

# ADVOCATES

First, we listen ...

*"Each of Us Is a Person First"*

*By Margaret (Peggy) Ryan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize Winner*

I'm Peggy Ryan, I'm a traumatic head injury survivor, and because the brain is an important part of the body, they'll be times when I won't be the person I should be.

It all started when I was fifteen. The driver had been drinking that night and he had lost control. That's when the accident happened.

They found me in a coma and I was rushed to the Family Medical Center in Wilmington. They saw that for a while, I wasn't going to have any use of my right side.

Then they found what was then and always will give me the most trouble in my life, my traumatic brain injury.

For about twenty years, I was having seizures, but am now kept under control with medication. But, I have a lot of blood tests taken to make sure I'm on the right dose, otherwise I could have another seizure.

I also live with memory problems, double-vision, headaches and anxiety. My medication was causing me to hallucinate and have auras but, they changed my medication so now I don't have them anymore. They put me in Spaulding Rehab, and I stayed in the coma for 1 1/2 months. When I woke up, then I began my recovery by having three different kinds of therapies. Speech, occupational, and physical.

A while after that I moved into the Warren House, an assisted living home for the brain injured. There was staff there 24/7 if I ever needed someone; I could be myself in front of the other residents. It was the best decision I made since the accident.

My dream was always to become an actress/comedian, but because of my brain injury, my life was nothing but traumatic, physically and mentally, because I pushed myself, my dream is finally coming true.

I used to be the joker around all my friends (and I still am), so, being the person I was, after the accident, to the person I am now, people can't believe I'm the same person, but some are not as fortunate.