

REACT



RYAN SHAZIER
FUND FOR SPINAL REHABILITATION

Serving the SCI community

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

When Ryan Shazier suffered a life-altering spinal contusion during a Steelers game in 2017, he quickly learned how the impact of an SCI extends to every facet of life – from physical, mental and emotional health to relationships with family, caregivers and the larger community.

After navigating obstacles along his own SCI journey with support from those around him, Ryan has remained committed to pouring that support back into the community, and helping SCI patients and their families get the treatment and resources they deserve through the Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation.

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MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER



I'm excited to share the accomplishments of the Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation in this year's annual report to the community, to our stakeholders and to the people we serve. Our third year was marked by remarkable growth and an extension of our reach into the spinal cord community and beyond.

We continued to hone our program offerings and to build strong partnerships that bring us closer to meeting our ultimate goal: helping people with spinal cord injuries (SCIs) and their families find new levels of independence. Much like in my professional playing days, success is a team effort, and it takes pushing yourself to meet new goals.

We couldn't accomplish these goals without the support of our staff, sponsors, donors, volunteers and community partners. I'm particularly proud of the leadership role that we have taken. This year's Bridging the Gaps Convening, which you'll read more about in this report, was the first meeting of its kind to pull together stakeholders in the Greater Pittsburgh SCI community. We made great strides as a collective for building a future where we collaborate more effectively for the sake of the people we serve.

Such stretch goals are challenging, but they are also important. They are the building blocks for remarkable achievements in the long term. They take us out of our comfort zone and push us to aim higher with our existing resources, projects and targets.

I started the Fund after seeing first-hand just how life-altering a spinal cord injury is both for patients and their families who often serve as primary caregivers. Having been through that, I vowed to do what I could for people who didn't have the resources and access to care that I did. Since that time, expanding our reach has led us to improve our processes and to be focused on innovation. It requires working differently, not simply working harder.

It's been a remarkable journey, and I thank you for sharing it with me. Spinal cord rehabilitation is expensive, painful and exhausting for patients and their caregivers. Together we can help make each person's journey a little less difficult and a lot more rewarding.

Yours in healing,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "R-Shazier". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

*Ryan Shazier, Founder
Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation*

MESSAGE FROM OUR Board President & Executive Director



The spirit of “Shalieve” is embodied in the DNA of the Ryan Shazier Fund. It is the heart of everything we do and is the catalyst for the progress we have made toward a vision of being a comprehensive point of contact for SCI individuals. We continue to reach for the next level.

This year, expansion of the Golden Window Program to eastern Ohio, northern West Virginia and all of western Pennsylvania, was our most significant accomplishment. We applied our learnings from the Golden Window Pilot, refined the program, evaluated our capacity and are now providing support to SCI individuals in 47 counties in three states.

The Ryan Shazier Fund is deeply committed to its mission. But it will take collaboration with others playing critical roles in the field to reach our goal of improving the pathways for SCI individuals and their families to access needed services and resources. We convened, for the first time, 60 southwestern Pennsylvania-based providers and SCI leaders to discuss how we can work together. The Bridging the Gaps Coalition was formed to continue the conversation and to take concrete action steps to establish a regional SCI Resource Service Navigation Network. The Fund is serving as the Coalition’s convener, and the Coalition is led by a steering committee of coalition participants appointed by our board of directors.

In order to reach the next level, it is important to have a game plan. The success of the Fund’s first three years

was grounded in a carefully prepared business plan. To prepare the organization for the next two to three years, our Strategic Planning Committee, under the leadership of Kate Dewey, worked with the StepUpPgh team from Deloitte to create a new plan. Updated priorities include:

- Improve access to SCI services and resources by collaborating with other non-profit organizations
- Provide predictable and sustainable support by establishing a “steady state” of operations in our service area, including diversifying and growing revenue, particularly to support the Golden Window Program
- Increase awareness by broadening the Fund’s social media presence
- Improve the opportunities for therapy/ rehabilitation by supporting the building of an activity-based therapy center within the Pittsburgh area, with a physical presence for the Fund.

