INSIDE —
• Loss of Identity
• Raising the Bar
... and More
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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.

Editorial Policy
Mind Matters is published quarterly by the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance. The editor reserves the right to edit submitted materials for style and space. The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance does not endorse, support, or recommend any specific method, facility, treatment, program, or support group for persons with brain injury and their families. Please call for advertising rates.

Letters to the Editor Policy
Letters to the Editor should be limited to 300 words. Letters may be edited for spelling, grammar and length. In order for letters to be considered, please include your name, address and the daytime phone number of the author. The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance reserves the right to refuse letters for publication, and submission of material does not guarantee publication. Opinions expressed in Letters to the Editor are solely those of the author and do not represent the opinions or positions of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance.
Welcome Mind Matters readers,

A few weeks back, a friend of ours told us that we needed to talk more about our accomplishments. We needed to celebrate our successes and share them with the public. “After all,” they said, “the Alliance is always encouraging the people it works with to do that. Why can’t the organization itself?”

So, allow us an issue to share some of the many successes of our Resource Facilitation program. Resource Facilitation is a free phone-based program that connects people affected by brain injury with resources in their area. It’s a very simple premise that has grown in scope over more than a decade and a half. Thousands of individuals, their family members and loved ones have been through the two-year program and discovered it to be invaluable in their lives after brain injury.

But, just like there are as many different kinds of brain injury as there are people in the world, there are also as many different ways and reasons to use Resource Facilitation as there are brain injuries. So, rather than tell you myself how incredible a program it is, we’re going to spend a large part of this issue sharing different success stories from Resource Facilitation. They aren’t all dramatic stories. Success isn’t always Earth-changing. Success can be as simple as filling out a form or making an appointment. But, each success is important, and we want to honor them in this issue.

We also want to fill you in on what’s been happening with our advocates, so Public Policy will let you know about that. And, the Walk for Thought? We’ve got an update for you. As well as our usual contributions from Mike Strand and our Grey Matters writers.

Finally, it’s the end of the year and I would love to see you make a donation to the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance as part of your year-end gift giving. It’s been a tough couple of years for us. We want to have the resources to create more successes like the ones you are going to read about. If you can, donate at braininjurymn.org or send your donations to

Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance
2277 Highway 36 West, Suite 200
Roseville, MN 55113

Thank you for your continued support,
David King
What does it mean to lose one’s sense of identity, if one views identity itself as fluid?
We all have evolving identities.

Brain plasticity is a much talked about subject, but what about persona plasticity? The very structure and nature of your identity changes over time. Like a many faceted jewel with shifting kaleidoscopic colors.

To stay with this analogy, awaking with a brain injury is like finding your jewel of persona suddenly deeply scratched and marred. Disfigured from what it was.

It takes time and effort to re-envision this new jewel. The dancing prisms are still there. It takes time to shed the old habits and memories of the past jewel, and it takes effort to acquire a new appreciation for the different beauty of this new jewel.

Brain injury recovery, as slow as it may seem, is usually faster than growing up... or growing old. Our personality changes as we age, but the speed of recovery can find us changing at a rate almost unimaginable. Getting to know, and coming to terms with, this new you, is a challenge. It is as exciting and uncomfortable as adolescence.

When I ask myself, “What kind of person am I?” the answer is usually found in reflecting on my past actions. With brain injury, I don’t have that option.

Or do I?

More than most folks, I can say, “That has been me, but now I am this.” I am no longer chained to my past. I have slipped loose from those bonds. I can choose to be however I want, and I want to be _______! Such becoming is never easy, if it was, everyone would be doing it.

I can be a victim and accept that I am only what I have lost, or I can be a hero and strive towards what I am becoming!

Step one in brain injury recovery was understanding what I had lost.
Step two was accepting what I had lost.
Step three was deciding I would be better.

Step four was identifying my assets.
Step five was deciding what bothered me most, what needed attention?
Step six was finding a way to address it and incorporating that into a routine.
Step seven was oscillating between steps five and six until I was satisfied, I was doing my best.
Step eight was to forgive myself for any failures, because I was doing my best.

Deciding what bothered me most was usually obvious, but I frequently had to carve it down into smaller pieces that could be handled by a simple routine. For example, the thing that bothered me most was my difficulty in walking; I was out of shape and my dizziness made the focus difficult to maintain.

