We are united in our belief that all of society wins when people with disabilities have equal opportunities to pursue their dreams and interests.
Facebook is proud to sponsor the United Spinal Association’s 75th anniversary celebrating its history of advocating for disability rights.

The Coca-Cola Company is proud to celebrate the 75th Anniversary Gala of United Spinal Association. Together, we can build an inclusive world.
Dear Champions of Access and Inclusion,

Founded by paralyzed veterans in 1946, United Spinal Association has come a long way. While it might be hard to believe, our 75th Anniversary is upon us this year. The theme for our 75th is “Building an Inclusive World” to showcase the impact United Spinal has on advancing disability rights, as well as empowering our large member, chapter and support group networks with vital programs and resources.

It’s not lost on me that this anniversary comes at a time when many individuals with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) continue to be impacted by the pandemic and want to make their voices heard during America’s recovery. United Spinal is working hard to make sure that our community has a seat at the table to advocate for jobs, education, accessibility, the means for independent living, and civil rights for people with disabilities—and that our message is heard loud and clear during this challenging time for our nation. I want to give kudos to all of our members and supporters who have given our community the tools and courage to persevere and thrive through this period.

I’m a firm believer that we all win when we create opportunities for people with disabilities to become leaders, advocates, and innovators. Those we empower to succeed today will shatter the stigma of disability tomorrow. Your participation in our 75th anniversary celebration will affirm and reaffirm that you are a leading advocate and ally alongside our 58,000 United Spinal members.

Like so many of our members, I wasn’t born with a spinal cord injury. I became paralyzed from a herniated disk in 2010. United Spinal supported me unconditionally, and helped me articulate my experiences and aspirations as a person living with SCI—and I want nothing more than to inspire others do the same. United Spinal embraces the talents of all people with SCI/D and their respective SCI journeys, and empowers them to succeed in all echelons of society. That was our calling 75 years ago and it remains at the forefront of our mission today.

We are grateful to our stakeholders from across the country, including our 75th Anniversary sponsors, corporate partners, United Spinal members, our allies, elected officials, community activists, organizational leaders and many special guests who are joining us to celebrate this remarkable milestone.

When I became CEO of United Spinal last November, I knew I was taking on a mission that would not only impact the rest of my life, but the lives of countless individuals that I will never meet. That’s the thing about community - our paths may never cross, but we find solidarity, hope and courage from one another as we recommit in breaking down longstanding inequities and building up greatness in the disability community.

Thank you for celebrating with us, and let’s roll onward to the next 75 years, never losing sight of our mission and the hope it brings so many people.

Vincenzo Piscopo
Thank You to Our Sponsors

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United Spinal Association is a national 501(c) (3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to empowering people with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), including veterans, to live successful and fulfilling lives.

Directed by people with disabilities, United Spinal Association works to overcome the stigma of disability and remove physical barriers to inclusion for wheelchair users. We are united in our belief that business, people with disabilities and society all benefit from providing equal opportunity to pursue passions, employment, and recreational opportunities. Our goal is to actively support people with SCI/D through valuable programs and services that maximize independence and create opportunities to become leaders, advocates, and innovators.

United Spinal transforms the lives of people with SCI/D by:
- Advocating for enforcement and enhancement of disability rights, including access to healthcare, mobility equipment, public transportation, rehabilitation, community services and supports, and the built environment
- Empowering our members, their loved ones, care providers and professionals with resources, one-on-one assistance, and peer support
- Promoting independence through employment, assisting individuals with employment opportunities, and ensuring that wheelchair users have equal access to housing, shopping and recreational opportunities
- Promoting civic participation and self-advocacy

Which of these vehicles is safely adapted for a person with a disability?

A  B

The QAP difference may not be visible, but it can be lifesaving.

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The Quality Assurance Program™ accreditation means putting safety first for persons with disabilities everywhere. Know more about adaptive driving options, and say “no more” to unregulated vehicle modifications.

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United Spinal has touched the lives of over one million individuals living with spinal cord injuries or disorders including MS, ALS, and spina bifida across the United States.

58K+ Members
50 Chapters
200 Support Groups
100+ Hospital Members
98K Circ. New Mobility Magazine
135K+ Monthly Visitors to Website/Resource Center
70K Social Media Followers

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are our foundations for innovation and drive our business forward.

Comcast NBCUniversal is proud to support the United Spinal Association and their 75th Anniversary.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are our foundations for innovation and drive our business forward.

Genentech embraces the increasingly diverse world around us.

