

# 2010 Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization Honoree

## June Breit

### The Alan Reinstein Memorial Award



As a dedicated and compassionate registered nurse with more than 30 years of experience, June Breit brings a unique perspective to her efforts on behalf of patients and families impacted by asbestos. An inspiration to us all, June continues to win the battle against pleural mesothelioma since she was diagnosed in 2002 and underwent the invasive extrapleural pneumonectomy (EPP) surgery. And the war she has waged against her disease goes well beyond her own personal battleground. June has become a political force to be reckoned with in her home state of Pennsylvania and at the national level, while also providing tireless and loving guidance to other asbestos-disease patients.

June has an enormous gusto for life. Prior to her surgery, she and her husband Howard were avid hikers and cyclists on the nearly endless trails surrounding their home on the outskirts of Philadelphia, a site selected specifically because of the natural beauty and recreation it provides. In addition, she enjoyed free-diving and snorkeling and loved to travel. June's diagnosis came just as she was preparing for her wedding. The house already purchased and the nuptials planned, she and Howard were shocked to discover that what they initially thought was the flu turned out to be a life-changing illness that would impact many of their future plans but not the love they have for each other. Like many, June was left with a myriad of questions about how she developed this disease, particularly with no known occupational exposure, and how she was now going to live with it. As June explains, "That was the beginning of my advocacy because as a nurse and one who had specialized in community health – I saw this as a public health crisis. I was astonished and incensed."

June has turned this anger into action. She has been instrumental to advocacy efforts in Pennsylvania, which tragically holds the third highest rate of asbestos-related disease in the nation. What began as a quest to successfully convince the state's consumer health site to include information on mesothelioma and asbestos related disease soon turned into a meeting with the Governor that led to the annual recognition of Mesothelioma Awareness Day in Pennsylvania. This has been coupled with her continuing political and educational efforts at the national level, fighting for a ban on asbestos and funding for increased treatment options.

A devoted stepmother and grandmother of two, June continues to serve as a central force within her family, and it has grown well beyond her immediate one to include ADAO. As Alan Reinstein, for whom this award is named, knew well – June has given the greatest gift of all to so many who were left feeling abandoned and alone: Hope.

She regularly zips along now on her Segway, spreading her energy and passion for life. "I know the sense of terror someone feels when they are diagnosed. I want them to know they're not alone," says June. "I will keep on fighting; I never give up."

The Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization  
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[www.AsbestosDiseaseAwareness.org](http://www.AsbestosDiseaseAwareness.org)