Jane and Joe Concato have always been ones to volunteer and assist others. They both came from families that volunteered in the emergency services of their communities.

Their life together started as they married on April 22, 1978. Jane’s career as a Dental Hygienist and Joe’s career in IT enabled a comfortable life-style as they settled in Westwood, NJ. They again became part of the emergency services team and continue as active members to this day.

March 15, 2004 was a day Jane cannot remember, but one that will never be forgotten. It was a Monday morning. Joe was half-awake in bed waiting for the AM alarm. A horrible sound caused him to jump out of bed and see that Jane had fallen down a flight of stairs. It was clear she had survived the fall, but it was also clear that little else was known.

Jane had suffered a traumatic brain injury. Acute care hospitalization addressed immediate medical issues and stabilized her condition. Inpatient rehabilitation was next with cognitive, physical and speech therapies to help with her deficits. Jane returned home 2 months after her initial fall. Over 18 months of outpatient therapies followed.

Adjusting to a new life-style was necessary as it was clear life would never be what it once was. The support of family helped. The assistance provided by friends was invaluable. Continued rehabilitation presented difficulties, but also showed the way to progress that continues to this day.
Attendance at Bergen County and Essex County Brain Injury Support Groups provided a forum where there was camaraderie, caring, compassion and understanding. It also provided an introduction to BIANJ. That introduction led to realization of the impact and prevalence of brain injury.

Volunteer efforts with BIANJ began across many levels. Participation in the Mentor program afforded the opportunity to provide others with one on one conversation and support. Expanded participation in Support Group activities led to becoming facilitators of the Bergen County Group in 2007. It has become a source of great pride for what it has meant to all that attend.

BIANJ has and continues to provide support to enable all that is done. Their direction provided what was needed to begin. As new ideas were presented, their response was eager and positive. Over the years, the Bergen Group, partnering with the Essex Group, has been and continues to be the #1 fundraising team for the Annual Walk for Brain Injury Awareness. Hosting an Annual BBQ provides all with an opportunity to gather at a social event where all can enjoy each other’s company. BIANJ presented Jane with the Mimi Goldman Positive Achievement Award and Jane and Joe with the James and Sarah Brady Community Service Award in recognition for these and other efforts.

All that Jane and Joe have done and will continue to do is part of their passion to assist those impacted by brain injury and provide support for rehabilitation and research. Their strength and perseverance has made this day possible and will continue to lead forward.