

# VOLUNTEER news

A newsletter for Shepherd Center Auxiliary & Volunteers

July 2024



***Volunteer Services will be closed on Thursday, July 4 for Independence Day.***

## **Welcome, Rebecca!**

We are pleased to announce that Rebecca Shearin has joined the Volunteer Services team as Family Support Service Coordinator! With her kind, caring, and empathetic nature, Rebecca will serve our patient family members well. She was born in Columbia, South Carolina, and raised in Mableton, Georgia. Rebecca majored in Film & Media at Georgia State University and minored in Studio Art. She's been married to her husband, Mike, for seven years and has a 14-year-old son, Sam, and a 5-year-old daughter, Cassie. Rebecca and Mike encourage their children to always be willing to try something new and to be genuine in how they're feeling or what they're thinking. In her childhood, Rebecca fondly remembers learning to crochet from her grandmother, a hobby she still enjoys. Her other hobbies range from baking and photography to painting and film projects. Besides creative outlets, Rebecca also volunteers on her son's swim team council. She organizes volunteers for swim meets and keeps the swim team's social media posts up to date. Rebecca is excited to have a job with purpose and community. Welcome, Rebecca! We are so glad to have you.



**SCI Ventures Launches Venture Philanthropy Fund to Accelerate Restorative Treatments for Spinal Cord Injury and a Cure for Paralysis**



NEW YORK and LONDON, June 10, 2024 – [SCI Ventures](#), a new venture philanthropy vehicle dedicated to funding and commercializing innovative treatments for spinal cord injury, today announced the launch of its first fund. SCI Ventures’ mission is to advance breakthroughs for people living with paralysis by supporting promising cure-oriented therapies and emerging technologies. The fund launches with \$27 million in commitments and anticipates raising \$40 million by year-end.

Spinal cord injury (SCI) affects more than 15 million people globally, and options to address the dramatic impact on their quality of life are currently limited. Beyond the loss of movement, paralysis impacts bowel, bladder, and sexual functions—and comes with massive financial costs. SCI is one of the most expensive medical conditions to manage: average lifetime costs range from \$2.9 million for paraplegia and up to \$6 million for high tetraplegia.

SCI Ventures is led by a team of professionals with expertise in venture capital, technology, and science with deep personal connections to the cause and is advised by world-class neuroscientists. By serving as an early-stage investor with extensive sector expertise, SCI Ventures aims to catalyze funding for the SCI space. There are many commonalities between spinal cord injuries and adjacent conditions such as stroke and neurodegenerative disorders. Therefore, SCI Ventures is confident the technologies backed by the Fund will yield high impact beyond the SCI community.

The launch of SCI Ventures marks the first time that five of the leading foundations addressing spinal cord injury in the U.S., U.K., and EU have come together in support of a novel investment vehicle. Co-Founders are the [Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation](#), [Wings for Life](#), the [International Spinal Research Trust](#) (“Spinal Research”), the [Promobilia Foundation](#), and [Shepherd Center](#). The venture philanthropy fund model was pioneered in SCI by the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, which led SCI Ventures’ first investments in the technology company ONWARD® Medical and AXONIS Therapeutics. SCI Ventures is building on this progress and industrializing the model.

“Recent scientific and technological advancements have made recovery from paralysis a real possibility for the first time in history. However, while treatments to restore function for people with spinal cord injury have shown promise in lab settings, transferring these treatments to clinical settings remains a stubborn barrier,” said Adrien Cohen, Founding Managing Director of SCI Ventures.

“We’re bridging that gap by providing financial and operational support to promising early-stage companies. As an expert investor, we plan to attract more capital to the SCI space by lowering the investment risk through the combined network and knowledge of our backing foundations,” he added.

SCI Ventures is an independently managed fund focusing on seed and Series A financing rounds. It will redeploy 100% of its investment gains into additional companies working toward the mission to cure paralysis. SCI Ventures plans to support up to 20 companies and has already established a growing portfolio of investments, including:

- [ONWARD® Medical](#), which provides targeted stimulation of the spinal cord to restore movement and other functions, alone or in combination with brain-computer interface (BCI) technology for thought-driven movement
- [AXONIS Therapeutics](#), which focuses on advancing drug discoveries for neuron revival and neuromodulation
- [Sania Therapeutics](#), a gene therapy company that can selectively target dysfunctional neural circuits, starting with spasticity
- [AUGMENTAL](#), which is developing the MouthPad^: an in-mouth interface for hands-free human-computer interaction

“We’re proud to continue innovating and leading in our shared mission to restore function to people with spinal cord injuries and eventually cure paralysis,” said Maggie Goldberg, President and CEO of the Reeve Foundation. “SCI Ventures is a unique model and an opportunity to bring together leaders from across the SCI and paralysis fields to offer resources and expertise that, when combined, can create lasting, positive impact.”

“We have experienced first-hand the immense challenges people with paralysis face each day, so Wings for Life is incredibly proud to be a co-founding member of SCI Ventures and an enabler of breakthrough treatments,” said Anita Gerhardtter, Global CEO of Wings for Life. “We see great potential in the emerging companies in SCI Ventures’ portfolio, and we are more confident than ever that people who are injured today will be the first generation that does not have to live with paralysis for the rest of their lives.”



## Pursuing Possible

The Campaign for Shepherd Center

On Friday, June 7, Shepherd Center celebrated the “topping out” for the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation. This is an incredible milestone, and the building is set to be completed in April. At the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, the fountain wall has been installed in the Hazel Family Garden. Trees and grass are in as well. There will be an open house for volunteers held on September 18, and more information to come!

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**BCA Furnished Apartments**



In June, BCA Furnished Apartments hosted a brunch for our patient families. They brought Chick-fil-A biscuits, a wonderful selection of fruit, and tasty yogurt. While they served families and patients, they shared more information about their apartments. We are grateful for our hotel partnerships!

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Shepherd Center Volunteer Services | 2020 Peachtree Rd NW | Atlanta, GA 30309 US

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