

The Project

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THE MIAMI PROJECT
TO CURE PARALYSIS

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LOIS POPE LIFE CENTER

HOME OF
THE MIAMI PROJECT TO CURE PARALYSIS



A LEGACY OF GREATNESS NICHOLAS A. BUONICONTI

My family has been overwhelmed by the outpouring of love and admiration for my father, Nick Buoniconti. He was more than a hero to us, he was loved and admired by many. Sports legend, business leader, agent, and attorney; by any measure, his list of achievements is long and impressive. Ultimately, however, he would want his legacy to reflect that he was the co-founder of The Miami Project and founder of The Buoniconti Fund. He knew instinctively that he had to lead the charge in finding a cure for paralysis. 34 years and \$500 million later, we are still here, bringing dignity to thousands of wheelchair-bound individuals all over the world. This all came to fruition because of a promise he made to me in 1985 in a hospital room in Johnson City, Tennessee.

My dad approached this task the way he did everything--with the same dogged determination he brought everywhere, from the football field to the boardroom. The Miami Project, a Center of Excellence at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, is now internationally recognized as the preeminent research center for spinal cord and brain injuries. This achievement would have been thought impossible when I was first injured.

During his NFL Hall of Fame career, my father always represented what I have aspired to be - a leader, a mentor and a champion. He selflessly gave all to football, to his family and to those who are less fortunate. His promise to me turned into a revolution in paralysis research. His vision is being fulfilled everyday, as the important work in the laboratories of The Miami Project continues. Many have asked me what we can do to make sure my dad's legacy continues. My answer is always the same. We best honor his dedication and commitment by continuing to work until that promise is fulfilled.

Throughout his entire life, my dad always put others before his desires and aspirations. His never-ending efforts to better humanity has earned him the well deserved title of HERO to all.

Everything I am, everything I have, and everything I will ever be is because of him.

Thank you for standing up for those who can't!

Marc A. Buoniconti
President, The Buoniconti Fund and The Miami Project



Drs. Barth A. Green,
W. Dalton Dietrich,
and Allan D. Levi

***A critical
Miami Project
mission is
to conduct
basic and
translational
research
to support
future clinical
advancements.***

The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, a Center of Excellence at the University of Miami, is dedicated to developing new treatments for improving outcomes after brain and spinal cord injury. This year has been an exceptional one in terms of scientific progress and discovery. Cellular therapy trials continue to move forward by evaluating Schwann cell transplantation in people with chronic spinal cord injury (SCI). Our innovative approach combines cell transplantation with exercise and rehabilitation to improve whole body health and function, which is being tested for the first time in humans. An FDA-approved clinical trial for testing a new peripheral nerve bridging strategy to promote successful axonal regeneration and functional motor recovery has been initiated. An innovative brain computer interface strategy has recently demonstrated efficacy in improving hand function in a person with cervical-level SCI. In the next year, we plan to combine these various approaches and utilize extensive upper and lower extremity rehabilitation combined with robotic motor training, neuromodulation, and pharmacological therapies to augment recovery mechanisms.

A critical Miami Project mission is to conduct basic and translational research to support future clinical advancements. Our scientists are utilizing state-of-the-art imaging and drug discovery approaches to identify and test compounds that protect neurons from dying after neurological injuries and to stimulate successful axonal regeneration and tissue repair. Recently, a single molecule that simultaneously targets two of the most important mechanisms for successful regeneration has been identified and tested in a SCI injury model. The importance

of inflammatory cells and mediators of tissue destruction are also being explored to identify new therapeutic strategies for drug discovery testing in our preclinical models. In addition to improving motor function, several quality of life issues important to individuals living with SCI including non-treatable neuropathic pain, cardiovascular and autonomic dysfunction and muscle spasticity are being examined in our clinical laboratories. Exciting new collaborative efforts with the Departments of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Physical Therapy, and Biomedical Engineering are providing new opportunities for improving the health and function of our constituents. Finally, an exciting, noninvasive neuromodulation approach using electromagnetic fields is being tested to improve function after SCI. Based on these preclinical findings, a first-in-man multi-center clinical trial is being proposed using this technology targeting upper and lower extremities in people with chronic SCI.

