

Good afternoon, and welcome everyone. My name is Bryan Pugh. I'm the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association of Maryland. This would have been the first day of our 2020 Annual Conference. Unfortunately, with all that's been going on with the coronavirus. We were forced to cancel our conference.

It's a beautiful day. We would have loved to have been welcoming you to the Turf Valley Resort this year. We had fantastic speakers. We had a wonderful venue, lots of good food picked out, some wonderful, wonderful sponsors and vendors that would have been there for us. Unfortunately, with all that's happened with the coronavirus, and everything that's going on with it, and the declaration of emergency by the governor, and the variety of things that have occurred afterwards, we were forced to cancel.

However, one of the things that we always enjoy, it's actually one of the high points of our year and the high point of the conference, is really the awards ceremony. We do a BIAMD update. And we do the Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Awards, and then we're able to celebrate others with our BIAMD Organizational Awards.

And even though we weren't able to meet with you, or celebrate with you, or introduce you to all of our new wonderful speakers and our new wonderful vendors, we did want to make sure that we recognized the wonderful people that had been nominated for these awards, and just make sure that you'll know about these special stories because they are very special stories.

We had some unique people come forward this year, and have actually had to make some amendments to the awards because we had so many very, very capable nominees this year.

So we did want to start out a little bit with an update, just to let you know where we are right now. As of about two weeks ago, we were asked by the hospital to move our offices off the premises and to telecommute, which we've been doing. Luckily, we have spent the last several years trying to ensure that our infrastructure would allow us to move off-site.

We've taken advantage of it several other times with snow apocalypse and with some of the other closures that we've had to do. We've been able to move off and work remotely.

This is the first time we've had so many people with our staff, now that we're up to six people. But so far, it's been working fairly well.

The real challenges for us has been that the work that we do, a lot of the case management, transitional case management that we've been hired to do by the state to work with the TBI Waiver program, a lot of it is boots on the ground. A lot of it is going out and talking to people, meeting with people, seeing them, visiting with them, helping them with their paperwork, and all those different-- a variety of things that we've been doing.

That's a little bit more challenging when you're trying to work on a Zoom Room where you're trying to set somebody up with the paperwork they need when you can't really go, actually meet with them, and walk through them. So it's taken some time to figure things out.

In addition to that, just trying to maintain the quality of services that we have. Make sure that we're giving back to people in a timely manner, trying to get through some of the home office issues with broadband, and internet, and all the different programs that people are using to try and communicate with each other.

And it has been a challenge. But we've been very proud of our folks. We've been very resilient. And we continue to try, and move forward as best we can.

Some of the things that we're working on right now, just to let you know, we are working to take the items that we would have had for our silent auction at the conference. We're working with 32 auctions to try and bring that to you online. So hopefully, we'll be launching that very soon.

I think we have around a hundred items that we're going to be presenting online, and try to make it as exciting and interesting as we possibly can, try to recapture some of the magic that we would have had, had we've been able to fill the rooms at Turf Valley, and pique your interest, and pique your interest on these items.

And it is an important fundraiser for us. So we would encourage you to take a look at it. We'll be getting that out in Five Thoughts, and making that available to everybody.

The other thing that we're going to be doing is we're going to be trying to do some of the training that we would have done, and use this technology, use the Zoom Room technology, use the online technology to try and capture some of the webinars, or capture some of the speakers that we would have had, the breakout sessions we would have had in webinars, and present those to you over time.

And we're working on trying to figure out exactly how to make that happen too, again, within the confines of we can't meet people with a studio. We can't bring the studio to them. We've got to figure out how to make the webinars, and create the webinars sort of off-site, in people's homes, or wherever.

So those are some of the technical challenges that we're trying to meet, but again, we're trying to work on those and make those better. We continue to answer the phones. We continue to respond to email. We continue to respond to social media. We continue to produce Five Thoughts Friday. We encourage you to take a look at those.

There's a lot of things that are still going on in the capital over and apart from the \$2 trillion packages that they continue to try and produce to fight the coronavirus, and to fight the economic damage that's happening to the country as a result.

And there are several things that-- we would encourage you to call your congressmen and your senators about. And I would encourage you to take a look at Five Thoughts Friday for that. You can go to our web site, www.biabd.org. Click on Five Thoughts Friday. And it'll ask for your email address and your contact information.

And every Friday at 9:00 AM, it'll hit your mailbox. You don't take a look at on Friday, it will hit it later on Monday. So nice and fresh rerun on Monday morning.