We are proud of what we accomplished this year and are optimistic about the year ahead. With a clear mission and plan, and all of the people that support us, we are ready to reach for the next level.

WILLIAM KASSLING
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CAROLINE E. BOYCE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Convening and collaborating with SCI individuals, advocates, caregivers and providers to bridge the gaps

In the United States, there are approximately 54 SCI cases per one million people, or about 17,810 new SCI cases each year. Many individuals in the SCI community, from patients to their families, caregivers, advocates and service providers are impacted by gaps in resources and support, and a lack of overall awareness about the SCI experience.

In June 2023, the Fund worked with Praxis Consulting Group – a development consulting firm that helps organizations achieve their goals through leadership development, strategic planning and facilitation and cultural change – to organize an in-person SCI summit titled “Bridging the Gaps: Improving Access to Spinal Cord Injury Services, Resources & Support.”

Held at the DoubleTree in Green Tree, Pittsburgh, and with the support of the

Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation, the two-day convening brought together more than 60 SCI community members (individuals, families, providers and nonprofits) in conversations and workshops aimed at improving access to SCI resources and support. Attendees shared moving stories and insights about their experiences accessing, receiving and administering care, and discussed unmet needs of patients, families and caregivers. (continued)

“Insurance and transportation are the biggest hurdles to accessing physical therapy. Sometimes getting from rural areas to the appropriate regions for therapy and treatment is impossible for patients.”

– CHRIS VENUS





“Our goal is to tackle the gaps that exist in bringing resources and access to patients that need them.”

— RYAN SHAZIER

After a panel discussion on day one that featured a mix of SCI patients, caregivers and advocates, participants convened in five breakout groups centered around key SCI themes: Outpatient Support, Caregiver Support, Recreation, Advocacy and Policy, and Disability Services. The breakout discussions shed light on many of the differences in people’s experiences when seeking care and support.

Through collaborative discussions, participants set actionable goals to inspire and influence their work, advocacy and communication with other SCI community members going forward. One of the main goals and projects participants chose to focus on in the coming months and years is an SCI resource and support network to educate, connect and build a community of advocates, patients, caregivers and providers online and eventually, in person.

Attendees organized taskforce subcommittees to continue a more regular cadence of meetings and collaboration outside of the convening to advance the overall mission of improving health and well-being, quality of life and access to care for the SCI community. From that, the Bridging the Gaps Coalition of Greater Pittsburgh was created.

“Because I’ve been around this for such a period of time – personally living with a spinal cord injury but also in the work environment –today’s convening reminded me of how broken people can be in the early stages. There’s this uneasiness of, ‘what kind of world have I been thrown into?’”

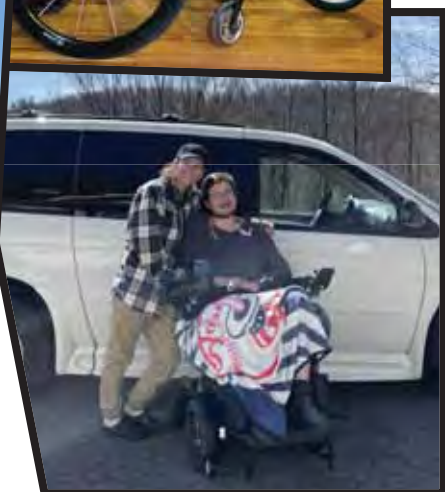
— JOHN SIKORA



Events and accomplishments in 2022-2023

This past year was a special year for the Fund, one that brought new opportunities for collaboration and problem-solving with others in the community, as well as more opportunities for growth, learning and adventure. The following is a summary of our programming accomplishments over the past year.

GOLDEN WINDOW



Funding essential SCI resources and equipment

The Fund launched its Golden Window stipend program and Caregivers Portal to help SCI patients and their families cover the cost of essential resources and build community. We provide direct support in the form of stipends of up to \$15,000 under the Golden Window program for eligible support services including additional rehab sessions, home modifications, adaptive vehicles and exercise equipment, depending on applicants' individual needs and circumstances.