I decided that would be best overcome by walking every day. I started by walking a block and back. After ten years I ran a ten-mile race! I was still dizzy, so I started doing Yoga. I became a yoga instructor. My dizziness never went away, even after thirty years, but I manage it much better.

None of my solutions or routines solved any of my problems, but I was addressing them. I was doing all that I could. Along the way, I stopped feeling like I wasn’t me anymore. I was too busy becoming me. That is life. Life is what happens on your way to reaching your goals.
Wendy Hoffman has been a part of the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Resource Facilitation program since she started here in 2007. At that point, the program was only about five years old and Wendy found herself assigned to Central Minnesota, where she grew up.

“So yeah, so I’ve been doing this for quite a while,” she says, “and now I have been the Resource Facilitation manager since the end of June. So that’s a whole new learning curve for me.”

When Resource Facilitation kicked off in 2002, it was the beginning of a project that was really the culmination of everything the Alliance had been building towards since 1984. Formed as a collaboration between families and providers, the Alliance had always intended to be a hub for services for people living with brain injury. Resource Facilitation was exactly that thing. A partnership with the Minnesota Department of Health, Resource Facilitation is a free, two-year telephone support program that provides education and connection to supports and services to assist people throughout Minnesota in navigating life after brain injury.

The way the program originally worked was a team of Resource Facilitators would each be assigned to a specific section of Minnesota. Then, a person calling in would be assigned to the Facilitator who covered their area. Today, things have changed.

“We started talking about, would it make sense to have two teams instead of eight people who have different areas of the state,” Wendy says. “The idea behind that would be that we could manage the caseload better.”

Though Facilitators had to familiarize themselves with larger areas of the state, it now meant that each Facilitator would have a more equal number of people assigned to them. Because, when you join Resource Facilitation, you may be with the same Facilitator for years. It’s a relationship that has helped thousands of Minnesotans in thousands of different ways. Resource Facilitation has become, over the years, a national concept adopted by Virginia, Florida, Iowa, Colorado, Nebraska, Alaska, and many other states.

“Resource Facilitation is a proactive support program,” Wendy says, “which means we’ll call you and check in with you. If you need us, you can call us anytime. But we will make sure to check in with you over two years, every six months or so. And we’re here for whatever you need. So it might just be that you need somebody to talk to about what’s going on. And validation that you’re not crazy. That this is for real. This is what happens when brain injuries happen. And oftentimes it will build from there. And there isn’t really a limit on what we might help people with. One of my favorite stories is the guy who called me and said, ‘You know, you always helped me with everything, I know you can help me get a fishing license!’ And we did get him a fishing license! And that has nothing to do with brain injury but it was important to him because he was disabled, he couldn’t afford it, and you actually can get a discounted fishing license. So that was a pretty cool experience for me.”

And it’s these stories, Fishing License stories, that are really what Resource Facilitation is about. It’s not always huge and flashy triumphs, although those do happen. It’s mostly small successes; but those successes add up and make living your best life a little more possible. What follows are a few of those stories. Everyone finds a different way to use Resource Facilitation – there are as many ways to do that as there are brain injuries – and everyone has a story to tell.

**Margaret**

Brain injury shows up in eighty percent of domestic violence cases. For people who have experienced domestic violence throughout their lives, the severity of the brain injury increases exponentially.

Margaret has a history of brain injuries from domestic violence, in addition to multiple brain injuries related to motor vehicle crashes and other accidents. Her brain injuries have left her off balance and with blurred vision. And, because of these issues, she finds herself unable to do the things that bring her joy – riding her bike and arts and crafts.

Margaret contacted Carla in Resource Facilitation almost two years ago seeking help getting connected with Hennepin Healthcare’s TBI Clinic and also obtaining a bus pass. Over multiple calls, Carla helped Margaret connect with Hennepin Healthcare and then keep track of her appointments. Margaret would frequently use Carla as a sounding board and a friendly ear, as Margaret encountered new setbacks and also as someone to listen as Margaret celebrated her victories.

“Carla has always helped me out,” Margaret says, “She’s very friendly. And she’s always helped me out with what’s going on. I had problems with rides and, you know, medical stuff. She helped me figure out which way I’m going even though my brain is kind of fuzzy.”
“I’ve never been in this situation in my life. And then to feel like I was being thrown under the bus? It’s like quicksand. Every time I would think I was getting something good, it felt like I was falling deeper.”

