

Strong Wheeled
TOGETHER
United Spinal Association



WE ARE #StrongWheeled TOGETHER!

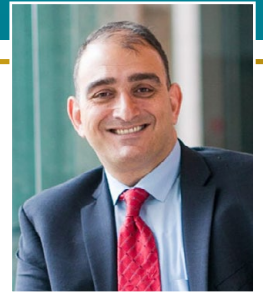
*Celebrating a New Generation of Talented Leaders
From the Disability Community*

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#StrongWheeled member event



A Letter from our CEO



Dear valued supporter,

Throughout 2022, the StrongWheeled Campaign paid tribute to the power of community—and our community, people living with spinal cord injuries or disorders (SCI/D). I am so grateful to everyone whose paths crossed with ours, as we raised public awareness about the achievements of the SCI/D community, and connected community members with vital support services and paths towards wellness.

At the Member Awards Gala, we will meet five new champions direct from the grassroots—who were selected by the community in an entertaining and engaging crowdsourced vote. They are the first ever recipients of the StrongWheeled Together Awards.

In designing the awards, we chose the categories Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Performing Arts, Sports and Recreation, Visual Arts and Writing, and Youth Leadership to cover the ground any established community organization aspires to encompass through its work and some of the categories where our community particularly excels. Creativity, technology, enterprise: it's all there. During the finalist voting round, the youth leadership category proved to be the most popular among them—but, in a way, this whole event and campaign is about generational renewal and breaking new ground.

Last year, United Spinal Association celebrated its 75th anniversary, holding up the heroes who made history for disability rights as an example for our entire community. This year has been all about the rising stars from our ranks who are poised to make history.

The StrongWheeled Together campaign's message and our Gala pose questions to their audiences in the future tense, projecting what is to come for our close-knit and dynamic community and opening up possibilities for a life well-lived with SCI/D. We want to be constantly challenging our members and supporters to think about what's next—and think big.

Even though United Spinal is an organization steeped in an accomplished past, it's not about reliving that history, but rather drawing lessons from it. Our tributes to Congressman Jim Langevin and Judy Heumann are accordingly forward-looking—and yes, maybe a little nostalgic, as well! In terms of the present, both Langevin's accomplishments as a legislator and Heumann's as an advocate have helped members of our community make huge advances towards the goal of living independently as equals—United Spinal's mission. Thanks to their work, the accomplishments of our awardees are possible. In the end, we want to build a world where anything is possible for our members and community.

Our community possesses an abundance of talent and creativity, and we want the world to recognize their achievements and capacity for innovation. Our whole society loses out when the talents of people with disability go unseen and untapped. The StrongWheeled Together Award and Gala aim to raise consciousness among the public about the immense value found in our community.

I want to thank all of our sponsors, staff, the United Spinal Board of Directors, and most importantly, our members for making this event and this year's campaign possible. This event, ultimately, is a tribute to all of you.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'V. Piscopo'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'V' and a long, sweeping tail.

Vincenzo Piscopo

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Our Mission

United Spinal Association is a national 501(c) (3) nonprofit membership organization dedicated to empowering and advocating for people living with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) and all wheelchair users, to discover greater independence and quality of life.

We are the leading national organization directly serving and advocating for people with SCI/D, all wheelchair users and their loved ones, providing free resources, one-on-one guidance, comprehensive programs and services, quality of life grants, and peer support.

We are united in our belief that people with disabilities have the right to equal opportunities in all facets of society. Since 1946, United Spinal has worked to overcome the stigma of disability and remove physical barriers to inclusion so that people with SCI/D can pursue their goals.

We support people with SCI/D and all wheelchair users throughout their lifespan by:

- Advocating for enforcement and enhancement of disability rights, including access to healthcare, mobility equipment, public transportation, rehabilitation, community services and support, and the built environment
- Empowering our members, their loved ones, care providers and professionals with valuable resources, including information on employment, affordable housing, transportation, health care, home- and community-based independent living, education, peer support, technology, and leisure and recreation
- Ensuring people with SCI/D and all wheelchair users can maintain the highest levels of independence, health, and personal fulfillment
- Promoting civic participation and self-advocacy

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.



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.

60K

Members

45+

Chapters

188

Support Groups

107

Hospital Members

98K

Circ.
New Mobility Magazine

100K+

Monthly Visitors to
Website/Resource Center

92K

Social Media Followers



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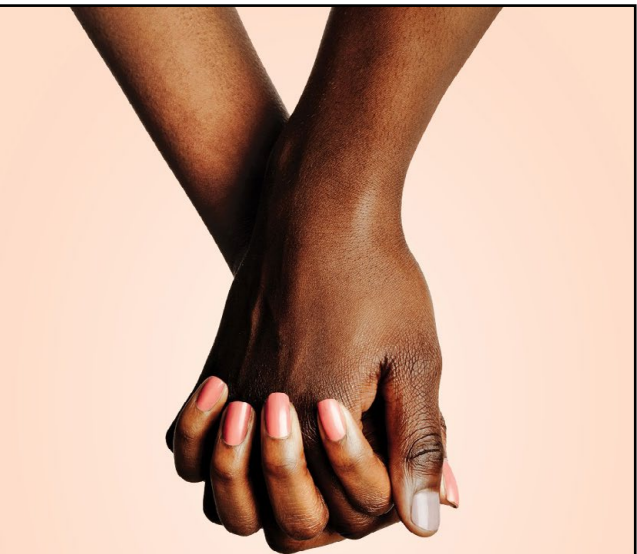


