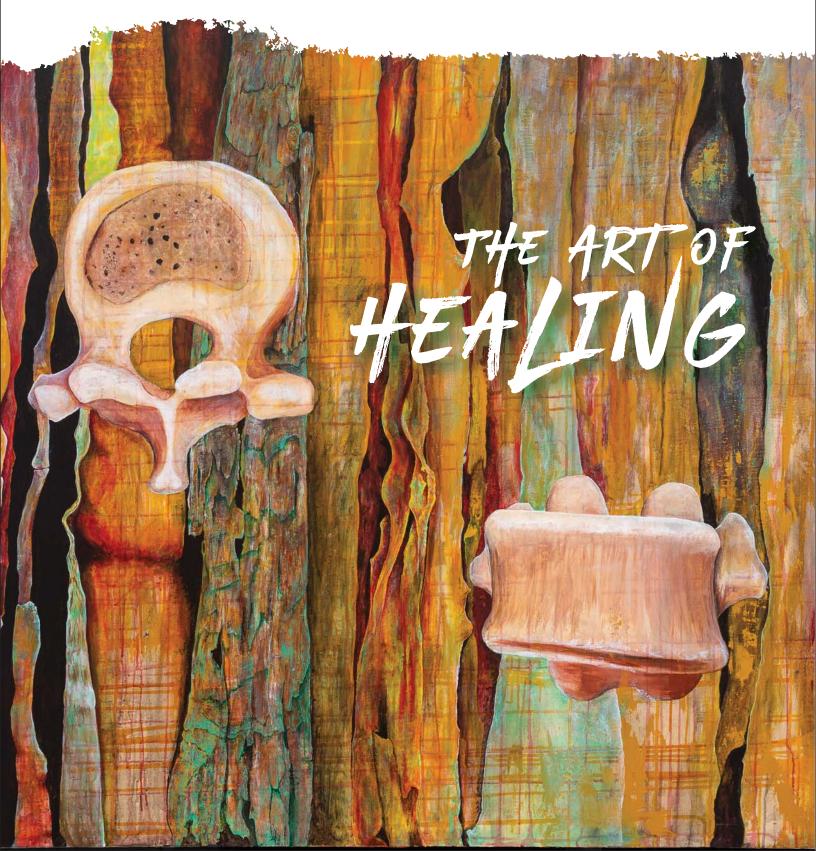


2021-2022 ANNUAL REPORT





The Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation, a certified 501(c)(3), is focused on giving people with spinal cord injuries (SCIs) and their caregivers the support, resources and funding they need to live independent and meaningful lives.

Former Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker Ryan Shazier had his eyes opened to the struggles faced by the vulnerable SCI community during his own inspirational recovery from a life-changing injury. He met countless patients, caregivers and families who endure daily challenges and systemic barriers — and then dedicated his post-football life to helping them.

Today, that mission is being met, as the Fund continues to grow with the help of generous sponsors and community members dedicated to helping others heal.

Pictured on the cover: A close-up of a painting by Jared Quinteros, whose spine was crushed during a tragic hiking incident in 2021.

The painting is titled "T 12" for the vertebrae in his spine that is no longer there as a result of his accident. Jared shares the story of his recovery and love for art later in this report.

(Photo by Richard Kelly)



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I'm proud to share the accomplishments of the Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation with the community, our stakeholders and the people we serve, in this year's annual report. The theme, "THE ART OF HEALING," aligns well with our mission, particularly as we continue to add brushstrokes in refining the programs we offer.

2022 was a year of growth for the Fund, featuring the introduction of innovative programs, record fundraising and creative partnerships that bring us closer to our ultimate goal: helping people with spinal cord injuries (SCIs) and their families find new levels of independence. We couldn't do that without the support of our donors, sponsors, staff and volunteers.

Helping those affected by SCIs is a big part of my personal healing process. As I recovered from my SCI, I found myself on a new, unfamiliar path. I started the Fund after seeing firsthand how life-altering these injuries are for patients and their family members who often serve as primary caregivers. I vowed to do what I can for people who don't have access to the same care that I received. My journey with the Fund was an unexpected personal undertaking, one that has proven to be my calling.