GENE.COM/DIVERSITY-INCLUSION

A Member of the Roche Group
Program Highlights

Amna Nawaz, Chief Correspondent, PBS NewsHour, EMCEE FOR THE EVENING

United Spinal’s 75 Year History in the Disability Community
REMARKS FROM:
• Michele Lee, United Spinal Program Director and TECH Access Member
• James Weisman, Former CEO, United Spinal

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE from 75th Anniversary Cornerstone Sponsor, Coca-Cola, featuring Alba Baylin, Vice President, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement, Coca-Cola North America

REMARKS FROM Vincenzo Piscopo, President & CEO, United Spinal Association

PERFORMANCE BY Carina Ho, United Spinal Board Member

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE from 75th Anniversary Zenith & Presenting Sponsor, ABBVIE

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE from 75th Anniversary Architect Sponsor, Quita Highsmith, Vice President and Chief Diversity, Genentech

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS to U.S. Senators Raphael Warnock and Tammy Duckworth

Atlanta United Spinal Chapter Vice President, Mitchell Tepper, PhD, MPH, presents THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD to U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock

United Spinal Board Chair, Tom Aiello, HIGHLIGHTS UNITED SPINAL’S VETSFIRST PROGRAM

REMARKS FROM Chairman Mark Takano, House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE from 75th Anniversary Architect Sponsor, Quita Highsmith, Vice President and Chief Diversity, Genentech

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS to U.S. Senators Raphael Warnock and Tammy Duckworth

Chicago Based United Spinal Board Member, Reveca Torres, presents THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD to U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth

REMARKS FROM International Disability Rights Activist, Judy Heumann

United Spinal Texas Member, Leonard Mayberry, INTRODUCES Governor Larry Hogan

Governor Hogan INTRODUCES The Honorable Tony Coelho

Tony Coelho presents THE NATIONAL ADVOCATE AWARD to former Congressman Steve Bartlett

Lin-Manuel Miranda presents Ali Stroker with THE NATIONAL IMAGE AWARD

ACCEPTANCE REMARKS from Ali Stroker, National Image Awardee

REMARKS FROM Teal Sherer, Actress and Media Columnist, New Mobility Magazine

Amna Nawaz CONCLUDES United Spinal’s 75th Anniversary Gala & Community Event
AT&T proudly supports the United Spinal Association for its legacy of work and its ongoing commitment to improving the lives of people with spinal cord injuries and disorders.

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Awardees and Special Guests

AWARDEE
Ali Stroker
Tony Award Winner

AWARDEE
The Honorable
Steve Bartlett

FEATURED GUEST
Lin-Manuel Miranda
Writer, Actor, Director

FEATURED PERFORMER
CARINA HO
Musician and Songwriter
United Spinal Board Member
Choose Shepherd Center for Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation and Research

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Airbnb is committed to making travel more inclusive, and we are proud to partner with organizations like United Spinal to improve accessibility across our platform, create connection and belonging, and empower communities.

Congratulations to United Spinal on 75 years of Building an Inclusive World!
1945—As World War II ends over 671,000 American soldiers return home wounded and/or disabled. Many are in desperate need of treatment and care.

1946—a small band of paralyzed veterans in New York City establish a support group to get the services and assistance needed to live independently. Soon after, this small group joins forces with other disabled veteran support groups in New York City to form our Association.

1948—Seventy of our members hold a public demonstration in New York’s Grand Central Station to gather signatures supporting the nation’s first accessible housing bill (Public Law 702) to get federal funds to build accessible homes for paralyzed veterans.

1968—we advocate for equal access to federally-funded buildings and facilities for Americans living with disabilities—leading to the passage of the Architectural Barriers Act. This act requires that facilities designed, built, altered, or leased with federal funds are designed and constructed to be wheelchair accessible.

1970—James J. Peters, a Life magazine correspondent and the Association’s future executive director, exposes the deplorable conditions facing paralyzed Vietnam veterans at the old Bronx VA Hospital. The article receives national attention and causes public outrage leading the VA to establish a national spinal cord injury service office in Washington, DC to address the needs of paralyzed veterans. Within ten years, the hospital is replaced by a new, improved hospital. The hospital is later renamed in honor of Peters.

1973—We advocate for the eventual passage of the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in federally funded programs and improved access to health care, social services, recreation, housing, and transportation.

1985—New York City settles the 1979 civil suit brought by United Spinal, agreeing to make all city buses accessible, retrofit key subway stations and commuter rail stations, and ensure that all new stations are accessible. The settlement also establishes a paratransit system for people unable to use mass transit.

1987—we help establish the PVA-EPVA Center for Neuroscience Regeneration Research. It opens at the West Haven, CT VAMC in conjunction with the Yale University Medical School. The Yale Center has been on the forefront of cutting-edge research throughout its history and has numerous “firsts” in understanding the mechanisms behind spinal cord injuries and disorders.