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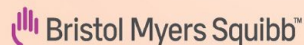


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Gala Highlights

EMCEE FOR THE EVENING

Hilary Muehlberger, Administrative Assistant, United Spinal Association

WELCOME REMARKS

Vincenzo Piscopo, President & CEO, United Spinal Association

SPORTS & RECREATION AWARD PRESENTATION

Winner Acceptance Remarks

PERFORMANCE by **4WheelCity**

VISUAL ARTS AWARD PRESENTATION

Winner Acceptance Remarks

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGE

The Honorable Jim Langevin, member of the U.S. House,
representing Rhode Island's 2nd Congressional District

ENTREPRENEUR & INNOVATION AWARD PRESENTATION

Winner Acceptance Remarks

PERFORMANCE by **Kebra Moore**

YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARD PRESENTATION

Winner Acceptance Remarks

LIFETIME IMPACT AWARD WINNER REMARKS

Judy Heumann, International Disability Rights Activist

PERFORMANCE by **Marna Michelle**

PERFORMING ARTS AWARD PRESENTATION

Winner Acceptance Remarks

CLOSING REMARKS by **Vincenzo Piscopo**, President & CEO, United Spinal Association

CLOSING PERFORMANCE by **Marna Michelle**

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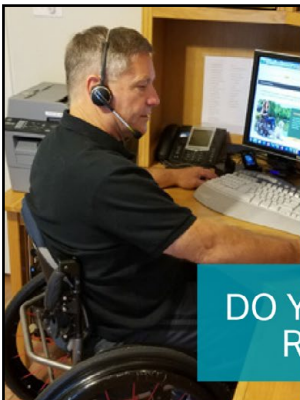


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Live Zoom**

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your questions answered live!**

*Our team of information specialists are ready
to share their knowledge and experience with you.*

**EVERY 4TH
WEDNESDAY
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*Come join and bring your
own questions! We
look forward to sharing
our resources with you.*

We can answer questions about:

- Health and Wellness Resources
- New Spinal Cord Injury
- Financial Assistance
- Transportation
- Employment
- Rehabilitation
- Sports and Recreation
- Traveling with a Disability
- Peer Support
- And much more!



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Celebrating a New Generation of Talented Leaders From the Disability Community



Lifetime Impact Award Winner
Judith Heumann

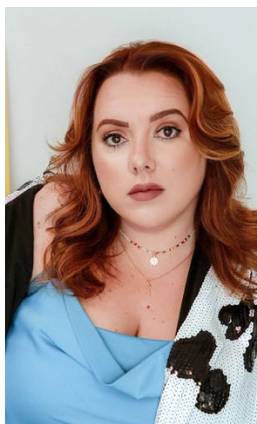


Congratulatory Message by
The Honorable Jim Langevin

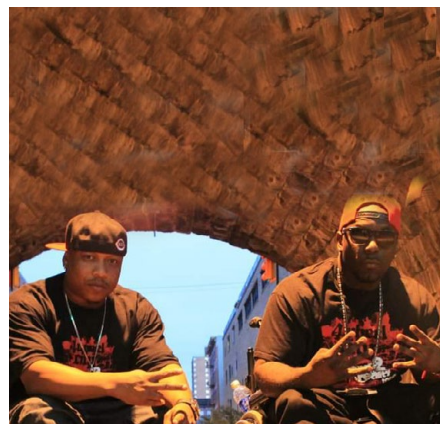
Performances by



Kebra Moore



Marna Michele



4 Wheel City

There are many ways to give! With the help of dedicated supporters like you, United Spinal can continue to help people overcome the challenges of paralysis and disability and guide them down a rewarding path of transformation and discovery. Visit <https://unitedspinal.org/ways-to-give/>.

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 and all wheelchair users.





United Spinal Association is the largest disability-led non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for 5.5 M wheelchair users in the U.S. including individuals living with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), and veterans, providing support and information to loved ones and care providers. United Spinal has over 75 years of advocacy experience educating, and empowering wheelchair users impacted by paralyzing conditions and mobility disabilities to achieve and maintain the highest levels of independence, health and personal fulfillment. United Spinal has over 60,000 members, over 45 chapters, close to 200 support groups and more than 100 rehabilitation facilities and hospital partners nationwide. United Spinal Association is also a VA-recognized veterans service organization (VSO) serving veterans with disabilities of all kinds.

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 mobility 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.

* Available for Program Sponsorship – non-exclusive/exclusive