

## Kerry's Story

In 1994, Kerry Weaver was a competitive race walker and a dedicated member of the St. Catharines Roadrunners & Walkers. She was scheduled to compete in the World Association of Veteran Athlete's world road race championships being held in Scarborough in one week's time. As part of her cross training she was riding her bicycle to an appointment but never arrived. She was run down by an inattentive driver. Kerry was rushed to the hospital unconscious but in those days there was little focus on the potential for brain damage and she was released that day with a bad head ache and muddled memory.

With no follow-up it wasn't until almost a year later that serious investigation began into the continuing inexplicable problems Kerry was experiencing regarding memory, cognition and motor skills. When it was finally determined that she had in fact suffered a serious acquired brain injury (ABI). Unfortunately the critical period of rehabilitation for an ABI was no longer available. The fight to regain a normal life had now taken on a totally different aspect.

Shortly after her diagnosis, it was suggested that she contact the Brain Injury Association of Niagara (BIAN). She did so with initial apprehension. Their knowledge, care and empathy lead to an understanding of what had happened to her and what she could expect in the future. Regular attendance in the Peer groups helped her and her family feel less alone and to formulate strategies to compensate for most of the permanent side effects of her ABI. BIAN helped Kerry get most of her life back. She could never return to her old life but she can now accept her new one and move forward.

This was a marriage of destiny – running club and not-for profit organization. Kerry's Head for the Hills was its offspring, a race designed to offer an interesting experience to runners and give back to an organization that had done so much for Kerry. As traditional sources of financial support for BIAN continue to shrink, events like Kerry's Head for the Hills have become life lines to survival.

Regarding the World Road Race Championships, Kerry competed in the 20 km individual and team race walk event one week after her accident. She had trained hard and was physically ready to compete. Weeks before the accident she had set a Canadian record in a 5K racewalk held in Dearborn Michigan. Despite her exceptional physical conditioning her brain was not ready for this. She struggled throughout the race, lost track of where she was, had to leave the course with a sudden attack of illness and almost quit. She did not quit but finished the race with a time that was slow by her training standards but quick enough to help her team take home bronze medals. She would continue to compete for many years but her competitive edge had been permanently dulled.