1989—we file a lawsuit challenging the Department of Veterans Affairs, alleging substandard care for paralyzed veterans at the Castle Point, NY VAMC. A settlement in 1994 initiates the Clinical Practice Guidelines, which promise to elevate spinal cord injury care throughout the VA system.

1990—we played a role in writing portions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)—the landmark civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability.

1995—Our advocacy efforts help to make New York City’s entire bus fleet 100 percent wheelchair accessible. Every month, more than 60,000 riders with disabilities ride New York City’s lift-equipped buses.

2005—we successfully lobby Congress for Traumatic Injury Insurance legislation that provides for an immediate payment of between $25,000 and $100,000 for active duty soldiers who sustain a life-altering injury while serving their country.

2012—we mobilize disability activists from its national network of member chapters and support groups for its first annual Roll on Capitol Hill.

2014—New York City’s Taxi and Limousine Commission voted unanimously to expand its accessible taxi fleet to 50 percent by 2020. The unanimous decision is a huge victory in a long battle that spans over 15 years of litigation and includes a class action lawsuit filed by United Spinal, along with other disability groups in 2011 that argued that the TLC must provide meaningful access to NYC’s taxi system under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Present—United Spinal Association’s initiatives in research and education, government policy and legislation, civil rights and advocacy, accessibility and architectural design, and competitive athletics have made it the fastest-growing not-for-profit in America dedicated to helping those with spinal cord injuries or disorders.
Together, we’re paving the way to a better future

VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE!
NEWMOBILITY.COM
ZOOX
Congratulates United Spinal on their 75th Anniversary!

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Stulberg & Walsh LLP
Attorneys at Law

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2022 Program Overview

VETSFIRST®
VetsFirst is a leader in advocacy for veterans with disabilities, ensuring they achieve the highest level of independence and quality of life. The program connects with thousands of veterans and actively serving military personnel annually.

NATIONAL CHAPTER NETWORK
United Spinal Chapters (50+) are self-dependent organizations support the SCI/D community by promoting health and well-being, inclusion and independence, organizing local events and projects, advocating for rights and accessibility, and offering resources and support.

CHAPTER LEADERSHIP MEETING*
This annual meeting brings together our national leadership to discuss the critical needs within the SCI/D community so we can provide our chapters with tools to effectively serve our members.

ADVOCACY & POLICY NETWORK
We are actively engaged in advocating for policies that benefit paralyzed Americans and all people with disabilities. Our priorities focus on healthcare, community integration, employment, disability benefits and disability rights.

ROLL ON CAPITOL HILL*
Our annual legislative advocacy event brings wheelchair users from across the country to Washington, DC to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the policy debate, and addresses legislative and regulatory issues that impact our members.

RESOURCE CENTER*
Our Spinal Cord Resource Center connects people with personal guidance and state and local resources to effectively regain their quality of life and independence after diagnosis of a spinal cord injury or disorder.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT*
We support the pursuit of new career opportunities for people with disabilities and partner with employers to place people with SCI/D in jobs and provide trained peer mentors, resources, and professional support to facilitate return to work.

FREE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM
We have over 75 years of experience empowering people with SCI/D to achieve the highest levels of independence, health and personal fulfillment.

PEER MENTORING/SUPPORT GROUPS
We provide peer to peer support for individuals, friends, caregivers and family members through a national network of peer support groups and individual mentor/peer relationships.

NEW MOBILITY
United Spinal’s monthly membership magazine which provides the latest information and resources on active living for wheelchair users.

HOSPITAL NETWORK
Our Affiliate Hospital Members provide the full scope of clinical and rehabilitative services with an emphasis on spinal cord injury care.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS/READY TO ROLL*
We assist the SCI/D community, caregivers, professionals and municipalities to prepare for natural or human-caused disasters through advanced planning, education, awareness raising and distribution of Ready to Roll kits.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES
We ensure that the built environment is accessible to all people with disabilities and provide a team of certified accessibility specialists and architects to train design professionals, review plans and complete inspections nationwide.

UNITED ON WHEELS PODCAST
We produce a wheelchair lifestyle podcast addressing all the things that wheelchair users care about and candid discussions ranging from dating to traveling with a disability.

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE CAMPAIGN
This national campaign was created to erase public misconceptions about wheelchair users and effectively interact with someone with a disability for the first time.

TECH ACCESS INITIATIVE*
This program ensures accessible tech innovation and thought leadership with tech industry stakeholders representing the needs of consumers with disability disabilities and wheelchair users. It’s Tech Access Group of quad and paraplegic influencers is available for focus groups and market research.

For more information about United Spinal’s programs and services, visit www.unitedspinal.org, call 800-404-2898 or email askus@unitedspinal.org.