Dennis received his brain injury while working at a farming supply store in the warehouse area. A 50 pound bale of hay tipped onto the two-wheeler being used for transport causing the handle to flip up and hit him over the left eye. Dennis was laid out flat, his glasses and hat sent flying in opposite directions and employees rushing to his aid. In the emergency room, Dennis was diagnosed as having a concussion and sent to a specialist. His therapies were going well until COVID hit and he was let go from his job and he suddenly found himself in an extremely complicated position.

Dennis’ brain injury occurred in Wisconsin and his medical care was originally covered under workers comp. Without his job, Dennis was in a legal gray area trying to get Minnesota’s State Medical Review Team to approve him for a CADI waiver. He found himself up in the air until his Adult Rehabilitative Mental Health Services (ARMHS) worker suggested he call the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance and talk to Resource Facilitation. May was appointed his RF worker.

May worked with Dennis on navigating and understanding the process of being certified disabled and what that means in both Minnesota and Wisconsin.

“They always answer my questions in a way that I can understand them,” he says, “Everybody’s helped, but May was the key in explaining the CADI waiver and what the steps were and how to go through them. And that helped because I don’t understand what’s going on, dude. That’s not my job. It’s like if I brought you my car and expected you to fix it. So, yeah, I’ve always appreciated May.”

When a person has lived with a brain injury for years, or even decades, it’s easy to think there might not be any reason for them to pursue new support or therapies. But, the effects of brain injury can change as the brain ages and family and loved ones might turn to Resource Facilitation to find help in these later years.

Sandra’s brother, Jim, is 63 and received his brain injury from a motorcycle accident when he was 17. Jim received rehabilitation and lived independently for most of his life, but as he grew older, he became less trusting of the people giving him care and began feeling despair at his situation. Sandra sought help and was recommended to the Resource Facilitation program.

Even though Sandra lived in Virginia, she was able to reach across the country to RF and find support for Jim. Her Facilitator, also named Jim, offered her a sympathetic ear and pointed her in directions that hadn’t occurred to her. Jim helped Sandra organize transportation for her brother, get him on Medicaid and find support for his emotional crises. He also introduced Sandra to the Disability Hub MN, a free statewide resource for finding resources for all disabilities.

Through Resource Facilitation, Sandra was able to find help for Jim in a discreet manner while addressing the issues that crop up with age. She was also able to find a generous ear to hear her concerns and help her find solutions in a manner that would respect her brother’s privacy and shield him from embarrassment.

“I was so delighted to know that Minnesota had an organization, an Alliance, just for this. Because better late than never. We’d been struggling for decades, trying to piece together family support, and economic support and rides. Jim, when I call him, I just can’t think of someone who is more empathetic and sympathetic, a better listener who gives you no sense of any rushing. I mean, he has as much time for you as you want to take.”
Roger

Roger received his first TBI over 25 years ago and, since then, has experienced numerous other brain injuries. His most recent, the result of an assault, required surgery to remove bone fragments from his brain and left him with affected vision and unable to work.

Having received a recommendation to contact Resource Facilitation from a friend, Roger called and began regularly talking with Carla, who started off by helping Roger set up conference calls to get his CADI waiver. Over the years, she and Roger have worked together through his neuropsych testing, sleep studies and housing difficulties. His brain injury can make it challenging to figure out where he needs to be and who he needs to talk to, but Resource Facilitation is set up to give him assistance in those situations while also helping him understand his brain injury.

“Carla calls and talks to me,” he says, “and explains to me why or how for people who suffered a brain injury things are not quite the way they’re supposed to be. Whenever she calls me I feel much better. Because I know that I’m not alone with this. Right? And, you know, I really like Carla a lot. She likes, give me suggestions and things like that. My life is better because of Carla.”

Corey

Frequently, Resource Facilitation is called upon to aid, not the person with the brain injury, but the person’s family member or caregiver. This is usually the case when a child has a brain injury.

Corey received his brain injury two years ago when he fell 45 feet down an escalator at the Mall of America. Besides broken bones and lacerations, Corey’s brain injury caused him to experience headaches, mood swings and sensitivity to light. All of these things made it difficult for seven-year-old Corey to function regularly in school.

Corey’s father, Eric, contacted Roger in the Resource Facilitation program who helped Eric understand the process for pursuing an IEP at Corey’s school. When Eric felt pressured by the school to accept a 504 plan instead, Roger set up a conference call with the school administration to help ensure the establishment and implementation of Corey’s IEP. After COVID hit, Roger helped the family maintain communication with the school, so that there would be no gap in Corey’s needs when he returned to class.

