



**Brain Injury  
Alliance**

N E B R A S K A

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2020

HELPING INDIVIDUALS WITH  
BRAIN INJURIES REBUILD THEIR  
LIVES, RESTORE PURPOSEFUL  
LIVING, AND REBUILD HOPE AND  
OPTIMISM.

# LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## A YEAR OF RESILIENCY Peggy Reisher, MSW

**“In the face of adversity, we have a choice. We can be bitter, or we can be better.”**  
~ Caryn Sullivan

**Dear Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska friends and supporters,**

Thank you for making 2020 another remarkable year for Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska... even with the challenges brought on by COVID! So many times, we marvel at the resiliency of the brain injury survivors and their families. This year, we took a page from their playbooks. 2020 was a year for us to practice our resiliency!

So we, at BIA-NE, pushed ourselves to be better in 2020. When in-person trainings and meetings were restricted due to the need for social distancing and isolation, we strove for resiliency and pivoted to continue our mission virtually.

- We moved our conference from an in-person event last March to a virtual conference in September instead.
- We offered 28 trainings in 2020, most of them virtually. As an added note, this was up from 2019's 27 trainings.
- We added three virtual support groups. We'd talked about doing this before but were pushed into action so that we could continue to offer support while respecting lockdowns.

Financially, we were anxious when COVID hit. But we were able to steward our funds well in the wake of everything.

- Blazing Trails sponsors and supporters were very generous and donated over \$7,000 to BIA-NE, even though the event was ultimately canceled.
  - We had so many kind donations.
  - One family donated their stimulus check to us.
  - Organizations like Union Pacific and Blue Cross & Blue Shield did what they could to support our cause.



In addition to all of these pluses, our team took advantage of some money-saving options to reduce our expenditures as well. For example, moving the conference to a virtual format reduced our cost.

We could not have done any of this without the support of all of you. We are so grateful for everything you do for our organization, our survivors, our families, and our community.

BIA-NE is looking forward to 2021 and the “new” that is coming.

Thank you for being a part of this adventure!

**Peggy Reisher, MSW**  
**Executive Director**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**President**  
**Mark Jones, Ph.D.** Omaha

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# LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT



## PROGRESS IN A CHALLENGING YEAR

### Dr. Mark Jones

**2020 was a year like no other for all of us, for every walk of life.**

As Board President for the Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska (BIA-NE), I could not be more proud of our organization's ability to adapt, thrive, and grow the mission of BIA-NE, even in the most challenging of environments. Despite COVID's hardships, BIA-NE continued to provide prevention, education, advocacy, and support services to Nebraska's young and aging impacted by brain injury.

When I joined the BIA-NE board in 2015, I was immediately struck by the devastating impact brain injury caused - not only for the individual but to entire families. I am inspired by BIA-NE's ability to provide vital services needed by so many of our fellow Nebraskans.

**"DESPITE COVID'S HARDSHIPS, BIA-NE CONTINUED TO PROVIDE PREVENTION, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND SUPPORT SERVICES TO NEBRASKA'S YOUNG AND AGING IMPACTED BY BRAIN INJURY."**

As I reflect on the challenging, but successful, year we had, a few notable items merit special attention. These items are reflective of the BIA-NE's ability to adapt, thrive, and grow.

- BIA-NE was fortunate to be eligible for the Paycheck Protection Program Loan Forgiveness and the CARES Act Funding.
- Impressively, the 2020 Annual Appeal yielded about \$23,000, which surpassed our initial fundraising goal of \$15,000. We were so grateful of the community's support in these tough times.
- Our annual Brain Injury Conference, typically held in March, was postponed, and moved to a virtual event in September. Staff and conference participants graciously adjusted to the change.
- For similar reasons, the Annual Blazing Trails 5k/1mi fundraiser, typically held in July, was cancelled. Virtual efforts were made to encourage donations and virtual participation, and many donors still contributed to the organization though no official event took place - a gesture we very much appreciate.
- Thanks to technology like Zoom, BIA-NE's footprint continued to grow in 2020 despite COVID. We continued to provide trainings across the state, offer support by the way of virtual support groups, and connect individuals to professional and peer support.