Randomized multicenter clinical trials for therapeutic hypothermia are assessing this experimental therapy on the acute and more progressive consequences of brain and spinal cord injury. Miami Project Educational and Outreach Programs are reaching out to thousands of individuals and providing current information on research studies and helping to recruit volunteers who participate in our clinical studies and trials. The construction of the Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Hospital is rapidly progressing and we anticipate expanding our clinical investigations in this state-of-the-art facility in early 2020. We are excited about the future as we continue to build new collaborations with research and industry partners and develop new treatments and technologies for improving functional recovery. We greatly appreciate the critical support of our friends, volunteers, and the spinal cord injury community for their important contributions for the continued success of our multidisciplinary research programs.

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Marc and Nick
Buoniconti.



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New Studies at The Miami Project BrainQ

Miami Project scientists have developed techniques for understanding the complex network of circuitry that connects the brain to the body.

Since The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis was founded more than 30 years ago, our scientists have been focused on restoring function to people with spinal cord injury (SCI). Although our research strategies are constantly evolving, improving transmission within the central nervous system (neuroplasticity) has always been a major cornerstone of The Miami Project's research efforts. Over the years, Miami Project scientists have developed techniques for understanding the complex network of circuitry that connects the brain to the body. We have evaluated a host of therapeutic strategies for improving and restoring voluntary control over weak or paralyzed muscles, including functional electrical stimulation (FES), transcranial magnetic stimulation, peripheral stimulation, and brain-computer interfaces. As technologies continue to evolve, the opportunities for combining physiology and neurotechnology become even more exciting.

Miami Project scientists have recently formed an alliance with an innovative Israeli startup company, BrainQ Technologies Ltd., to evaluate a device that produces non-invasive, low intensity, and low frequency electromagnetic fields. Electromagnetic stimulation has been shown to promote neuroplasticity, which may in turn improve functional recovery outcomes after SCI. BrainQ's technology targets the pathways within the central nervous system responsible for motor control, which can be identified by frequency-specific features. The natural rhythms of these networks are reinforced by electromagnetic fields applied to the brain and spinal cord, which may promote strengthening of motor pathways.

To determine the optimal conditions of electromagnetic field exposure, Dr. W Dalton Dietrich, Professor and Scientific Director of The Miami Project, and Dr. Helen Bramlett, Professor, are evaluating BrainQ's technology in a preclinical model of SCI. Five groups of rats are being exposed to very low intensity and frequency electromagnetic fields, with varying frequencies, over a period of several weeks. At different time points throughout the experiment, the rats undergo behavioral testing to evaluate motor and



BrainQ's technology produces low intensity and low frequency electromagnetic fields, which are applied to the central nervous system.

sensory function, as well as biomarker analysis. The information obtained by these experiments will help scientists determine whether animals treated with different frequencies of electromagnetic stimulation after SCI demonstrate improvements in function.

BrainQ's technology is also being evaluated in clinical studies at The Miami Project, led by Dr. Dietrich and Dr. Katie Gant, Associate Scientist and Director of Education and Outreach. This is a multi-center study, which will be conducted along with researchers at Kessler Institute of Rehabilitation in West Orange, New Jersey and Sheba

Medical Center in Israel. Each center will enroll four individuals with upper-extremity impairments resulting from cervical-level, incomplete SCI, who are 12-30 months post-injury. Participants will be exposed to very low intensity and frequency electromagnetic fields three times a week over a period of several months. The stimulation is so low in intensity, the participants probably won't even feel it. These sessions will be accompanied by concurrent upper-extremity training with a physical therapist. The research team, including Dr. Annie Palermo, Dr. George Jimsheleishvili, Dr. Deena Cilien and Danielle Cilien, will evaluate upper extremity strength and function at various time points, along with outcome measures related to spasticity, pain, and quality of life.

If you are interested in participating in this study, or other research studies at The Miami Project, please contact our Education Department at 305-243-7108 or mpinfo@med.miami.edu. You may also fill out an Intake Form at <http://bit.ly/MP-Intake>

I Can't Catch Any Zzzz's with this Spinal Cord Injury!

Since poor sleep in SCI may serve as an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease and other disorders, it is crucial to understand the prevalence and characteristics of sleep disorders within the SCI community.

After a long day, the one thing we all look forward to is sleep. For most people, it is easy to fall asleep and stay asleep. But for some, getting that much-needed rest at the end of a day can be a major challenge, wreaking havoc on their quality of life. In the general population, poor sleep has been shown to cause depression, increased risk of stroke, diabetes, and high blood pressure to name a few.