Thanks to Corey’s IEP, the family was able to secure supports for their son as he progressed through his brain injury.

“He really put things in perspective for me,” Eric says. “I think he went above and beyond. Because when it came to the school, that was heartfelt. I had to hold back tears. I thought I was all alone. And when he stepped up, things really started moving and getting easier. I don’t know what I would have been doing without him. It’s like they say, ‘God puts people in your place when you need them most.’”

Michael

One brain injury can leave a person susceptible to future brain injuries and when that’s the case, people can end up using Resource Facilitation multiple times in their lives.

Michael sustained his first brain injury in 2016 when he was forced to swerve his semi to avoid an accident and ended up crashing into a ditch. He connected with Resource Facilitation and would talk frequently about his therapy appointments and overall progress. He also became involved as a speaker.

“It did me a world of good,” he says, “to get up there and speak.”

Michael found himself feeling disconnected from the world following his brain injury. He could no longer work and was on social security and military disability. And then, in 2020, he sustained another brain injury from a fall. This further compounded the effects of his previous injury and he reconnected with RF.

Since his second injury, Michael has become a regular caller to Resource Facilitation. They serve as an anchor when his moods grow particularly dark and have helped him to make his way through times of crisis.

“I’ve had people give me trouble because I’m so forgetful and my balance is horrible. The thing I like is, you know, the Brain Injury Alliance is a place that’s concerned about people who’ve had brain injury. There’s not a lot of other places that are well aware of what a brain injury really entails.”

Lenee

Lenee and his wife live independently, but both are on disability. When Lenee was in a motor vehicle accident in 2020, he received a brain injury that went untreated as doctors focused primarily on his fractured bones. This is more common than one might think as the immediate issue - shattered legs, physical rehabilitation - can crowd out the more subtle issues brought about by brain injury.

Lenee called Resource Facilitation and was put in contact with Wendy. Due to short-term memory issues, Lenee needs help keeping track of his appointments and setting up meetings with providers. Wendy helped keep him on track with his neurobehavioral appointments and in seeking referrals for different specialists.

“The best thing is they’ve kept in touch and helped me to remember things that I had said before. My memory isn’t all back, but it’s getting better with their help. They have been very nice about checking in on me. They basically helped me with things that happened the last time we talked. They’ll say, ‘well you know like two weeks ago or a month ago you said this,’ and oh that’s right! Yeah, I’ve been doing that; that really helped or that hasn’t helped. I just appreciate the time and that y’all stay in touch with me.”
Sarah

Part of the success of Resource Facilitation is its measurable effectiveness in helping people after they leave a medical setting. Recently, the Alliance has been partnering with the Mayo Clinic’s Traumatic Brain Injury Model System in an ongoing study on patients with brain injury.

Sarah is a part of that study. She received her brain injury in 2018 when she was t-boned by a pickup truck. Her injury was severe enough that she had to be cleared to drive again, something that was detrimental to her continuing her job as a cashier at a casino. Her memory and headaches meant that she soon found the constant shuffling of numbers to be unsuited to her and she moved into the food services area. And though dealing with the system has been stressful, she was glad to have Wendy, her Resource Facilitator, there.

“They were very helpful a lot over the last three years. And you know, just having that support to reach out to was the biggest thing. There were days I had really, really down days and hard days and like, I’d reach out to Wendy and she’s like, you know, how can we try to help you with this? And it was even just a shoulder to cry on because the day was so bad and I’m just bawling. And I mean, it’s just having that support system.”

When she was enrolled in the Mayo study, Sarah found an additional supporter in Anne Moessner, the Mayo Advanced Practice Nurse who is one of the researchers behind the project. Sarah would frequently check in with Anne as well as Wendy to document her progress. The partnership not only benefited the research, but benefited Sarah as well. It helped her find new ways of strengthening her memory while also learning to advocate for herself in ways that helped her to communicate with her family and employers.

“What I can say about the program was it was awesome,” she says. “I mean, even just having these questions Anne would read to me and ask me, because it was part of what she had to do, and she’s like, ‘Is anything more difficult to do?’ and I’m like, ‘No.’ I’ve told Wendy several times I’ve gotten to what I consider my new normal and that’s like having something shown to me several times and then it registers and then physically have me do it. Otherwise it’s not gonna stay up here. If I just watch it’s not ever just going to stay. So, guide me through it step by step, don’t just say, ‘Nope, you missed something nope nope you’re doing this wrong.’ Help me through this. I’m not gonna say I’m not gonna get flustered because I am. But, stay with me and I’ll remember it.”