We are anxious and hopeful to see what 2021 brings. We know this last year has made us stronger and we are poised to continue to fulfill our mission, making Nebraska a better place to be.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Jones". The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Dr. Mark Jones,  
General Director of Health, Union Pacific**

# PROGRAMMING HIGHLIGHTS

## MISSION BASED PROGRAMMING

**THE BRAIN INJURY ALLIANCE OF NEBRASKA WORKS TO CREATE A BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL NEBRASKANS THROUGH BRAIN INJURY PREVENTION, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, AND SUPPORT.**

Serving the brain injury population means working to secure and develop community-based services, providing support groups and access to pertinent information and medical resources and service referrals. It also means educating professionals who work with children and adults with brain injury. Below are examples of our mission in action during the year 2020:



### PREVENTION

- **Over 350,000 views of “Forever Shaken,”** a powerful 30-minute documentary for childcare advocates, schools, hospitals, etc., showing the lifelong challenges of Abusive Head Trauma.
- **6 billboards with nearly 10 million views** encouraged seatbelt usage: “Buckle up. Every trip. Every time.”



### EDUCATION

- **28 trainings, 800+ trainees** focused on brain injury and domestic violence, juvenile justice, aging, corrections, veterans, and behavioral health. Trainings were held virtually.
- **200 virtual conference participants** learned about brain injury, innovative treatments, and support options.
- **Over 900 school administrators and educators** sought “Get Schooled on Concussion” information made available by BIA-NE.



### ADVOCACY

- **2 advocacy events**, Brain Injury Awareness Day and Disability Pride Week, were hosted and co-hosted by BIA-NE.
- **14 Legislative bills** in 2020 were followed by BIA-NE, of which BIA-NE wrote six letters of support or opposition, as it benefited individuals with brain injury.



### SUPPORT

- **19 support groups** facilitated by volunteers meet regularly across Nebraska. 3 of which are new, virtual meetings.
- **2,800 individuals received BIA-NE monthly e-newsletters** which highlighted new survivor stories each issue.
- **136 new referrals** were made in 2020 to our resource facilitation program, which provides a specialist who assists by providing information, resources, and referral services to individuals and their families.

# SURVIVOR TESTIMONY

## IT MAY BE NEW, BUT IT'S NOT NORMAL Penny Costello

My brain injury journey began on Thanksgiving Day 2014 on UNL's East Campus. For 15 years, I've enjoyed bringing my dogs out to East Campus to romp. On that day, I had taken my dogs, Etta and Sophie, and Simon, my stepson's bouncing, boisterous 6-month-old puppy. We were playing fetch and getting some exercise before I would leave them at home and head off to Thanksgiving festivities that afternoon.

While playing fetch, Etta went to retrieve the ball and dropped it on the very edge of the bank of Salt Creek, ominously known as Dead Man's Run.

None of us had ever gone that close to the creek in all our years of playing fetch there. I had no idea how steep the drop-off to the creek was. As I leaned forward to pick up the ball, I inadvertently stepped into a small hole. It wasn't deep, but it pitched my balance forward, and I fell headfirst.

Visually I saw the edge of the embankment, and I saw the creek nearly 30 feet below. From there, my visual memory of the actual fall is blackness. The fall knocked the wind out of me. For a few seconds, before I could catch my breath, I wondered if this might be how I would die. But my breath returned, and I didn't lose consciousness. Though severe pain shot through my neck and upper spine, I was on my hands and knees, and I could feel my extremities. I knew that I was going to live.

After catching my breath, I was able to lean over on my left hip, hold myself up on my left elbow, and call for help. I tried to describe to the 911 dispatcher where I was. Soon I heard sirens from all directions. It was surreal to

think they were coming for me. From arriving at the park to arriving at Bryan West Trauma Center, less than 2 hours had passed. A swarm of people surrounded me and cut my clothes off, did a CT scan, and got me stabilized. I had broken my neck in three places, and I had a concussion.

