They operate several group homes in communities around Minnesota. So, Karyn was placed into a group home and set about regaining her independence.

“It was kind of a process of learning how to live again,” Kareyn recalls. “I realized I’m not going to start re-igniting my brain just by sitting in this house and going and sitting at the day center. So I started venturing out and taking the bus because, you know, you have to figure it out in your head and all that kind of stuff. And then I did some volunteer work, which was good, it gets you back into a routine. Then I decided after a couple years that I was well enough to move back out on my own, much to the chagrin of everybody that knew me. And of course, I started drinking again. And so then they shot me right
back into treatment, and back into Sojourn. And that’s where I’ve been ever since!”

In addition to her detox, Karyn had to overcome the physical impact of her injury.

“The lack of the vitamin B, I think, in my body that caused my brain injury also caused my legs to give out,” she says. “So, once I got back on track with eating food and vitamins, I was able to go from the wheelchair to a walker. And then finally to a cane. And when I moved to Sojourn, the owner, Sally said, ‘You know what, Karen, we’re going to get rid of that cane.’ And so she sent me to physical therapy. And that’s really the only physical therapy I had was just learning how to walk without a cane.”

In her time at Sojourn, Karyn has worked through a program called Supported Employment. Coincidentally, before her brain injury, Karyn was a welfare to work employment specialist, working directly with clients, getting them jobs, going to job fairs and meeting with employers and encouraging them to employ her clients. This history helped her when she began seeking her own employment.

“I had a good base of how to look for a job,” she says, “and websites to go to. I would go to the library every day and get on the computers and apply for jobs. And just having my resume done and knowing how to interview and things like that.”

Karyn first encountered the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance when her sister contacted us for resources immediately following her diagnosis. But, Karyn’s first real experience with the Alliance was as a part of Sojourn’s participation in the Unmasking Brain Injury In Minnesota project.

“I split my mask in half, and it was pre-brain injury, and post-brain injury and like life differences,” Karyn says.

Karyn happened to be making her mask on a day Jed Schlegelmilch was capturing footage for his documentary “Unmasking” and she ended up in the film.

“We went up to see it in Brooklyn Center,” she says. “To watch the movie and listen to the speaker [Jordan Leopold].”

And now, five years later, Karyn finds herself in a very different place.

“I have to write a lot of things down or make reminders,” she says, “and really be mindful with paperwork. I have to keep more organized than I normally am with this brain injury. Because I’ll forget stuff, you know. And so even just to file something away, then a month later I could be like, now, where did I put that? You know?”

“But, I have a job. And, I’m hoping to go back once we’re allowed to go back to work. But I work at Presbyterian Homes in the kitchen, in the dining area, as a server. And I really enjoy that. And I’m eventually hoping to get more independent, although I have it pretty good right now. The only thing I don’t like about where I live is that it’s so far away from family. So, I’d like to have an independent apartment but in a Presbyterian Home setting. You know, where there’s other people and you can go eat your meal with other people and see people. Because isolation is the big worry with me, so that’s why no one’s recommending I move out on my own.”

In spite of her ongoing symptoms, Karyn has found a way to stay active and engaged in her community. Perhaps her brain injury slowed her down, but it hasn’t stood in the way of her spirit and her ongoing drive to help others.
Support the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Today

If you believe in a Minnesota where everyone recognizes brain injury’s causes and effects; where all individuals living with brain injury are encouraged to realize their full potential; and where the greater community recognizes the intrinsic value of all people living with brain injury, we hope you’ll give to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance today.

Over the past year, the Alliance has had to completely rethink its operations, moving the majority of its services online. While it was challenging to transition to conducting our classes, conferences, events and outreach entirely over the internet, our team made it work.

However, while these efforts kept us afloat, the entire nonprofit sector, including the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance, has been facing fiscal hardship. Our financial performance has been strongly impacted by the slowing economy.

We need our community’s help to continue our mission, and we need your support more than we ever have before.

Please donate to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance today. A gift of $50, $100, $250, or whatever is meaningful to you. YOU will make a difference. Give online at braininjurymn.org/donate.

Thank you for your commitment to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance and for your continued support!
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Spring 2021
Renewed Push To Pass Cassy’s Law

Seven years ago, Cassy suffered a major stroke after complications from a hernia operation. A brand new mom only months before the surgery, she awoke from a coma having lost her leg and not understanding what had happened. The damage to Cassy’s frontal lobe caused major deficits in her sense of consequences and inhibition controls. These deficits have resulted in behaviors that have catapulted her family into the criminal justice system. Unfortunately the court system did not take this into consideration. She was sent to prison where she has been unable to access supports that would help her manage and deal with her behaviors long-term.

As a new two-year legislative session begins, the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance has recommitted to passing Cassy’s Law. We hope to break the criminal justice and corrections cycle many people with brain injury, stroke and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder get caught up in. It requires neuropsychological examinations be conducted and considered by judges prior to sentencing in order to provide relevant treatment and management options. Hearings are currently happening at the Capitol where we are trying to balance the cost of the exams: figuring out how to pay for them and determining how to get help to those most vulnerable in our current system.

Tim Barry, Cassy’s father, has been leading the effort to educate policymakers and anybody who will listen about how this endless cycle has impacted his family. His mission is to raise awareness about the gaps and failures in the human services and criminal justice systems and he hopes to ensure this never happens to anybody again.

