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## Continuing the Work of Christopher Reeve

By Julie Jacobs

Staff members of the Springfield-based Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation (CRPF) were deeply saddened this past October upon learning of the death of their beloved chairman, Christopher Reeve. The actor, who had become an international figure and a tireless advocate for spinal cord injury research, died of a heart attack nearly 10 years after becoming paralyzed from a horse-riding accident. Although foundation workers, along with his family, friends and colleagues, are dismayed that he will not be around to see the fruits of his labor, they are just as determined to stay on course so that others suffering from paralysis will be able to walk again.

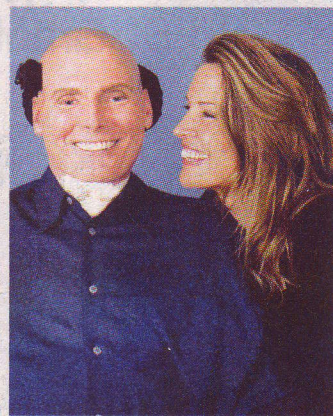
"Christopher stood for bold thinking, for pushing the envelope and for taking calculated risks," says Kathy Lewis, CRPF president and CEO. "Out of respect for his work, everyone is more resolved."

"His death has certainly intensified our focus," adds Oswald Steward, PhD, Chairman of the CRPF Science Advisory Council and Director of the Reeve-Irvine Research Center in California. "Somehow it has galvanized our energy and made us more intent to meet our goals."

### Supporting Science

The CRPF is a national non-profit organization committed to funding research that develops treatments and cures for paralysis caused by spinal cord injury and other central nervous system disorders. Born out of a merger in 1999 of the Christopher Reeve Foundation and the American Paralysis Association, then the preeminent organization for spinal cord injury, the CRPF also maintains an advocacy office in Washington, DC, as well as a resource center in Short Hills.

To date, the CRPF has given 50 million dollars to various research initiatives. Its Science Advisory Council, an external independent committee made up of scientists from institutions worldwide, reviews grant proposals with an eye toward cutting-edge studies that might be considered too risky to qualify for larger grants from the National Institutes of Health. Staying apprised of



what's happening in the field also enables the Foundation to rapidly re-direct funding when necessary.

"We want to leverage our dollars and make sure that we're learning from each step. We try not to be repetitive, but rather help move research along," Lewis says. "Research in this area is so important because it may hasten the progress of treatments and cures for such related conditions as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS and multiple sclerosis."

### Life Enhancement

In addition to funding research, the CRPF provides grant money to initiatives that seek to improve quality of life for people living with paralysis and their families and caregivers. Its Quality of Life program was established in 1999 and is overseen by Dana Reeve, Chris' wife and the foundation's new chairperson. Since its inception, the program has awarded more than \$6 million to other nonprofit organizations and projects focusing on such areas as accessibility, assistive technology, counseling, education, employment, health promotion, sports and recreation and independent living.

Also helping to enhance the lives of those who are paralyzed is the Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Resource Center (PRC) in Short Hills. Launched with a \$2 million federal grant, the PRC opened in May 2002 and stands as the first, largest and most comprehensive clearinghouse in the nation for paralysis-related publications and information. Trained specialists are available to make referrals, distribute educational materials and answer questions in English and Spanish on a myriad of issues, from how to find a job to how to arrange for a wheelchair on safari.

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