To sustain three neck fractures and not be paralyzed or dead seemed miraculous. A concussion seemed minor in comparison. However, the concussion turned out to be the real life-changer.

The concussion made it hard for me to sleep. I found that I was irritable, and I had a lower threshold for frustration. My ears would ring when I got fatigued and I had difficulty concentrating. These symptoms still persist.

I would not return to work for five weeks, and when I did, I was limited to half-time for nearly three more months. I was a public television producer by profession. In the coming years, I would face the reality that the impacts of my



brain injury would force me to take early retirement and seek a new career path.

It's been six years my brain injury. I still have the same intelligence, skills as a writer, communicator, and storyteller, but now it takes much longer to translate the thoughts from my head to paper or the screen. A friend who also experienced a brain injury expressed it very well when she said, *"It's not a deficit of intelligence. It's a capacity issue."* Exactly.

Another friend and brain injury survivor also summed it up well when she said, *"When you've seen one brain injury, you've seen one brain injury."* Each survivor's experience is unique to them.

In fact, the only commonality in the experience of brain injury survivors is the journey of discovery. Each survivor has to find tools and strategies that work for them. To help adapt to memory and cognitive issues, personality changes, the loss of joy one used to find in certain activities became more challenging or less satisfying. Some of these changes are subtle, strange, and they make us question our reality. And they can also impact relationships with spouses, friends, family, and co-workers who navigate this journey with us.

I don't want my brain injury to define me. But for a time, I had to let it redefine me. The key to my healing has been accepting what happened and the resulting changes in my life. Through this, I've opened up to new opportunities and experiences.

The opportunity to serve others as a volunteer and board member with the BIA-NE has allowed me to help shape policy and increase the available resources for brain injury survivors. I've helped BIA-NE launch a series of online support groups for survivors, family members, and caregivers that meet several times monthly.

As host and facilitator of those groups, I continue to learn from others' experiences. I'm blessed to provide support and perspective to other survivors. I gratefully give back for all of the help I've had along the way. Hearing the stories of people who struggle to find the right resources, witnessing the benefit for attendees as they affirm and reassure each other through shared experiences - inspire me and give me purpose. They illuminate the continued and extensive need to increase our understanding of brain injury and expand the services available to survivors and their families.

**"THE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE OTHERS AS A VOLUNTEER AND BOARD MEMBER WITH BIA-NE HAS ALLOWED ME TO HELP SHAPE POLICY AND INCREASE THE AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR BRAIN INJURY SURVIVORS. "**

# FINANCES

## FINANCIAL POSITION

### Current Assets

Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$223,108
Grants & Pledges Receivable	\$23,396
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$246,504</b>

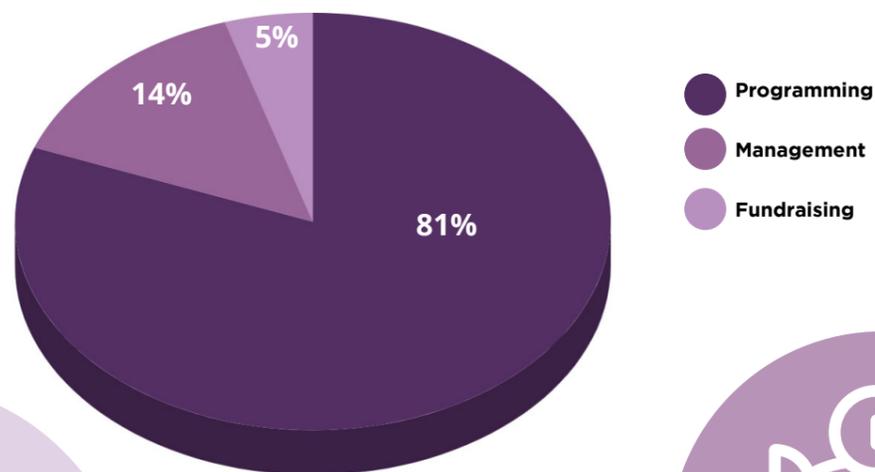
### Current Liabilities

Accounts Payable	\$4,788
Accrued Vacation	\$4,361
Other Accrued Expenses	\$5,123
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$14,272</b>

### Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets	\$222,947
Restricted Net Assets	\$9,285
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$232,232</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$246,504</b>

## EXPENSE CHART



## FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES

### Revenues & Support

Contributions	\$167,207
Grants	
Fundraising Events	\$37,198
Conference & Training Fees	\$37,198
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$1,002
<b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>	<b>\$245,145</b>

### Expenses

Program	\$235,926
Management	\$42,241
Fundraising	\$13,944
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$292,111</b>

### Year Summary

Increase in Restricted Assets	\$720
Total Increase in Net Assets	\$104,662
<b>Net Assets at Beginning of 2020</b>	<b>\$127,570</b>
<b>Net Assets at End of 2020</b>	<b>\$232,232</b>



# 5k Run/1mi Walk or Roll Teams Welcome!

**Sunday, August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021 | 9am-Noon**  
**Chalco Hills Recreation Area | 8901 S 154th St, Omaha, NE 68138**

Early Registration: \$40 | Day-of Registration: \$50

[runsignup.com/BlazingTrails](https://runsignup.com/BlazingTrails)

*Fundraising Event:* Your donation supports Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska (BIA-NE), a statewide nonprofit organization working to create a better future for all Nebraskans through brain injury prevention, education, advocacy, and support.



### Questions?

Paula Dodds, Special Events Coordinator  
 Brain Injury Alliance of Nebraska  
[paula@biane.org](mailto:paula@biane.org)

Only registrants signed up before 8/6/21 will be guaranteed a tshirt

[biane.org](http://biane.org) | (844) 423-2463 | (402) 423-2463 | [info@biane.org](mailto:info@biane.org)



# FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

## CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, AND SPONSORS

Baird Holm, LLP  
Benevity Fund  
Blue Cross/Blue Shield  
Bryan Health  
CHI Health Immanuel  
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Nebraska Total Care  
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Relentless Screen Printing  
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Union Pacific Railroad  
United Way/CHAD Helping Hands Auction

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David & Dawn Johnson  
Diane & Bruce Boden  
Douglas & Sherri Troupe  
EPIC PLD Inc.  
Hawks Foundation  
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Joseph & Janet Taylor  
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Neil & Marti Welch  
Omaha Storm Chasers Baseball  
Stefanie Christensen  
Tenaska, Inc.  
Wade & Susan Wickey

## LIVING TRIBUTES

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Lois Hartmann  
Monty R. & Lynette Sellon  
Quality Dry Cleaners

### Michael Meyer

Michael and Marcie Meyer

### Jodi Reese

Llody Reese  
Toni Reese

### Sharon Royers

Timothy Royers

### Ben Tucker

Mary Lea Yseth

### Julie Young

Kenneth Young



## DONORS

### \$6,000-\$3,000

Tom & Peggy Reisher

### \$2,999 - \$1,000

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Clete Blakeman  
Michelle Hawley-Grieser  
Laurie Jessen

Mark & Paula Jones  
Norma Register  
Sharon & Rick Royers  
Charles Taylon

### \$999-500

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Jim & Judy Cada  
Susan Courtney  
Ashley Hatheway

Risa Hofmeister  
Michele & Dale Johannes  
Rondi & Mike Kinney  
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Michael Meyer

Mike & Penny Moritz  
Rene Orosco  
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William Thorell

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Linda Bogenreif  
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Mark Brasee  
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Ann DeLashmutt  
Stacey Fryc  
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Mary O'Hare  
Fidelis Ohamara  
Kailey Rayburn  
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Jenny Thompson  
Steven & Julie Totten  
Maggie Wittlin

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Don Terry  
Sue Warner  
Brodi Willard  
Thomas Scott Wrigley Jr.  
Gary Zellweger



## YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

We have sincerely appreciated your continued support in 2020 - your gift was especially important during a year when everyone, no matter their circumstance, faced unforeseen challenges. Your continued support in 2021 is vital.

Please set up your recurring donation through our website or make a one-time contribution.