Our efforts this past year through the Golden Window program allowed us to fund two wheelchair accessible vans, seven pieces of in-home exercise equipment to encourage physical activity, two standing frames, four pieces of mobility equipment, the installation of 10 ramps/vertical platform lifts and payment for 275 additional rehabilitation sessions.

We purchased application and grant administration software from Submittable that will be beneficial for the Golden Window program as we continue to grow financially and broaden our geographical reach.

Reaching more SCI patients with the expansion of services

In just over three years, the Fund has expanded its services from Allegheny and Westmoreland counties to a two-hour radius outside of Pittsburgh, including western Pennsylvania, northern West Virginia and eastern Ohio and the Columbus market.

The Fund is working strategically with key stakeholders to determine the best way to leverage our efforts to support the SCI community. We are particularly concerned with addressing the needs of underserved populations in both urban and rural communities.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WOODLANDS FAMILY RETREATS

Providing fun, relaxation and connection for SCI families

Twice a year, our team looks forward to hosting immersive retreats at the Woodlands Foundation site in Wexford, Pa. The fully accessible facility and grounds offer an ideal environment for activities, relaxation, and peer-to-peer mentoring and connection.

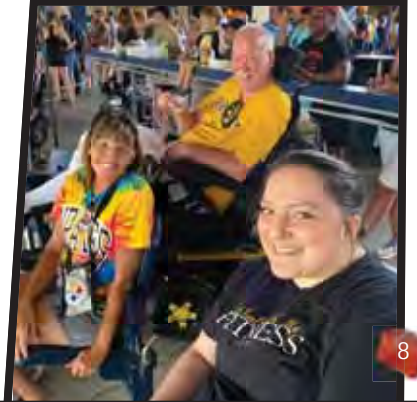
In fall 2022, we hosted our third Annual Woodlands Family Retreat with six families that stayed overnight, and several SCI individuals who joined as day campers. In addition to enjoying Woodlands' many adaptive offerings, including swimming, golf, games and art, we made s'mores by the campfire and spent time with mental health professionals from Untethered Therapy, who helped foster meaningful connection and communication among participants.



PITTSBURGH PIRATES GAME

A day at the ballpark

It is part of the Fund's strategy to build a thriving SCI community through social events and outings. During baseball season, the Fund got to cheer on our home team, the Buccos! We took 85 SCI individuals and their friends and family to a Pirates game. Everyone had a great time on this beautiful summer day!



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

CLIMBING EVENT



Reaching new heights with the grip of each rock

The Fund hosted an adaptive climbing event at ASCEND in Point Breeze, which opened its doors in November 2022. The facility was designed to suit all types of climbers, including those with adaptive needs.

Twelve individuals with SCI and their family members had an incredible time scaling the climbing wall using adaptive equipment.

A team of trained volunteers ensured a safe and fun event and encouraged the climbers as they took on this exciting challenge.

Just like the climbers, the Fund continues to extend its reach and is always looking for ways to bring the SCI community together.



UPMC CELEBRITY CLASSIC

Golfing for a good cause

This past year, PNC Bank was once again the presenting sponsor of the Fund's annual golf outing, where we teamed up with the UPMC Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation to raise more than \$100,000 for research and the care of people with SCIs. The golf outing was a terrific opportunity to honor the individuals and institutions that are working to improve the health, well-being and quality of life of all those living with and affected by SCIs.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

RUN FOR THE BLACK AND GOLD



Reaching new milestones with the support of others

The Fund held its annual Run for the Black and Gold fundraising event at Acrisure Stadium in May, and in only its second year, the run has become one of the region's signature fundraising events.

The mock horse racing event featured celebrity "jockeys" including founder Ryan Shazier. He was joined by other players and supporters including current Steelers, Cam Heyward and Kenny Pickett. Someone in the crowd also bid to be a mystery jockey.

Along with delicious food and awesome entertainment, the live auction raised more than \$600,000 and will allow the Fund to provide direct support to SCI individuals and caregivers throughout the year.