People with spinal cord injury (SCI) actually report higher rates of sleep disturbances, particularly restless sleep, early morning awakenings, muscle spasms, daytime sleepiness, and snoring. Although this fact is widely known within the SCI community, most people have no idea how to improve their quality of sleep. Since poor sleep in SCI may serve as an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease and other disorders, it is crucial to understand the prevalence and characteristics of sleep disorders within the SCI community.

In order to better understand this issue, Miami Project Professor and Associate Scientific Director for Research, Dr. Mark Nash, in collaboration with Pulmonology and Sleep Medicine physician Dr. Shirin Shafazand, and Dr. Kimberly Anderson, developed a web-based survey to gather input from people with SCI all over the world, who have trouble getting a good night's rest. The survey included questions about insomnia, time spent sleeping, nighttime muscle spasms, and tiredness upon waking and throughout the day. It also asked how these characteristics affected the person's quality of sleep and overall quality of life. Throughout the course of the study, more than 300 people with SCI responded to the survey.



Drs. Katie Gant, Mark Nash, and Shirin Shafazand

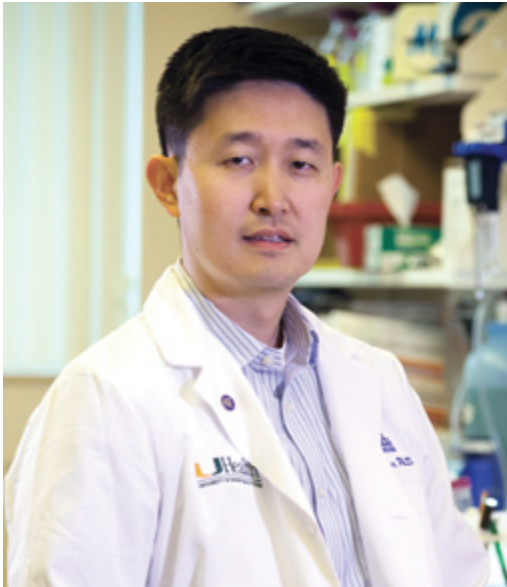
The researchers found that more than half of people surveyed experience symptoms of insomnia and unrestful sleep, with more than 1/3 have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep. Almost 40% ranked their sleep quality as fairly bad to very bad, and almost 30% reported "moderate to extreme distress" from uncomfortable leg symptoms. In addition, 1/3 reported symptoms of sleep apnea (a disorder where a person stops breathing for a short period of time during sleep), although only 13% reported seeking treatment for it. Also, excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) was reported by more than 1/3 of the participants.

Based on these results, it is clear that sleep related issues are under recognized and undertreated in the SCI population. This could have profound implications related to cardiovascular and cognitive function, particularly in the SCI population, which already has

a higher than average prevalence of these conditions. The research team is now expanding on this work in a new project supported by the Craig H. Nielsen Foundation. This study, led by Dr. Shafazand and Dr. Nash, will be examining the relationship between sleep-disordered breathing and neuroplasticity in people with SCI. They will be joined in the work by Dr. Katie Gant, Associate Scientist and Director of Education and Outreach at the Miami Project, and Dr. Armando Mendez, Research Associate Professor, Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism. The researchers will enroll 60 people with cervical-level, incomplete SCI in to this study, which requires six in-person visits to The Miami Project during a span of 17 days. If you are interested in participating in this study, or other research studies at The Miami Project, please contact our Education Department at 305-243-7108 or mpinfo@med.miami.edu. You may also fill out an Intake Form at <http://bit.ly/MP-Intake>

From The Front Lines

Taking on Spinal Cord Injury



Dr. Jae Lee

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REVIEW

The origin, fate, and contribution of macrophages to spinal cord injury pathology

Lindsay M. Milich¹ · Christine B. Ryan² · Jae K. Lee³

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Abstract
Virtually all phases of spinal cord injury pathogenesis, including inflammation, cell proliferation and differentiation, as well as tissue remodeling, are mediated in part by infiltrating monocyte-derived macrophages. It is now clear that these infiltrate

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Research Paper

Bromodomain and extraterminal domain-containing protein inhibition attenuates acute inflammation after spinal cord injury

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ABSTRACT
Inflammation is a major contributor to the secondary damage that occurs after spinal cord injury (SCI). The inflammatory response is controlled by many different signaling molecules including the upstream modulation of protein and adhesion. Bromodomain and extraterminal domain-containing proteins (BETs) regulate

After spinal cord injury (SCI), damage within the central nervous system triggers a natural cascade of events to protect surrounding tissue and repair the damaged spinal cord. The immune system mobilizes a sophisticated army of biological warfare specialists to the front lines of the SCI, where a variety of cell types contribute towards defensive and offensive efforts involved in the wound healing process.