Erin

Erin had previous concussions, but the one that changed her life came about from being catapulted off a water ski. From past experience she knew she had another concussion, but she was in a new job and felt pressured to work through the injury and show up anyway. Ultimately, however, her symptoms got to the point where she had to pull herself off her job.

Because of the particulars of her diagnosis and treatment, Erin wasn’t referred to the Resource Facilitation program, however, she is friends with our Public Relations Associate Katrina Meyer through church. Katrina, recognizing Erin’s situation as indicative of someone experiencing real distress from a brain injury, emphatically recommended Erin contact RF. Which, thankfully she did.

Erin connected with Carla in RF and after an hour-long initial phone call, Carla was able to help Erin get into Hennepin Healthcare Brain Injury Clinic. It was a complex process but Carla was able to help Erin along the way, making sure she contacted the right people at the right time. Erin would also talk to Carla before important appointments to brainstorm questions to ask and make sure she was prepared. Today, she makes sure all of her friends know about Resource Facilitation in case they need it in the future.

“All of a sudden here’s all the things you need to do and you’re like wait, what?” she says. “And so I don’t see Carla or the Resource Facilitation program as ‘something else to do’. Because at the time I talked to her it was the first time, besides with Katrina, I felt heard and seen at an extensive level. And it’s like I had more hope that I was gonna be okay once I talked to her. I don’t want to know what the experience would have been without her. I guess I probably would have made my way through it, but it just felt so different having this advocate. And I remember going into appointments prepared, because of my chats with Carla. I can see where you could fall through the cracks. It’s just another thing for people to do. Or another piece of paper when it’s so much more than that. And, everyone’s gonna heal at different rates, you know, and have different results, but just the quality of that healing and the journey, I think is highly improved by having a partner in a Resource Facilitator.”
Taylor and Lisa

At times, brain injury can become complicated by the presence of additional disabilities as services for one disability seemingly cancel out services for another. That is a situation Lisa hit when her son Taylor lost his eyesight as a result of his brain injury. The family moved back to Minnesota from Arizona for services after finding that services for the blind and services for brain injury weren’t always compatible.

Taylor was involved in a motor vehicle crash in 2012 that resulted in him losing his eyesight. Lisa actually contacted Resource Facilitation before moving in 2014 in order to establish services for Taylor in advance. She was put in contact with Jim who started off by connecting her with state resources for the blind. Over the better part of a decade, Jim has helped with getting Taylor on the CADI waiver, finding legal aid, searching for care for Taylor and “helping us survive this period in our lives.”

Lisa discovered that people experienced in helping the blind and vision impaired might not have training in brain injury, so Jim helped her to bridge that gap while educators from the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance worked to teach Taylor’s family and Vision Loss Resources about Taylor’s needs.

Jim also helped the family sort through the endless paperwork and figure out who they were meant to be talking to.

“It’s just a heinous process,” Lisa says, “because there are so many nooks and crannies that we slip into all the time. My son’s care has been a complicated situation. We’ve looked for everything from a home to place him in to legal aid needs. And there were actually resources that I could not find on the internet. I didn’t find them when I was trying to do my cursory review. And of course, because things were emotional, when we’re trying to figure these things out, it was just nice to have Jim as a sounding board and for him to sort things out for me, and then say, ‘Here, because of where you live this is who you need to call.’ He kind of held my hand a little bit through the process. I’m sure he goes above and beyond.”

Lee and Carla

Sometimes, Resource Facilitation is offered before a person realizes they need it. That was the case with Lee, who fell in his front yard, was told to be on the lookout for signs of concussion and sent home. Six weeks later, his symptoms had grown to where his wife, Carla, took him to the hospital where he was rushed into surgery for a subdural hematoma. He also experienced two strokes.

Lee ended up needing followup therapies for nearly everything: PT, OT, SPL, psych. But, when they started receiving calls from Resource Facilitation, Lee dismissed them as unnecessary. It was Carla who finally called and talked to Becca. She got Lee on the mailing list and he began reading “Mind Matters” and taking a greater interest in learning more about his brain injury. The Alliance’s Brain Injury Basics classes also helped both Lee and Carla learn more about his situation. Lee eventually began to feel enthusiastic about taking control of his situation.