Like me, artist Jared Quinteros wasn't expecting his life to be turned upside down by a tragic accident, but he was among the first people the Fund was able to help, and his magnificent artwork is featured throughout this report. Jared embodies what I like to call, "THE SPIRIT OF SHALIEVE," the belief in yourself, in setting and crushing personal goals, and inspiring others to do the same. He incorporates his story into his art, challenging viewers to find new details woven into his paintings with every glance. His work is equally thought-provoking and joyous as it radiates the power of recovery and personal growth. I hope you'll take the time to appreciate his talent and read his story.

Spinal cord rehabilitation is expensive, painful and exhausting for patients and their caregivers.

As we celebrate the art of healing, together we can make each person's journey a little less difficult.

Yours in healing,

2000

RYAN SHAZIER, FOUNDER



The Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation may be a young organization, but we are already making a significant impact. A major reason is that the communities we serve, those with spinal cord injuries (SCI) and their caregivers, advise us on program design. An SCI impacts an entire family, and everyone involved has healing to do. Therefore, our programs respond to their full range of needs, from medical to mental health. However, this approach takes skill, knowledge and creativity — indeed, there is an **ART TO HEALING**.

What does the art of healing mean to us?

There are two ways to look at "art." First, there is art as skill, acquired through experience, study or observation. For us, that is primarily physical and mental health and related technical treatment and support (legal, financial and technology).

There is also art as a creative activity, traditionally thought of as painting, music, literature and dance. We view that even more broadly to embrace creative opportunities for SCI individuals and their families to have respite, fun and laughter, and to connect and share.

How are we carrying out the art of healing?

Developing Skills:

Our Golden Window Pilot Program is providing support to individuals with SCI to achieve more independent lives through additional rehab sessions, assistive technology and home adaptations. With a particular focus on the first 24 months following an injury — the "Golden Window" — we are helping individuals live more independent lives and reducing dependency on family members and caregivers.

Enabling Creative Opportunities:

Through our Caregiver Portal Program and other initiatives, we provide outings and events, such as the Woodlands Retreats. Private Ryan Time conversations inspire and uplift, and Shalieve Stories move SCI individuals, families and the public at large by sharing the journeys of those who meet and surpass their challenges. And, as we see with Jared Quinteros — who you'll meet later in this report — sometimes the creative side of the art of healing includes art itself.

We hope that our work in these areas give patients and families the tools and the fortitude they need to believe in themselves and keep their inner circle close.

With gratitude to all who have contributed to a very successful second year,

WILLIAM KASSLING

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CAROLINE E. BOYCE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

3

2022 was an incredible period of growth for the Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation, and nowhere was that more evident than in our work with SCI patients, families and caregivers. The following is a brief look at our achievements through programming over the past year.



GOLDEN WINDOW

The Window is open - and there's no closing it now.

After a year of planning, the Fund's Golden Window Program, named for the crucial period of recovery following a spinal cord injury, kicked off both its trial and pilot programs. The Fund granted more than \$140,000 in stipends to 12 individuals, aimed at providing specific support and services that will help them live meaningful and independent lives.

The projects and services funded by the stipends included:

- In-home elevator installation
- Stairlift purchase and installation
- Adaptive driving equipment purchase, installation and instruction
- Accessible van
- Rehabilitation sessions, including physical, occupational, aqua and activity-based therapies
- One-on-one coaching with a licensed nutritionist
- Home exercise equipment, including functional electrical stimulation bikes and recumbent steppers
- Home modifications to design accessible hallways and bathrooms
- All-terrain wheelchair purchase and upgrades
- Accessible rental van for travel to out-of-state rehabilitation facilities

This year's recipients were from Allegheny and Westmoreland counties, but the program will expand its borders in the years to come.







WOODLANDS FAMILY RETREATS

Through a partnership with the Woodlands Foundation, a nonprofit focused on enriching the lives of individuals with disabilities, the Fund was able to give SCI individuals and families an opportunity to participate in recreational activities, work with trained counselors and connect with other families.