White blood cells (monocytes) migrate toward the injury site and take on numerous responsibilities over the first few months. Early after injury, monocytes act as the clean-up crew, turning in to cells that surround and digest cellular debris and foreign substances (macrophages). This rapid-response team often has to travel long distances to reach the battleground, with many originating from the spleen and, eventually, bone marrow. Macrophages persist within the central nervous system around the area of injury and continue to perform a variety of duties for many years. During that time, certain subtypes of macrophages seem to have beneficial effects and promote regeneration. Yet, other subtypes of macrophages appear to contribute to chronic inflammation, which actually limits the potential for neural repair and regeneration. While it is clear that macrophages play a central role in the wound healing process after SCI, there are still a lot of unanswered questions.

To help clarify the role of macrophages after SCI, Dr. Jae Lee, Associate Professor at The Miami Project and Department of Neurological Surgery, recently published a review, entitled “The origin, fate, and contribution of macrophages to spinal cord injury pathology,” in *Acta Neuropathologica*, along with Neuroscience program graduate students, Lindsay Milich and Christine Ryan. The Miami Project scientists describe the current state of knowledge regarding macrophages in the central nervous system following SCI and highlight potential strategies for reducing chronic inflammation after SCI.

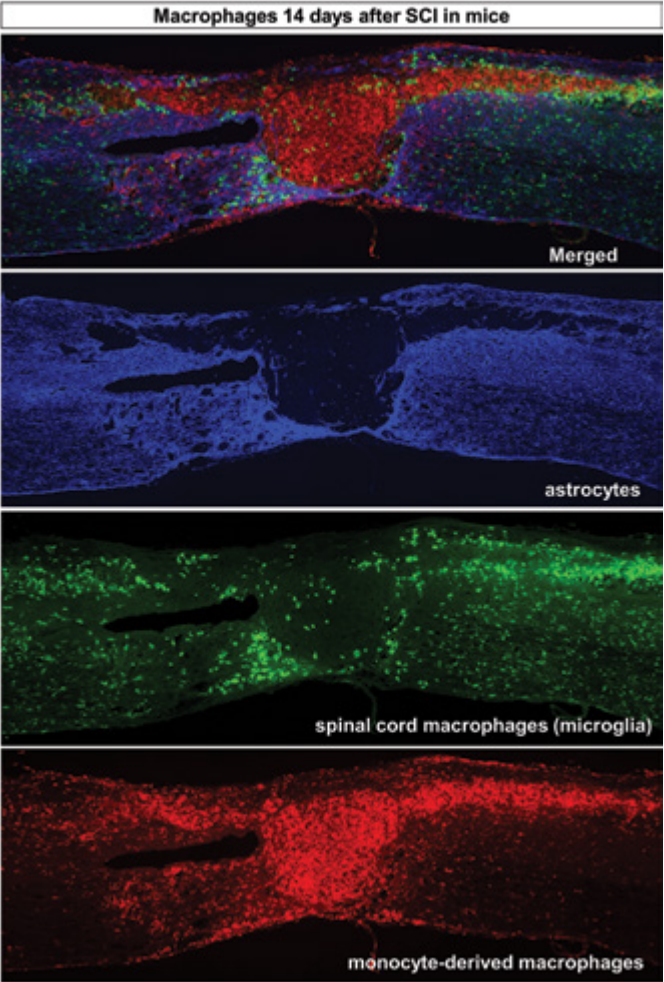
Miami Project scientists are leading the way towards developing effective strategies for reducing inflammation and improving function after SCI.

Miami Project scientists are leading the way towards developing effective strategies for reducing inflammation and improving function after SCI. In a recent collaborative study with Dr. Nagi Ayad, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and Co-Director of the University of Miami Brain Tumor Initiative, Dr. Lee targeted a family of proteins (bromodomain and extraterminal domain-containing proteins, BETs), which are important regulators of inflammation. Previous studies have shown that inhibition of BETs reduces inflammation in experimental models of arthritis, atherosclerosis, and inflammatory bowel disease.