Becca was able to recommend apps that could help Lee with memory and to connect to resources in Duluth as Lee and Carla live in Wisconsin. Carla began to find a benefit in talking to Becca as her role as caregiver to Lee required her to find new ways to navigate life.

“It’s been very helpful, truly,” Carla says, “In the beginning, Lee wasn’t available for phone calls. So it’s usually been me talking to Becca. And you guys are so supportive, because living out here in a rural area, we live on a lake you know, we’re not as connected as we used to be. That phone connection has been very helpful.”

“Do whatever they tell you!” Lee adds. “Just whatever you recommend I say, go for it. Follow through whatever they tell you to do. And don’t ask why, just do it!”

Thank you to everyone who took the time and shared their stories with us for this article. Remember that this is just a small sampling of the work that our Resource Facilitation team does day in and day out for people affected by brain injury and stroke. The RF team is the beating heart of our organization and they touch so many lives.

If you would like to talk to one of our Resource Facilitation team members, please call 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442 Monday through Friday and you will be connected with someone familiar with resources in your area.
MEET THE TEAM

Wendy H
Employee since 2007

Carla B
Employee since 2013

May D
Employee since 2010

Jim R
Employee since 2015

Cindy L
Employee since 2019

Rebecca Z
Employee since 2020

Cherish T
Employee since 2021

Hannah
Intern since 2021
An event that really changes lives!

The last two years have certainly been unusual for the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance and, most specifically, for the Walk for Thought. It was not our intention in 2020 to spend two Walks away from our incredible community. But, necessity called for innovation and we asked everyone to step outside of their comfort zones and join us online for a Virtual Walk for Thought in 2020 and then in 2021. And, more than 400 people joined us online on September 25 and raised more than $20,000! It was so incredibly heartening to see so many of our friends show up and stand up for the brain injury community.

If you were there, we appreciate you sharing your day and your photos with us; we love seeing where people were walking and who they were walking with. If you weren’t able to participate, but chose to give to the Walk, thank you as well. For those of you who took time out of your busy and beautiful Saturday morning to spend it with us, we appreciate that you donated, asked others to donate and/or asked others to join your team. We appreciate your support for our organization in every way you showed it. We appreciate you!

Visit our Facebook page or look for the hashtag #WalkForThought to see pictures from some of those who participated. And, you can still donate at braininjurymn.org/walk. Mark your calendars for the next Walk for Thought on Saturday, September 24, 2022. Hopefully, and it’s a big “hopefully,” we will be able to walk in person.

Twenty months is a long time for any business to be disrupted, and for nearly two years we’ve seen every single business be hit hard by COVID-19. The nonprofit sector, particularly, was hit hard by the sudden loss of volunteers, donations and community outreach. However, brain injury doesn’t stop when the world does and the needs of the brain injury community have persisted. So, the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance persisted as well.

Despite not being able to join each other face-to-face, Alliance staff have continued to educate people about brain injury, get people access to the services they need, answer questions, and offer people the opportunity to share their brain injury experiences. Our free Brain Injury Basic classes went online as well as our professional Brain Injury Conference, Stroke Conferences and Lunch and Learn seminars.

Resource Facilitators, working from home, have been able to reach and assist more people due to clients being at home to answer calls. Prioritizing mental health check-ins has ensured clients have the resources they need. Case Managers and Care Coordinators increased their “well-being” phone calls, checking to ensure that clients still have access to support services, adequate food and medication, and safe and secure housing. Public Policy continued its advocacy training, getting disability advocates ready to talk with their representatives in online forums and rallies.

This is what we do. And, we will continue doing it for as long as we are capable. Minnesota deserves an organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for all people affected by brain injury. But, we are struggling and you can help us.

Make a donation today at braininjurymn.org/donate. Even if it’s just a few dollars, trust me, it will help. Every gift counts and every person matters. Help make sure that no one slips through the cracks in 2022. Give what you can and thank you for your support.
## Donors Count

Donations made July 1, 2021 through October 31, 2021

### Donors

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### Members

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<td>Ms. Bettye Jackson</td>
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<td>Anonymous</td>
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<td>Ms. Eunice Morelli</td>
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<td>Mr. Marco Morelli</td>
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<td>Mr. Jim Sangiagacomo</td>
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<td>Mr. John Sacco</td>
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### Memorials