So that's where we are right now. We're pushing through this crisis like everyone else, trying to do the best we can, trying to give the best service we can, and be as responsive as we can. We thank you for all of your kind support. And we look forward to serving you as we move through this crisis together.

So one of the things that we consistently have been able to give at the conference, and this is actually, I believe, the 30-second addition of this conference. It started off further small, and is now built into one of the premier conferences on the east coast.

For years, we were handing out awards and recognizing individuals for their contribution to the Brain Injury community, for serving others, for serving as an inspiration.

And two years ago, we lost Alicia Cignatta, who was the longest-serving employee at the Brain Injury Association. She, I believe, was 14 years when she lost her battle to cancer Christmas two years ago.

And in recognition of all the contributions that she had made and all the advocacy that she had done, we rededicated the awards to her memory, and rededicated the spirit of independence awards to become the Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Awards.

She is dearly missed. The phenomenal thing about Alicia is that-- one of the things that she did to sort of cope with her own brain injury and her own struggles, where she labeled everything.

There was nothing in the office that didn't have an Alicia label on it. And it's so funny to be rummaging through something, or finding a file, or looking for something for an event like a bin, and wonder what's in the bin. And you pop the top of the bin off, and there is Alicia's notes of everything that's in this bin. Or in a file folder, you open it up. And you go through when there are Post-it notes for her, letting you know what's there.

So her spirit is very much alive in our office. Her memory is very much alive in her office. She has missed on a daily basis. And so one of the ways that we want to celebrate her life and celebrate her contributions to both Maryland and the country is this Spirit of Independence Award dedicated to her.

So we have a variety of different categories. And there are nominations within those categories. This year was unique. The category for recognition for contributions to improving the quality of life for individuals with brain injury had some very, very compelling nominations. And because of that, the conference committee, which meets every month of the year to try and make sure that the conference is going to go off without a hitch and be better than the last, really struggled.

And so rather than eliminate two good nominees, we created a new category. Because it's actually becoming more and more commonplace for us to have individuals that are younger and individuals that maybe have had their brain injury longer ago.

And so we created a category called individual under 22. And then we have the other category, which is individual over 22. And I believe you'll find out that the rationale for that was that this was a fairly compelling story. And we wanted to recognize this nominee. And because of the particular way it was nominated, we thought it was a good idea.

So the nomination was nominated by his mother, Margaret. And the nomination reads like this, "When Jake was 2, he fell from a second story window. He spent 19 days in the hospital. He's now 17, and is about to graduate high school with high honors. He completed his eagle project the 16th of February, and is a three-sport varsity athlete. He has a minimal 504, and is proven to teachers, classmates, friends and family, that his brain injury will not hold him back."

We were told math would be hard because of the location of the injury. He is an honors trig, dual enrollment with the College of Southern Maryland. We were also told baseball would be too hard because of hitting a baseball entails. He is a dominating hitter and a star outfielder, and hopes to play baseball in college.

He's also ranked in the state for high school wrestlers. He could have used his injury as an excuse to extend his eagle project and not do school, or do well in sports, but he doesn't. We are beyond proud of our son, the miracle that he is, and hope that you consider him for this award."

And this year's award for individual with the brain injury under the age of 22 is Jacob Ham. And we're very proud to be able to present an award to him. We can't do it right now, of course, because we're on a podcast. But we will be presenting him with a recognition and a full wooden award that memorializes this individual with a brain injury under 22. So congratulations to Jacob, and thank you so very much to his mother for the nomination.

Next, we go to the Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Award for recognitions of contributions to improving the quality of life for individuals with brain injury, the individual award. And this nominee was nominated by Debra Cottrell.

And it reads like this, "We're nominating Marissa Skulsky for the Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Award. Marissa Skulsky sustained a traumatic brain injury on October 3, 2011 after a motor vehicle accident where she was ejected from the passenger side of the vehicle. The person that was driving left the scene, and also left Marissa laying on the side of the road in a ditch.

Luckily, someone witnessed the accident, and called for help. There were moments of frustration and challenge through the years, but Marissa worked hard to overcome every one of them. When Marissa sets a goal, she usually achieves it. There hasn't been one goal that she has said that she hasn't achieved.

Marissa's mother and father were extremely involved in coordination of her care. Pam Skulsky has always been one of Marissa's most skilled advocates. Marissa moved out of residential housing to independent living. She was able to regain her driver's license. She attended college and obtained certificates and degrees. She has participated in motivational and informational speaking about her brain injury and her sobriety.

