



Anna Murphy photo

**CHERISHED MEMORIES** — Joseph and Julia Quinlan display a book about their daughter, Karen Ann Quinlan, who was in a coma for 10

years before her parents won the right to take her off life support. Karen's legacy is the Karen Ann Quinlan Center of Hope Hospice.

## Hospice remains legacy for Karen Ann Quinlan

By **DONNA BRADY**  
Herald Staff Writer

**NEWTON** — The name of Karen Ann Quinlan is synonymous with a local hospice that has offered hope and improved the lives of the terminally ill and their families for the past 15 years.

"We didn't know about hospices. All we knew was that there were many families like ours who needed as much help as their dying loved ones," said Julia Quinlan, Karen Ann's mother.

It was 20 years ago that Joseph and Julia Quinlan began waging a lengthy legal battle to have their then 21-year-old daughter, who was brain-damaged and in a coma, removed from a respirator. The highly publicized court case drew attention from around the world and helped provoke the ethical and legal debate over the "right to die" issue.

Karen Ann Quinlan would have turned 41 last week. Her family acknowledged her birthday qui-

etly with a Mass, as they have since she was left comatose on April 15, 1975, about two weeks after her 21st birthday.

Miss Quinlan was found unconscious in her Cranberry Lake bungalow by a friend. She had apparently consumed several alcoholic drinks along with a mild tranquilizer and possibly some aspirin that evening while celebrating a friend's birthday at a Byram tavern. There were reports that she had started a crash diet the previous day and had not eaten for awhile.

The young woman stopped breathing after choking and was without oxygen for about 15 minutes before police arrived. Her parents eventually petitioned the courts to have her life-support system removed when the hospital refused to do so. A state Supreme Court judge granted their petition on March 31, 1976.

Yet it was a hollow victory for the Quinlans because of their daughter's illness. She died at age 31 on June 11, 1985 after 10 years in a coma.

Now, when Julia Quinlan speaks of those dark

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