During Fall 2021 and Spring 2022, 10 families and 60 individuals enjoyed the rejuvenating weekend getaways at Woodlands Family Retreats at the Woodlands Foundation's campus north of Pittsburgh. Participants enjoyed adaptive golf, swimming and handcycling exercises, and caregivers were given time to convene with Ryan's wife, Michelle Shazier, to discuss their daily challenges, hopes and achievements. These special getaways allow children and adults with SCIs to engage with others in ways that enhance their quality of life, all while gaining skills to enhance their autonomy, independence and self-sufficiency.

















SCI STREET FAIR

It's not always about work. Sometimes, we all need to party.

Alongside our great partners, including The Edgar Snyder and Associates Foundation, The Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation, Bakery Square, Alta Via Pizzeria and the Human Engineering Research Laboratory (HERL), the Fund hosted its first Spinal Cord Injury Street Fair in Bakery Square on August 21, 2022.

It was a fun and supportive environment for SCI families to gather and connect. Over 150 people — including 15 individuals with SCIs and their caregivers — participated in the fair's activities.

SCI SURVEY

In July of 2022, the Fund conducted a survey of individuals with SCIs to collect helpful data to strengthen and better inform our program offerings. Questions prompted respondents to reflect on specific resources and services they'd like to see in their engagement with the Fund. Nearly 1,000 individuals from around the United States participated in the survey, providing the organization with some illuminating insights.

- Respondents were most interested in events specifically for those with SCIs (79%), followed by full family outings and events (15%).
- Respondents indicated they're most interested in attending sporting events with the Fund (11%), followed closely by cultural events (concerts, museums, etc.)(10%), then participatory activities (cooking classes, art classes, etc.)(6%).

INSPIRING THE SCI COMMUNITY

Recovering from an SCI is mentally exhausting, so we know the importance of inspiration.

In 2022, we hosted 26 Ryan Times, private conversations in which Ryan meets with an SCI individual or family to encourage them on their journey. We also highlighted SCI individuals and caregivers doing extraordinary things with our Shalieve Stories, tales of perseverance and hope shared on our website and social media outlets.

The Fund's reach expanded in Year 2, as we took our position as a significant presence in the region's nonprofit scene and beyond.













The year's highlight — and among the biggest events on Pittsburgh's 2022 social calendar — was the inaugural Run for the Black and Gold. The mock horse racing event (think of the Kentucky Derby with a yinzer flair) featured celebrity "jockeys," including current and former Steelers such as Cameron Heyward, T.J. Watt, Franco Harris and Joey Porter. With the help of a silent auction, the event grossed more than \$700,000.

The Run, which will return in 2023, was one of several significant achievements during an incredibly successful year:

- We were a first-time co-beneficiary of the UPMC Celebrity Classic Golf Tournament and Gala.
- The Edgar Snyder and Associates Foundation stepped forward to sponsor our Caregivers program.
- We enjoyed a significant increase in support outside of western Pennsylvania.
- We put in place more infrastructure for future fundraising success.



SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

36%

Increase in social media reach over the past year

5,000+

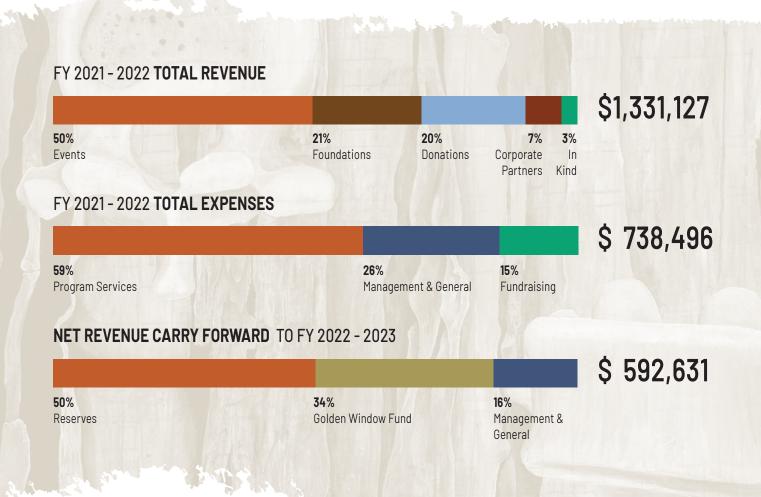
Total fans across the Fund's social platforms

44%

Year-over-year growth on Instagram

The Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation has a long-term strategy to ensure our mission to support individuals with SCIs and their families is sustainable and scalable.

