

Previously Featured ABTA CommYOUUnity™ Volunteers

Kevin Farrell
Blacklick, OH



Volunteering with the ABTA allows me to touch someone's life each day and remind brain tumor patients they are not alone. Spreading awareness and educating others on brain tumors is important to me because I lived 6-10 years of my life unaware of the tumor I had slowly growing inside.

I was diagnosed with an Acoustic Neuroma at the Columbus V.A. Facility on March 24th, 2015. I was there for a check-up as I had been having strange sensations located on the right side of my body such as hearing loss, vision impairment, and loss of balance. I was informed there was a mass on my brain and that I

needed to come in for an MRI. I was sent to The Ohio State University where I received three surgeries in three weeks to remove the 4cm x 4cm sized tumor.

My friend Wendy and her husband took me in and served as my caregivers while I was undergoing intensive rehab. It was during that time we came across the BT5K in Columbus, OH. As unsteady as I was, I got up on my feet and attended the event determined to learn more about the ABTA. We listened to the survivor speaker and watched the runners cross the finish line and by the end of the event I was passing out water as a volunteer. It was the most uplifting feeling I had since my diagnosis. You could not help but be inspired by the positive vibe in the air.

From that moment I did not waste any time becoming an ABTA volunteer. I formed a BT5K team and I am now the Chair for the BT5K Columbus Planning Committee. I joined CommYOUUnity™, the ABTA's nationwide volunteer network, where I am a mentor, host my own fundraising event and actively advocate for brain tumor research. My friends tell me I have never met a stranger and by meeting individuals who have been touched in some way by a brain tumor I feel I am able to make a difference by connecting with those in the community.

Kimberly Kunkel
Loveland, OH



Kimberly Kunkel started to with the ABTA as a means to help others who have been affected by a brain tumor diagnosis. She herself was diagnosed in 1993, so having the platform to share the impact of brain tumors on patients and their families has been a fulfilling opportunity. Kimberly's background as a Registered Nurse Case Manager helps her connect with members of the brain tumor community both personally and professionally. She believes it is important to keep the faith and allow others to help in any way they are able to in order to have a successful recovery.

Kimberly is a mentor in our CommYOUunity™ Connect program where she is able to provide a listening ear to others who have faced a similar story of having a brain tumor and needing surgery. In addition to being a Mentor, she was part of the inaugural group of Social Ambassadors and has contributed to our Health Care Provider Outreach efforts. She also made the trip from Ohio to Louisville in October to serve as a patient panelist at our final Partners in Treatment and Care meeting of 2016.

Fred Thompson
Orlando, FL



Fred Thompson, a 24 year brain tumor survivor, is a member of our CommYOUUnity™ Volunteer Network and has been an advocate for the ABTA, spreading awareness at the local level. He was first diagnosed with a brain tumor in 1992, during a time when little resources were available due to the lack of internet and technology. He was referred to the ABTA and immediately wanted to contribute and give back to the brain tumor community. He knew if he had someone to connect with at the point of diagnosis, his journey would have been an easier one. Fred's background of problem solving in his career has allowed him to develop an empathetic ear to those who need help.

He believes it is important to do what you have a passion for because it is more fulfilling and rewarding to be able to use your talents for helping others. This belief has led him to become a Mentor in our CommYOUUnity™ Connect Program. One of his proudest moments as a volunteer was being able to co-chair the Annual Past Presidents Golf Charity with the National Association of Residential Property Managers in 2015 and raised over \$160,000 for the ABTA.

Ashlie Thornbury
Philadelphia, PA



Ashlie Thornbury is a member of our CommYOUUnity™ Volunteer Network and has been part of the ABTA's volunteer fundraising event program, Breakthrough Your Way, since 2007. Ashlie host's Amy's Walk, which celebrates life with a 5-mile walk in Philadelphia, PA in memory of her aunt, Amy Masiejczyk, who passed away from a brain tumor at just 39 years old. Since organizing this event 10 years ago, the walk has raised almost \$40,000 for the ABTA.

"It brings us all together," Ashlie says, "We want to keep her memory alive and do something positive while helping other people suffering from this terrible disease."

Ashlie continues to advocate for the ABTA at the local level and serves on ABTA's new Volunteer Advisory Council.

For more information about Amy's Walk and to keep in touch with the family year round, please visit their Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/amyswalkphila

Karma Punwasi
Humble, TX



Karma Punwasi is a member of our CommYOUity™ Volunteer Network and has been volunteering with the ABTA since 2014. Karma became involved with the ABTA after she learned her husband, Martín Romero-Sanchez (also a member of our Volunteer Network) was diagnosed with a grade 3 Astrocytoma and grade 4 GBM in August of 2012. She advocates locally in her Texas community by volunteering at the BT5K Dallas event and throughout the year. Karma has also become a voice for the brain tumor community by advocating at the national level as a speaker on the Patient Panel at the ABTA's National

Patient & Family Conference.

“My husband and I were honored to share our story and were surprised to receive feedback that our "day to day grit" was so inspiring,” Karma says, “We are determined to live our lives with the same tenacity as before our diagnosis and if sharing our story helps others to do the same, then we gladly accept the opportunity.”

Karma has truly become a powerful force in the fight against brain tumors.



Sabine Schwab
Ledgewood, NJ



Sabine was a brand new mom when she received her brain tumor diagnosis in 2014. While undergoing treatment, she was struggling with the fact that her demanding career, as she had planned it, was over because of various cognitive impairments.

What Sabine was looking for was a new "purpose in life." She found new purpose as a volunteer and advocate for the brain tumor cause. Sabine began as a volunteer with the ABTA through the

BT5K run/walk in New York City and continues to be actively involved on the planning committee. "There are so many people that show up each year, and it's beautiful to see the power of us coming together and being there for one another," Sabine said when asked what is special about the event. Since then, she has been involved in a variety of volunteer projects for the ABTA as a Research Grant Reviewer, Volunteer Leadership Workshop participant and presenter, patient panelist at a Partners in Treatment and Care Meeting and more. It is the variety of opportunities and ways to make an impact that Sabine appreciates most about being an ABTA CommYOUity™ volunteer.

This year, Sabine made a commitment to become even more involved as an inaugural member of the ABTA's Volunteer Advisory Council. She is "excited to make an even bigger impact" and use the skills she acquired in her career to support the volunteer program at a higher level. You can connect with Sabine on Twitter at @Sabine_NJ.