#### In memory of Clarence Fowler
- Ms. Leone Fowler

#### In memory of Ethan Heidlebaugh
- Ms. Susan Kronmiller
- Mr. & Ms. Millard & Vicki Marsh

#### In memory of Joni Parker
- Mr. Scott Parker
- Ms. Lois K. Parker

#### In memory of Lynda Petersen
- Ms. Betty Petersen

#### In memory of Don Steichen
- Mrs. Agnes Steichen

### Lifetime Members

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<th>Lifetime Members</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ms. Mary Adams</td>
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<td>Mr. Richard Bloom</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Richard Duerre</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Ms. John &amp; Marcine Forrette</td>
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<td>Mr. Paul Godlewski</td>
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<td>Ms. Ellie Hands</td>
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<td>Ms. Elizabeth A. Jensen</td>
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<td>Dr. Robert L. Karol, Ph.D.</td>
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<td>Mr. David Kendrick</td>
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<td>Mr. David P. King</td>
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<td>Ms. Patricia Landers</td>
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<td>Mr. Martin J. McMorrow</td>
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<td>Dr. William T. O’Dowd, PhD</td>
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<td>Mr. Jason Peters</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Ms. Terry &amp; Ardis Sandstrom</td>
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<td>Ms. Catherine I. Shannon</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Ms. William &amp; LeAnn Siitari</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Ms. Brian Siska</td>
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<td>Mr. &amp; Mrs. Michael Strand</td>
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<td>Mr. Tim Traudt</td>
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<td>Mrs. Terri Traudt</td>
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### Tributes

#### In honor of Gwyneth Leder
- Mr. Rick Leder & Ms. Cherrill Spencer

### Organizational Donors

- AmazonSmile
- Andersen Corporate Foundation
- CAF America
- CoBank
- Shakopee Lions
- Supply Chain Solutions
- Thomson Reuters
- Village Bank
- Wells Fargo Community Support Campaign
Public Policy Department Sets 2022 Legislative Agenda

The Minnesota State Legislature is scheduled to come back into session on January 31, 2022. This is considered the “short session” or the second year of the two-year biennium that began in 2021. While the state budget was passed last year, we expect there will be a supplemental budget bill that will make adjustments to that budget.

There is still a lot of uncertainty moving forward due to COVID-19. It appears that if the Capitol is open at all to the public, (citizens, lobbyists, observers, etc.) it will probably be run in some type of “hybrid” manner with a combination of in-person and virtual processes moving legislation forward. When you add the fact that 2022 is an election year, with the House, Senate and Governor all up for election, things could get heated, confusing and very political.

With that in mind, it is likely that the majority of our efforts will be monitoring any budget changes for opportunities for or threats to programs and funding affecting people with brain injury. We will continue to push Cassy’s Law forward and work to improve safety on metro transit as well.

While it is not likely that our Citizen Advocacy will return to “in-person” activity for 2022, it is possible and we’ll keep you posted. Even if we do have some opportunities for face-to-face contact, we fully intend to keep our Citizen Advocacy efforts ongoing virtually through Zoom and other technology.

While this is all incredibly challenging, our advocates demonstrated last year that nothing can keep us from working on policy to enhance the quality of life for people affected by brain injury.

Regarding other exciting news, please join us in welcoming Cynthia Callais as the new Public Policy Associate for the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance. Cynthia, who started in October, brings a wealth of political experience to her new role. She has moved a number of issues through the legislative process while on staff at the Minnesota Legislature and has deep grassroots experience working and supervising others on political campaigns. She is really excited to be joining the “purple shirts” - the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Citizen Advocates – and putting her skills and knowledge to work on behalf of a mission-driven non-profit like ours!

Contact Jeff Nachbar by email jeffn@braininjurymn.org or by phone 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442 if you want to become a Citizen Advocate or have thoughts about how to ensure the voice of people affected by brain injury continues to be heard.

Help Spread the Word About Resource Facilitation

In this issue’s feature story, we heard multiple accounts of how Resource Facilitation has supported individuals in their recovery journey. I would like to highlight how brain injury professionals use Resource Facilitation as an important part of the recovery process for their patients.

When asked about why she takes time to personally connect people with Resource Facilitation, Kayla, a therapist at HealthPartners Neuroscience Center says she has found the Resource Facilitation Program has helped in two specific ways.

“First,” she says, “my patients get help from Resource Facilitators to find doctors or therapists who understand brain injury. Some brain injury survivors don’t get the care they need after they are injured. Getting connected to the right kind of care can make a big difference and the Resource Facilitators understand that. Second, my patients tell me that Resource Facilitation has helped them find information during a time when that kind of task feels too overwhelming or difficult.”