2021-2022 was our second full year as an organization. We continued our focus on minimizing expenses, while raising funds to support program start up and establishing two board-designated funds for the Golden Window Program and Operating Reserves. Our fundraising exceeded expectations enabling us to set aside \$500,000 for those two funds, and carry forward \$92,000 to support organizational operations in 2022-2023.



'Finding That Safe Place': Painting is Healing for Artist Bouncing Back from Tragedy



In 2021, Jared Quinteros and his wife Kara
Leo were hiking along the Morton Ravine
Trail in Upper St. Clair, PA, when a falling
tree branch killed her and crushed his spine.
Jared, an artist, was one of the first people
served by the Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal
Rehabilitation, and it's his art that is
featured prominently throughout this
Annual Report. We sat down with Jared to
have him share his story and talk about the
healing power of art.

When did you start painting?

I started as a little kid. I had kind of a rough childhood, so it was my outlet as a kid. I remember the first thing I did — I think I was about 5 or 6 — I got a posterboard and drew a scene of a "Star Wars" battle [laughs]. And that's the first thing that I remember that I actually did. I went around the neighborhood trying to sell my "Star Wars" painting.

Talk a little about your style of painting:

I guess, over the course of life, things happen.
I remember in high school, I used to do a lot of charcoal drawings. I did portraits and things like that, where I'd focus on all the fine details — learning how to measure out the human body, proportions and all those things, learning perspective.

I won a couple of awards. I got artist of the year my junior and senior year, which as a junior you weren't supposed to get that. I got some scholarship money and bought a bunch of art supplies.

I think it was in late high school when I started to get dark with some of my stuff. I started to create things that were more abstract. Something about it felt more comfortable to me. Things that you don't necessarily take at face value, that you look at and you think, "I see this. I see that." There was a lot more emotion that was happening in there for me. It kind of took off from there.

I moved out to San Francisco from Phoenix and continued to do it. And that's when I started to sell some work — did some shows there, little things — and it snowballed from there. (continued on next page)

'Finding That Safe Place': Painting is Healing for Artist Bouncing Back from Tragedy (continued)

How has art played a role in your recovery?

It's huge. My art was like my life before I met my wife 20 years ago — that was all I did. I was known for my Volkswagens and my art and that was kind of it. Meeting my wife, I feel like I got busy with other things in life. I always say I was too happy to paint when I was with her. It felt like everything was hunky dory. I tried to paint a lot and just struggled to do it. It just didn't have the same oomph for me. With my childhood being rough, it was my outlet, my safe place and how I dealt with a lot of things.

Having the spinal cord injury took me to the same kind of place of needing my art, of finding that safe place for myself to put my emotions into it. Having that while going through everything I went through, losing my wife, losing my legs, learning how to live in a different way, it's been my go-to spot for myself. I can take all this raw emotion and put it into a canvas and walk away from it and be OK. I can't skateboard anymore, and that was a good outlet, too — but I can still paint.

Do you view your SCI as a core part of your work or would you say you're more of an artist who has a spinal cord injury?

That's a good question. I think my spinal cord injury definitely affects my art, both physically and emotionally. Physically, I am restricted on what I can do because I can't reach a lot of stuff, and I'm still trying to figure out how to do that. Learning to stretch a large canvas by myself, that was a challenge. Really, it's trying to engineer a new way to do it.

I guess I'm an artist with a spinal cord injury, more so than it's who I am. It definitely affects everything I do.

What message do you try to convey about spinal cord injuries through your art?

I've done a few pieces that have been practically linked to my spinal cord injury, like the one of my broken spine — the one of the vertebrae that's missing from my back.



I guess there's a strange beauty in what it is. You've got an x-ray of my broken spine, and the miracle that they could actually repair this. So, to look at it in a painting, in an image like that, I'm sure it's hard to look at for some people, but at the same time it's beautiful that you can take something like that and fix it. As time goes on and things progress, I'm hoping to get further away from having to paint the stuff that's closer to my spinal cord injury, kind of expand and try different things. I don't want to get comfortable painting the same thing.