She is an amazing mother. And she is actively employed. And she is one of the positive people that you will ever come across. Marissa is speaking, or was speaking at the BIAMD conference this year. And she was set up to have her breakout sessions, specifically on the challenges of parenting and relationships before and after brain injury.

Marissa's willingness to share her story and her challenges is a gift to all those that have the opportunity to hear her. She is approachable, kind, and honest. Her honesty and integrity are securely woven into the fabric of her being. Parenting is something that Marissa takes very seriously. The work that she has done on herself only makes her that much more a wonderful mother.

Part of Marissa's journey has been her sobriety. Since her injury, Marissa has been cleaned and sober. She is active and attending AA meetings, and being an amazing role model for others who are challenged with the same obstacles that she has had. We have always referred to Marissa as our poster child for brain injury rehabilitation.

The resilience is infectious. And every person she comes into contact with is touched by her story. She has never given up on herself, and will tell you that she is a work in progress. But aren't we all? Her strength to continue working on her self-esteem and self-worth has become part of who she is. And she passes that on to anyone she comes in contact with. Marissa's journey has only begun. The sky's the limit with her. Thank you for considering Marissa Skulsky for the Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Award."

And this year's winner for the individual category is Marissa Skulsky. So congratulations, Marissa. And we are deeply disappointed that you-- was going to be a speaker. And we weren't able to hear her this year. But we will certainly, certainly love to see her in the 2021 session next year.

Next up in the category of family member. We will have an individual who was nominated by Candace Rebuck. And this is Candace's nomination.

"Cathy Bedolla is an outstanding example of a partner and care provider to someone with a brain injury. And here is a small portion of their story. Her boyfriend, Eric [? Bakula, ?] had an MBA versus a tree accident on July 7, 2018. He was in shock trauma for almost a month with a severe brain injury, cortical blindness, and multi-trauma injuries.

He came to UM Rehab in August, and stayed for almost two months. During that time, she was not just by his side and supportive. She adopted strategies for communication from speech therapy for his aphasia, assisted him through each step of his rehab stay. She developed a method to help regulate sleep and wake cycles due to his traumatic blindness by helping him wash up each morning and facilitating some sun on his face.

For sleep, she would help him wash up and massage his back while softly reminding him that it's time for sleeping and orienting him. She was strong, but kind advocate, and managed to sound sensitivities daily.

Even in his most confused times, she has been patient, positive, and kind to Eric, and all of his care team. She came to therapy, went on an outing, and prepared to take him home without falter. She successfully helped him transition home, obtain therapy and blind services, and develop several of her own to manage it in his home, and improve greatly.

He has progressed well, and currently returning to work. They have been kind to each other, and advocate for the newly blind and brain injured to many, and are remembered fondly by all our staff. They stop and visit periodically to our staff. They spoke of the 2019 Brain Injury Reunion at the rehab hospital, and inspire everyone around them. We would like to strongly recommend Catherine Bedolla for the family member, partner, outstanding member for this community. Thanks for your consideration."

And this year's Family Member of the Alicia Cignatta Spirit Independence Award is Cathy Bedolla. So what a wonderful story. And thank you, Candace, for letting us know about that.

Next, we have a professional individual who works with the brain injury community. This health care professional was nominated by Jess Nessbit of the Brain Injury Association. And Jess' nomination reads like this.

"I first met Candace at the Conference Planning Committee for the Brain Injury Association of Maryland. And I was struck right away by her go-getter attitude. She is a calm, reliable, and

passionate presence in our community, always willing to go the extra mile with her patients and their families in mind.

Candace is a rec therapist In Brain Injury Unit at the University of Maryland Rehab and Ortho Institute. She also runs a support group there for individuals with injuries.

When I went to a meeting, I was blown away by her facilitation skills, her genuine interest in supporting people, and having them engage in whatever way was comfortable to them. She does a lot of research and work to make that group enriching, supportive, and dynamic.

When I think of Candace, I think of person-centered. It is evident that she sees each patient as a person first, and works to support that person in all areas of their lives.

She sits in on the education session I present on the Brain Injury Unit twice a month, and always seems to know the best way to engage someone who might be irritable, or confused, or [Perseverating] on a topic.

I am impressed by her ability to communicate what feels like a really complicated concept or fact into something easy for everyone to understand. I have a feeling that Candace does a slew of other things, other activities, and sits on other committees, but I don't know all of them. What I do know is that her dedication to her patients, and the Brain Injury Community is a gift. And we are lucky to have her supporting people with brain injuries.