To evaluate the effects on neuroinflammation, scientists injected a BET inhibitor (JQ1) into mice three hours after experimental SCI. By three days post-injury, markers of inflammation within the spinal cord were decreased and less immune cells were being recruited to the injury site. Despite this, the researchers did not observe improvements in locomotor function or reduction in spinal cord damage. Their findings were published in the journal of *Experimental Neurology* (Rudman et al., 2018). Drs. Lee and Ayad suggest that different BET inhibitors with better drug-like properties or modes of drug delivery may ultimately decrease secondary injury and promote improved functional outcomes after SCI.

Milich, L.M.*, Ryan, C.B.*, Lee, J.K. (2019) The origin, fate, and contribution of macrophages to spinal cord injury pathology. *Acta Neuropathologica*. 137(5):799–800. *equal contribution

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Macrophages and microglia are distributed around the spinal cord injury area. At 14 days after injury, microglia are located mostly around the astroglial scar area, and monocyte-derived macrophages are found within the lesion site, as well as in the astroglial scar.



Active Studies @The Miami Project

Researchers at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis are currently recruiting people with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, or severe peripheral nerve injury for the following studies. If you are interested in volunteering as a research participant, please fill out an intake form directly at: bit.ly/MP-Intake or by following the links for research participation on our website: themiamiproject.org

- A Lifestyle Intervention Targeting Enhanced Health and Function for Persons with Chronic SCI in Caregiver/ Care-Receiver Relationships: Effects of Caregiver Co-Treatment
- Stakeholder Perceptions and Clinical Assessment of Cardiometabolic Disease/Syndrome after Spinal Cord Injury
- Statin Monotherapy for Treatment of Endocrine Metabolic Disease Risk
- Postprandial Fat Metabolism Following an Acute Exercise Bout in Persons with Spinal Cord Injuries
- Fertility Evaluation
- Utility of MRS Brain Biomarkers of Pain Phenotypes after Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Altered body representation in people with spinal cord injury and its association with pain sensation
- Development of pain education for improving pain health literacy and quality of life after spinal cord injury
- The safety and efficacy of autologous human Schwann cell (ahSC) augmentation of nerve autografts after severe peripheral nerve injury

For additional information, please contact the Miami Project Education Department at 305-243-7108 or mpinfo@med.miami.edu

Meet The Miami Project Faculty

Alberto Martinez-Arizala, MD

Alberto Martinez-Arizala, MD, Clinical Associate Professor of Neurology, Neurological Surgery, and Orthopedics and Rehabilitation has been treating people with spinal cord injuries (SCIs) for many years. Seeing patients at the University of Miami Hospital and Clinics and the Miami Veterans Affairs Healthcare System, he has become the “go-to guy” for the SCI community in South Florida. While treating so many people with SCI, Dr. Martinez-Arizala found that two symptoms, pain and spasticity, are especially problematic for a significant number of people, as they can interfere with daily activities and affect quality of life. For this reason, his research interests focus on investigating the basis for the development of neuropathic pain and problematic spasticity in the SCI population and studying potential novel treatments. Dr. Martinez-Arizala also oversees the clinical aspects of many clinical research studies at The Miami Project, monitoring the safety and wellbeing of clinical trials participants. Recently, he discontinued his clinical duties at the Miami VA in order to devote more time to his research efforts at The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.



Alberto Martinez-Arizala, M.D.

New Executive Director of The Miami Project - John Fox



Executive Director John Fox visiting a lab at The Miami Project

“I am humbled, inspired, and excited to come to work everyday with 200 doctors, scientists, physical therapists, and staff, all dedicated to finding a cure for paralysis and attendant difficulties. On a regular basis, we find new ways to assist in quality-of-life matters for those in wheelchairs, while the search for a cure continues.”

