

Giving a Hand to Our Helping Hands!

AFTD Volunteer: Brianna Sullivan

Across the United States and Canada, there are volunteers for AFTD that share common and persistent goals of raising awareness, gaining understanding, and supporting the fight against frontotemporal degeneration. AFTD genuinely values our volunteers and their involvement and dedication to help people affected by FTD. A reliable and responsive intern, Brianna Sullivan, works remotely from Boston, where she analyzes data from the AFTD HelpLine to obtain a better understanding of who is contacting AFTD and for what reason they are getting in touch with the association.

Pursuing her Master's Degree in Public Health at Boston University, Brianna originally planned on working with organizations that provided mental health and social support to low-income mothers suffering from anxiety and depression. However, in 2010, Brianna became all too familiar with FTD when her father was diagnosed.

"Processing his diagnosis and dealing with all of the challenges of having a father with FTD was hard enough," stated Brianna. But when complications arose and her father suddenly passed away, Brianna recalls losing all sense of drive, motivation and inspiration. Brianna also remembers feeling a strong sense of isolation because the diagnosis is so rare.



Brianna Sullivan

While trying to get her life back on track last summer, Brianna "stumbled upon the volunteer form on the AFTD website," just as the association was rolling out their first official graduate-level internship program. Some people believe in the saying "perfect timing," and for Brianna—and AFTD—the timing couldn't have been better.

"Information from a regular volunteer form leads us to projects that are wonderfully, mutually beneficial," said Sharon Denny, Program Manager. Brianna's evaluation of the HelpLine allows AFTD to learn more about the service and the needs of the FTD community via the retrieved data.

As the FTD population grows, so does the need for innovative volunteers that are as intellectually curious as Brianna. Brianna believes that "compassion for people and families affected by FTD and some free time – even if just a few hours a week – are really valuable assets in and of themselves."