WEBSITE UPGRADE

Reaching a bigger audience with each new post

The Fund launched a new website this year which features a user-friendly design and a more robust resource section. Links to information regarding funding resources, educational scholarships, peer support and disability services, to name a few, are now available.

A site highlight is the Shalieve stories, which now not only introduces SCI individuals but also caregivers. This addition allows the reader to gain the perspective of each group and delve into the personal stories of members of the community. The strength, bravery and determination of everyone featured is truly encouraging.

Social media helps to create a supportive and growing community around people with SCIs. The Fund started a private Facebook group in 2022 for people to interact with others facing similar situations, share resources and enjoy conversation. The Fund is also increasing the number of posts and videos across all social media platforms to continue to spread awareness and bring more people together.



Reach

5.5 K fans across social media platforms

52.6% increase in FB reach over the past year

101.7% increase in IG reach over the past year

653 new FB followers this year (an increase of 4.1%)

796 new IG followers

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

JUNE 30, 2023 and 2022

	2023	2022
<u>Assets</u>		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,112,276	\$ 1,007,976
Promises to give	222,828	214,488
Prepaid expenses	13,512	2,497
Total Assets	\$ 1,348,616	\$ 1,224,961
<u>Liabilities and Net Assets</u>		
<u>Liabilities:</u>		
Accounts payable	\$ 155,825	\$ 104,197
Awards payable	128,761	113,461
Accrued wages	8,610	25,747
Accrued compensated absences	16,086	-
Accrued expenses	7,871	1,768
Total Liabilities	317,153	245,173
<u>Net Assets:</u>		
Without donor restrictions		
Board-designated	550,000	550,000
Undesignated	391,313	292,741
Total without donor restrictions	941,313	842,741
With donor restrictions	90,150	137,047
Total Net Assets	1,031,463	979,788
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 1,348,616	\$ 1,224,961

A complete set of audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2023 is available at www.ryanshazierfund.org/about/

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

Year Ended June 30, 2023

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenues and Other Support:			
Contributions	\$ 495,798	\$ 130,000	\$ 625,798
Contributed nonfinancial assets	3,000	-	3,000
Gross special event revenue:			
Tickets, auction, and jockeys	640,353	-	640,353
Contributed nonfinancial assets	-	-	-
Less: cost of direct benefits to donors	(241,370)	-	(241,370)
Net special events revenue	398,983	-	398,983
Other income	2	-	2
Net assets released from restrictions	176,897	(176,897)	-
Total revenues and other support	1,074,680	(46,897)	1,027,783
Expenses:			
Program services	615,028	-	615,028
Management and general	174,829	-	174,829
Fundraising	186,251	-	186,251
Total expenses	976,108	-	976,108
Change in Net Assets	98,572	(46,897)	51,675
Net Assets:			
Beginning of year	842,741	137,047	979,788
End of year	\$ 941,313	\$ 90,150	\$ 1,031,463

A complete set of audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2023 is available at www.ryanshazierfund.org/about/

CONTRIBUTORS & SPONSORS

A heartfelt "Thank You" to all of our contributors and sponsors for their generous support. You are making a difference to the lives of SCI individuals and their families.

\$50,000 AND ABOVE

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For more than 40 years, Edgar Snyder & Associates has been committed to giving back to the community. In 2021, the firm formalized those efforts by establishing the Edgar Snyder & Associates Foundation.

The Foundation made an inaugural gift of \$100,000 to The Ryan Shazier Fund for Spinal Rehabilitation to help establish the Family and Caregiver Program with the goal of creating an emotional support system and access to resources for those caring for an individual living with a spinal cord injury.

Because Edgar Snyder & Associates (ESA) has decades of experience helping clients who have been hurt in accidents, one of the primary goals of their Foundation is to support those who have sustained injuries as well as their caretakers. ESA and the Shazier Fund are entering the third year of their partnership and looking to expand the work they do together in 2024.

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"Since my SCI injury in Feb. 2022 my life and my family's life were altered forever. The loss of my ability to move and a constant sense of dread and desperation were overwhelming. I knew I was a burden to my family and that alone caused me such a sense of depression.