Valerie, a Speech-language pathologist with Courage Kenny Rehab at Mercy Hospital, said, “I highly recommend the Resource Facilitation program to many of my patients and also to members of the TBI/stroke support groups that I facilitate. This connection is very important to persons who have sustained a TBI/stroke and their family members.”

Resource Facilitation is particularly valuable because it helps patients and their families after therapies have ended and patients are not sure who to contact with their concerns and questions.

A sad reality is that many of the people who could benefit most from Resource Facilitation don’t know about the program and the first step to using Resource Facilitation is knowing about it. Word-of-mouth and invested healthcare professionals play a large role in increasing access to Resource Facilitation. So please, share your stories and knowledge of Resource Facilitation with others, spread the word. You don’t have to be a brain injury professional; anyone can help connect people with the program by calling our office or visiting our website. For those who aren’t aware of the program or are unsure if it would be helpful, some extra encouragement from a friend or professional can be a big help.

If you are a healthcare professional and want to know more about supports and tools to help patients connect with Resource Facilitation, please contact Katrina Meyer at katrinam@braininjurymn.org or call 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442. The larger the network of people encouraging connection and support, the fewer holes there are for individuals to fall through. Let’s support the brain injury community!
As we approach the end of 2021, it is important to reflect on how far our ability to socialize and gather together has come since last year. However, we should also remember that community recovery is a marathon race and a number of our communities are still experiencing incredibly high rates of illness. For many people experiencing the long haul of COVID-19, there is a tug-of-war between the need for social distancing, masking, and vaccinations and the vital human need to reach out and reconnect.

We have all encountered challenges and changes this year, and many of us have lost work and income, family and friends, stability and familiarity, and particularly a sense of safety and security. This loss puts reconnecting and rebuilding relationships at the top of the priority list to stay healthy.

For many, apps like Zoom have become popular for filling the void of in-person contact. Some of our communities have started publicizing meetings and events again to draw people from their homes back to public spaces and activities. And, meeting others in an open area can be a great spontaneous way to reconnect while maintaining a comfortable amount of distance. But, connection is very personal and for many of us intimate emotional closeness happens in ways only we can identify and describe. So, how can we reconnect and maintain our personal safety needs?

If you’re having trouble figuring out what it is you need to reconnect this winter, the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Resource Facilitation team can help you discover those needs. Connection is vital for getting healthy and Resource Facilitation can be an important first connection by talking you through your needs and anxieties, your losses and hopes, your priorities and values.

This winter, you may need to reach in to reach out and the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance can get you started on reconnecting.

— by Dr. Erwin Concepcion

Feeling connected, whether through personal or virtual contact, is so important to our mental health and overall wellbeing. The pandemic made connection a bit of a challenge, but most of us learned how to navigate new technologies and made an effort to connect with others.

Now that we have started to emerge from the pandemic isolation, we can actually feel a bit weird re-acclimatizing to in-person connection. Some people are feeling anxious about venturing out in public, while others aren’t quite ready to make the leap just yet.

No matter where you are on this spectrum — it’s okay! You have to go at your own pace, just like with any other sort of recovery (emerging from the pandemic is likened to a form of recovery). You have to be willing to set boundaries for yourself, and communicate those boundaries with those you love to let them understand what you want from them, or how you want to interact with them.

Many survivors struggle with asking for help or expressing what they need. But it is critical if you wish to move forward. Whether verbal, written, or even drawn in pictures, the objective is to help others help you feel comfortable.

It’s important to feel connected with others, but it is equally as important to communicate clear instructions for how you wish to connect. Nobody can read your mind and it’s absolutely okay to ask for assistance.

The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance is looking forward to reconnecting with you, and has resources available to help you navigate these murky waters if you need them. Please reach out!

— Amy Zellmer

Addendum to Gray Matters articles
The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance Resource Facilitation program is here to help you navigate life after a brain injury. Facilitators are available Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Call 612-378-2742 or 800-669-6442 to talk to a Facilitator in your area.
The FNC team works with patients from around the world. They are experts in Neuro-Recovery and experienced in working with:

* Complex Concussions
  * Dysautonomia
  * POTS
  * Vertigo
  * Dizziness
  * Balance
  * Migraines
  * Whiplash
  * Chronic Pain
  * Brain Fog

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