In the 2020 Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Award for professional who works in the Brain Injury Community is Candace Rebuck. Congratulations to Candace. And we can only hope that we will have another year of Candace's help both on the conference committee and with her patients in 2020.

The next award is the Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Awards for Advocate. And these are recognitions of people who improve the quality of life for individuals with brain injuries. This nomination comes from Terry [Bishoff] McDonnell. And her nomination reads as follows:

"Dr. Joan Carney is the Director of the Fairmount Rehabilitation Programs within Kennedy Krieger's Pediatric Brain Injury Rehabilitation Continuum. These programs include the specialized transition program and the community rehabilitation program.

In addition, Dr. Carney directs the Inpatient Educational Services Unit and a training grant working with parents and professionals, and local school districts, the Specialized Health Needs Interagency Collaboration Project, otherwise known as SHNIC.

After completing her undergraduate degree from the Catholic University in Special Education in 1978 and acquiring her Maryland State teaching credentials, Dr. Carney started her career-teaching in Maryland public schools.

She later completed her Master's Degree in Special Education Rehabilitation at the George Washington University in 1981. In 1986, Dr. Carney began working at Kennedy Krieger as an Educational Specialist in the Pediatric Rehabilitation Continuum, specializing in the assessment and educational management of children and adolescents with brain injury.

In 1995, she launched Kennedy Krieger's Intensive Day Rehabilitation Programs, serving patients with brain injury. Dr. Carney completed her doctorate from Johns Hopkins University in 2012 with her dissertation studying the functional outcomes of children with hemiparesis who participated in constraint-induced movement therapy. Her interest in serving children and adolescents with brain injuries continues as she currently serves on the board of directors for the Brain Injury Association of Maryland and the Governor's Advisory Board for TBI.

Dr. Carney's research focus is on the efficacy and best practice protocols for constraint-induced movement therapy, and other therapy practices provided in the clinical programs under her direction. Her doctoral dissertation, "The Effects of Constraint-induced Movement Therapy on Activity Important to Independent School Participation of Children with Hemiparesis" represents her strong belief in the need to focus rehab goals on school and community life skills.

Dr. Carney's program is currently part of the phase III Multi-state RCT, funded by NIH StrokeNet. And her specific interests in this endeavor are with the physical outcomes and other collateral findings her team has started to document in language and other cognitive domains.

On a personal note as the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Association, Joan has only been nothing, but the very, very best advocate for brain injury, and working on our behalf, and has really, really augmented all of the efforts that we have. And it's particularly been influential in both our training programs for teachers, in addition to our movements to try and get legislation to assist educators in finding individuals with brain injuries on kids with brain injury so we can give them the services they need."

So the 2020 Alicia Cignatta Spirit of Independence Award and the role of advocate this year is Dr. Joan Carney. And we congratulate her, and thank her very much for all the great work.

So those are the ones that are actually nominated and from others. And one of these special things that happens with this awards ceremony is that the Brain Injury Association is able to award two different awards that is selected by the staff and the board of the BIAMD.

And in order to recognize individuals that are making not only contributions to the brain injury community at large, but are making specific contributions to the brain injury association. We are a small organization. We have a very large mandate. We have a very wide variety population within the state of Maryland. And it takes a lot of people to pull off all the different things that we do. And we get so many different contributions from a variety of different individuals, but it only seems fitting that we're able to provide some recognition to the folks that are helping us in serving our mission.

These folks will be placed on plaques in our office. These are the two plaques that they'll be recognized on. We have both the Organizational Leadership Award and then the Frances Bateson Dexter Award.

And so those will be memorialized on a plaque. In addition to the plaque that will provide them, once the virus makes its departure.

So the Organizational Leadership Award is in appreciation of organization's dedication and support of the work of the Brain Injury Association of Maryland. This particular organization has been working very closely with the Brain Injury Association and the Brain Injury Community for decades.

But within the last 10 years particularly, they have modified their program to immediately serve those most directly involved with the TBI waiver. The organization was founded a very long time ago. But in the last decade, they've really moved their programs to ensure that individuals that move, that are going to be transitioning from an institutional setting into a community setting within the TBI waiver are given the best tools that they have for success that are available.

So much so that they actually redesigned their program to ensure that it mirrored those programs that were going on in the community. So that an individual who may have been inappropriately placed in a skilled nursing facility may be subject to homelessness, or subject to incarceration.