Legislators are supportive of our efforts. They recognize the pain and injustice this causes and seem committed to change. We are hopeful we can navigate a political path forward. Even though it may cost money upfront, preventing a lifetime of incarceration will save Minnesota money in the long-term and will provide hope to families and individuals suffering in the current status quo.

Public Relations Efforts Help Hospitals Adjust To Pandemic

When the pandemic first hit Minnesota, the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance was concerned that we would see a large drop in referrals to Resource Facilitation. While there was an initial dip, health service professionals across the state stepped up to the challenge and the referral numbers recovered. With all the obstacles we have faced, this is huge and we hope what was learned in 2020 is a launch pad into supporting brain injury and stroke individuals in 2021.

- 2020 saw an increase in hospital use of our online referral form
- Video meetings facilitated collaboration and advocacy
- Virtual support groups provided much-needed interaction in our communities
- Online Conferences and Continuing Education Sessions allowed professionals to keep up with brain injury and stroke trends and developments
- Virtual awareness walks spread awareness and offered a sense of community

Resource Facilitation participants were grateful for the check in calls. They helped to combat loneliness and isolation while helping them access supports they never thought they would need until the pandemic hit. Resource Facilitation also helped participants to navigate the telehealth/e-visit changes that occurred over the past year.

A couple of our partners and champions really stood out and have gone above and beyond in 2020. We would like to publicly recognize and thank them.

Regions Hospital and Neuroscience Center has been a great example of consistency and innovation. They have built referring patients to Resource Facilitation directly into their standard of care for patients involved in the rehab program. This creates a consistent and ongoing base of referrals. Additionally, their leaders are continually asking ‘Who are we missing and how can we help them get connected?’ They invite ideas and conversations about new approaches to catch different patient groups.

St. Cloud CentraCare staff have been reviewing how they can support their brain injury and stroke patients at discharge and took time to look at how they approach Resource Facilitation referrals and how they might be able to increase the number of patients that leave the hospital connected to the Resource Facilitation program.

We encourage each hospital to continue to consider how they might be able to help those affected by brain injury and stroke get connected to a network of support as they journey through their recovery. Our Public Relations staff are happy to continue to meet with professionals over phone or video call to discuss ways to help patients get connected and to raise awareness about brain injury and stroke. Thanks for all you do.

Contact Jeff Nachbar, jeffn@braininjurymn.org to get involved in advocacy.

Contact Katrina Meyer, katrinam@braininjurymn.org for public relations support.
Celebrating Unmasking Brain Injury

For five years the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Unmasking event has given Minnesotans with brain injury the opportunity to tell their stories. Sharing our stories is one of the best ways we have of healing. It gives unlimited opportunities for sharing what we’ve been through, educating others about who we are and how brain injury can turn lives upside down. A mask allows us to pour out who we are in amounts we can manage and that others can understand. Masks are universal and represent who we are and what we want to reveal to others.

We think of masks as things we hide behind, but they allow us to share the parts of ourselves that can be invisible or hard for others to see. Most of us are not great story tellers but our stories are far more powerful than we realize and we may need an assist like a mask to help us tell that story. The more ways we have to tell our stories the more opportunity we have to heal and eventually take back control of our stories and write our own ending.

Unmasking Brain Injury has been a huge success by allowing thousands of people with brain injury to step into the light and share with others their journeys of struggle and healing. They’ve been ambassadors to educating others about the effects of brain injury. Knowing who the person was before the brain injury and who the person is after the brain injury can ensure we personalize what we do in helping with the healing and recovery of each individual.

Unmasking has been an inspiration to everyone involved, a huge success in sharing previously unheard personal stories and is still going strong. On behalf of all the professionals who have been trained and taught by the very people we serve, thank you to everyone who has helped to unmask brain injury whether through the Unmasking project or your own way to tell your very important story!

— by Erwin Concepcion

I first became a Citizen’s Advocate with the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance during the 2016 legislative session. At first it was a little overwhelming for me due to all of the noise and stimulation at the Capitol, but by 2017 I was becoming a regular fixture for Tuesdays at the Capitol.

During one of our Tuesdays several staff members from the Alliance were present to help us create our masks for the Unmasking Brain Injury project. I was hesitant at first, because I just wasn’t feeling very artsy that day. But I knew it was an important project and made my way to the room to work on my mask.

As soon as I started painting it with some pink and purple (my two favorite colors) and added some sparkles to it, I was having a really good time. It was actually a bit therapeutic. I had been a writer and a photographer all of my life and was good at expressing myself through these two art forms; however, creating the mask opened a whole new chapter for me.

In February of 2017 the Alliance had an exhibit at the Capitol for Disability Awareness Day and I was briefly interviewed by Channel 5 news to share about my mask. My take-away message was that while my injury may be invisible, I am NOT! This has turned into my mantra, and I even began an awareness campaign of my own because of it: #NOTINVISIBLE.

A few months later there was an exhibit at Earle Brown Heritage Center with a display of over 1,000 masks made by Minnesota brain injury survivors. It was so powerful to walk through the exhibit and read everyone’s stories, as well as see my own hanging in all its pink and purple sparkly glory.

The project gave voice to survivors who may not be able to express themselves more clearly than through art. It gave the public an opportunity to pull back the curtain and see what brain injury means to those living with it every single day. Through the unmasking project, I hope we are able to create a bridge between those living with brain injury and the community at large to help them better understand the daily struggles of life with a TBI.

How are you going to share YOUR story with the world?

—Amy Zellmer
the functional neurology center™

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