What, for you, is success as an artist?

For anybody who has the time and space in their life to create, that's a success, whether you're making money at that or not. ... If you're in a way of living that you have that time and space in your life, that's pretty incredible.

The Fund talks a lot about the whole concept of "Shalieve," the belief in yourself, in setting and crushing personal goals, and inspiring others to do the same. Ryan has described you as someone who embodies that spirit of Shalieve. How does that make you feel?

That means a lot, coming from a guy who has overcome as much as he has. I look at him being a younger guy, having such a great head on his shoulders, going through such a horrific experience, and coming through on the other side of it with so much positivity. ... I feel honored to have him speak of me that way.

I've heard from other people who have said nice things about me in that way, and I don't really see myself like that so much. Really, at the end of the day, I'm just trying to be OK, you know? I see where I can help other people out. I feel that drives my want to put that positivity out there and inspire others to keep being positive.

We would like to extend a heartfelt "Thank You" to all of our contributors and sponsors for their generous support.

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"Mission for Miracles is dedicated to supporting the Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation's mission of giving those with spinal cord injuries and their caregivers the support, resources, and funding they need to live independent and meaningful lives.

As a family that faced life-altering spinal cord and brain injuries, we know firsthand the importance of building a solid community around recovery and rehabilitation. It's crucial to help those we may never meet, so the entire SCI community has the equal opportunity to experience healthy and prosperous lives beyond their injuries."

- JOHN THROCKMORTON

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"We support the Ryan Shazier Fund because we believe in the mission and the leadership of the organization. Ryan's personal experience is eye-opening and inspirational."

- MELISSA & MICHAEL STRATOS

As this report highlights, 2022 was a year in which the Fund truly took its place as a force in the western Pennsylvania nonprofit landscape and set up infrastructure to step onto the national stage. Our work, however, is only beginning. In building on the previous year's efforts, we'll be focusing on four areas in 2023:

IMPROVING PATHWAYS TO RESOURCES

Everything the Fund does is geared toward helping SCI individuals live more full and independent lives, but perhaps nothing has a more obvious impact than guiding these people to life-changing resources. Last year saw the growth of our Golden Window program, and in 2023, we'll be launching a formal Caregiver Navigator program and partnering with organizations that share a similar mission, such as Community Living and Support Services (CLASS). Additionally, following great feedback from our Woodlands retreats sessions, we're opening them up to more participants. Upgrades are also coming to our website to feature a more user-friendly interface to drive visitors to resources.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR MENTORING AND SHARING

The best connections we can make are among those who intimately understand each other's problems. That's why we'll be establishing private Facebook communities for SCI individuals and families from far and wide to share their experiences and build networks of support. We'll also increase opportunities for fun in-person events with SCI families.

INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS

The Fund's reputation is growing, but there are many more people from the SCI community and general public to reach, not to mention potential donors. To meet that goal, we'll focus on cultivating our social media channels, hosting more community-based events like the SCI Street Fair, and sharing Shalieve Stories, which will expand to include caregivers' stories.

CONTINUING TO BUILD AN IMPACTFUL AND SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION

As the Fund grows and evolves, so must our operations. In the next year, we'll update our business plan and core governing documents to recognize where we currently stand. Furthermore, we are continuing to expand our fundraising efforts to help us meet our goals, as well as continuing to build a diverse board that reflects our organizational priorities.

Most of all, in 2023, we'll be focused on changing the lives of more SCI individuals than ever. And that's a goal we're certain to achieve.







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We always welcome hearing from supporters and those interested in learning about how they can be a part of the Fund. See below for information on how to contact us and where to find us on social media.

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Email info@ryanshazierfund.org

Phone 412-356-2057

SOCIAL MEDIA

facebook.com/ryanshazierfund

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DONATE

The quickest and easiest way to donate to the Fund is at our website: **ryanshazierfund.org**. You can set up one-time or recurring gifts, as well as dedicate the donation in memory of or in honor of someone.

2022 was a remarkable year for the Fund, and we know 2023 will be even better, all thanks to supporters like you!