Because of their brain injury and because of their particular circumstances, they become eligible for a TBI waiver program. And that TBI waiver program, rather than placing them in an institution or incarcerate them or continuous homelessness, places them in a community setting. And that takes a lot of energy and a lot of effort. And this institution has been doing so.

And we are very, very proud and appreciative of the work that they do, particularly now that the Brain Injury Association works both in finding individuals that are eligible for these programs, getting them into the pipeline for these programs, moving them into the process so that they are able to move from institutional settings into community settings, and the partner that we have on an almost daily basis, sometimes even hourly basis.

And the winner of this year's Organizational Leadership Award is the team at the Western Maryland Hospital Center. And we're very proud to have them as partners. We're even prouder to have them as friends, and colleagues, and wanted to recognize them for all of that they do, for the Brain Injury Community and for the Brain Injury Association of Maryland as we work on our mission to ensure that we can find placement and proper success for individuals that are entering into the TBI waiver program.

So congratulations to Western Maryland. Annie and David, we love you. And we're very appreciative of the work that you do.

Finally, the award that is probably the biggest, the best award that the Brain Injury Association can give is the Frances Bateson Dexter Award. Frances Bateson Dexter was an Executive Director and longtime advocate for the Brain Injury Association and for the Brain Injury Community, and just basically, took the organization from its infancy, moved it into a player, moved it into an advocacy role, and was just a non-stop force of nature when it came to representing families and individuals that have experienced brain injury.

And so this award is dedicated in appreciation, the work of an individual who has really helped us and stepped up for the Brain Injury Association a variety of ways.

There are some volunteers that you just count on. You just know they're going to be there. You just know they're going to show up. They just appear. Sometimes you don't talk to them for months. Sometimes you don't talk to them for even a year. But you know that when it comes down to it, and you're absolutely going to need help that they step in and step up.

And this individual, to her credit, despite all of her physical ailments, despite all of her employment challenges, and all of the different things that she's experienced, she always, always steps up and rises to the occasion.

And for the last nine years, maybe at least 10 years-- if you have seen a picture from Scarecrow, or if you have received a picture of yourself or others in Scarecrow, or if you've seen a Scarecrow Classic race website, it's going to have come from Theresa Hornung.

She appears. She takes marvelous pictures. She takes action photos. She takes pictures of runners. She takes pictures of the awards. She takes pictures of the outcome. She has been there in snow. She has been there in hurricane. She has been there in bright days and sunny days. And she has been there in fog, and cold, and nasty days.

Every year, she appears. She takes her wonderful photos. She leaves the chip with the photos on them. And she disappears. And she's just amazing. And we just can't say enough about her.

And it has been this way as long as I've been the executive director, which is 9 years this past February, and even before that. And so we cannot thank her enough. We cannot recognize her enough. And we have not done so.

And so this year's 2020 Frances Bateson Dexter Award goes to Theresa Hornung. And we're absolutely thrilled to recognize her. And we're absolutely-- just completely humbled at what she is able to do for us year in, year out. And we thank her very much.

So this has been our awards ceremony. It is very unusual in a variety of ways. We wanted to make sure that you got an update. We wanted to make sure that you recognized and learned about these wonderful individuals. We will be sending them awards. And we will make sure that they know that they won.

We really appreciate all of the nominations, particularly the nominations of the individuals who've been recognized today. And we thank you so much for your ongoing support.

If you have not subscribed to Five Thoughts Friday, I encourage you to do so. That's the best way to get information about the Brain Injury Association. We try to make it engaging and informative. We try to keep you up-to-date on the latest and greatest at Brain Injury Association of Maryland, and also the Brain Injury Community at large, and then a couple of other things that might be fun for you as well.

In addition, we want you to take a look at our silent auction as it goes out, and then be on the lookout for some of the webinars that we're going to be introducing and putting out. If you'd like to, we'd like you to consider a membership. You can also join on the website. There's a variety of different pricing structures from individuals with brain injury, which is free, all the way up to professionals. And the professional membership is only \$100 a year.

So we'd love to have you. We can't be an association without members. We can't have members without you joining. So we encourage you to do so.

We thank you very much for your patience and ongoing support through this difficult times. We want you to continue to be healthy. We want you to continue to be prosperous. And if you ever do need us, you can email us at info@biamd.org, or give us a call at 800-221-6443.

Thank you very much, and hope you have a great afternoon.