"I watched videos and clips of Ryan and his strength and determination. He was and always will be a role model for me. I may have a few 'years up on him' but I can learn from him!"

"I want to express my sincere gratitude to everyone at the Ryan Shazier Fund for helping me to acquire a scooter. In addition, I am very grateful for the funding from the Golden Window program to receive the Botox injections, which are enabling me to move my feet and joints more freely and less painfully.

"The scooter gives me such a sense of freedom and normalcy. Prior to receiving the scooter, I was only able to walk with the aid of a walker and cane very short distances. I could not even walk to our mailbox. How my world has changed! I am now the talk of the neighborhood. I can motor to our neighborhood pool and chat with all my friends. I am now able to attend my grandchildren's soccer and baseball games. Honestly, the sense of autonomy and connection that this generous gift has created is nothing short of a wonder."

— ARTHUR SPRINGER

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"I honestly don't know how as a single mom I would have been able to afford my daughter's rehabilitation program without the Ryan Shazier Fund's Golden Window program. And the difference it has made has been remarkable. Mary showed more progress in those two-and-a-half months of rehab than she did in the three years since her accident.

"She keeps progressing, and what she knows is possible is growing. Having the light of hope lit again means everything."

— PAM SURANO

This particular award was funded in part by the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation.

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Ronald M. & Tracy L. Syphrit
Taylor Takacs
Manoj & Geetika Tandon
Carvel Forrest Tefft
The Pittsburgh Foundation
Three Rivers Paintball
Robert Trostler
Michael Tucker
Paul Uhler
Joshua Vaughn
Kirk J. & Cory L. Vogel
Robert Volosky
Zachary Walsh
William & Margaret Wamboldt
Dawn Wanninger
Adrienne Ward
Michael Ward
Ethel Warren
Jimmy Wells
Wells Fargo Foundation Education
Matching Gifts Program
Robert & Karen Wengryn Jr.
Amanda White
David White
James White
Chase Willis
Mark Woodburn
Arthur P. Woods
Tammy Wright
Xycom Technology
Xinyan Ye
Russ York
Wesley Young
Youngstown Crew
Robin Zoufalik

What does the future hold for the Fund?

We couldn't be happier with the events, services, relationship building and community outreach we accomplished over the past year, and we have much to look forward to in terms of expanding our reach and impact for the SCI community in the year ahead.

Building upon connections

We remain committed to building upon the connections made through our Bridging the Gaps meetings and strategically expanding our service reach into eastern Ohio, including Columbus and northern West Virginia.

Improving pathways to resources

We will continue to center our work around the key goals of improving pathways to resources for SCI individuals and caregivers, increasing in-person opportunities for SCI families to engage in fun, meaningful and community-oriented activities, and enabling more families to participate in outings like the Woodlands retreat.

Achieving stronger social media reach

Through achieving stronger social media reach, hosting community events like the SCI FunFest, and continuing to share Shalieve stories, as well as SCI caregiver stories, we hope to increase public awareness of the Fund and our work, and of the reality of SCIs.

Growing an impactful and sustainable organization

Finally, our team will continue to grow an impactful and sustainable organization by updating our business plan, diversifying our fundraising efforts, and building a board that reflects our organizational priorities and the diverse demographics of the regions we serve. Every SCI patient and story looks different, and we're here to honor those differences, every day, in our work and engagement.



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Keeping up with community members is a critical component of our SCI advocacy and outreach. We love hearing from existing families, volunteers, donors and partners in our network, as well as new individuals looking to learn more about how they can make an impact on the Fund and its mission. See below for more information on how to connect with us and where to find us on social media.

CONTACT US

Email info@ryanshazierfund.org

Phone 412-356-2057

SOCIAL MEDIA



<https://www.facebook.com/ryanshazierfund/>



<https://twitter.com/ryanshazierfund?lang=en>



<https://www.instagram.com/ryanshazierfund/?hl=en>

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.

2023 was a year of great accomplishments, exploration and collaboration for the Fund, and we look forward to all that 2024 has to offer, thanks to continued support from people like you!