John Fox became the new Executive Director of The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis on April 22, 2019, following the retirement of Suzie Sayfie, who served in the position for 25 years. As a long-time supporter of The Miami Project and The Buoniconti Fund, John is enthusiastic about his new role and the opportunity to further contribute to The Miami Project's and The Buoniconti Fund's mission of curing paralysis. Previously, he spent a 28-year career with Royal Caribbean Cruises, Ltd., during which time he founded and headed three departments - government relations, customer relations and community relations. In addition, John served on four statewide commissions: the Florida Economic Growth and International Development Commission, the Florida Tourism Commission, the Florida Sports Foundation, and the Florida Board of Pilot Commissioners. Deeply committed to philanthropic efforts, John has a long history of community involvement, including serving as chair of the Dade County Easter Seal Society, chair of the Maritime and Science Technology Academy, national board member of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, executive committee member of the Jackson Memorial Hospital Foundation, and fundraiser for cystic fibrosis research. John also serves as a board member for The Starkey Hearing Foundation, which has distributed hearing instruments to more than one million needy children all over the world. He is senior advisor to Dentons, the largest law firm in the world.

We would like to welcome David R. Gater, Jr., M.D., Ph.D., who recently joined the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine as chair of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Gater comes from Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State College of Medicine, and previously held faculty appointments at Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Kentucky, along with clinical appointments at their associated Veterans Health Administration hospitals.

Dr. Gater earned an undergraduate degree in biology, a masters degree in exercise and sports science, a Ph.D. in physiology, and an M.D., all at the University of Arizona, Tucson. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation, electrodiagnostic medicine, and the subspecialty of spinal cord injury medicine. In addition, he has published more than 100 articles in academic journals and delivered hundreds of presentations.

Dr. Gater's research efforts focus on cardiometabolic health after spinal cord injury, and his current projects evaluate the effects of exercise and nutrition interventions in people with SCI. He also collaborated recently with Dr. Mark Nash, Associate Scientific Director for Research at the Miami Project, to develop the clinical guidelines for the identification and management of cardiometabolic risk after SCI (Nash et al, 2019).

When the Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center opens in early 2020 as one of the world's premier rehabilitation hospitals, Dr. Gater will play an integral role in uniting the inpatient and outpatient clinical services offered by UHealth and Jackson Memorial Medical Center with the clinical trials and research groups from The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.



David R. Gater, Jr., M.D., Ph.D.

Upcoming Spinal Cord Injury Conference

Grab a Sharpie and mark your calendars. The South Florida Spinal Cord Injury Model System, along with The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, University of Miami Health System, Jackson Memorial Medical Center, and Miami Veterans Affairs, will be hosting a spinal cord injury (SCI) conference in Miami April 16 – 18, 2020.

The SCI conference will highlight the new Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Center for The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis at the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Medical Center, which is set to open in early 2020. Presentations, discussion opportunities and facility tours will provide attendees with the opportunity to learn about the latest updates in SCI research and clinical care. Sessions will be targeted towards the SCI community, scientists, clinicians, trainees, and the general public. We hope you will consider joining us for this event. More information will be available at themiamiproject.org.



Nearly completed Christine E. Lynn Rehabilitation Institute

More Than Just Wheels

by Melissa Reyes

Everybody knows the physical consequences of spinal cord injury (SCI); damage to the spinal cord may result in permanent loss of function below the level of injury. However, what do people *actually* know about a person who is living with SCI? Who do people see when they see a person in a wheelchair? What is their first impression of that person? What is their immediate perception?

As a person living with SCI since the age of two, I have gotten some interesting reactions from people over the years. I have learned that people will do and say whatever's in their mind — often without any sort of filter. I always get the comment of how “pretty and happy” I look, even though I'm in a wheelchair. I think to myself, “So what? Am I supposed to be ugly and sad just because I'm in a wheelchair?” I want people to know that I am more than just my chair. My wheelchair is simply the tool I use to get around, which makes life a bit easier to navigate.

Granted, my wheelchair is pretty good. With its custom seating and personalized options, it gives me independence. Despite this, my day-to-day is complicated by my SCI. I start my day earlier than most to get ready for the day, because getting ready is not as easy as waking up and go. I need help transferring out of bed and basic daily routines take me longer to do with one arm. In addition, I use public transportation to get around, but that can be a challenge if the elevators are out of service at the Metrorail stations or if there's inclement weather. The other big factor of using public transportation is I have to plan to leave home earlier to go wherever I need, because Miami public transportation is not reliable.

However, with the right tools and support system, I make it work. I try to make the best of life, even by making fun of myself from time to time, like the off-the-wall comment I make after taking off my shoes, “Ahh, that feels good!” — even though I cannot feel my feet. Why take life so seriously? Seeing the bright side of life with SCI makes it easier.

Despite my positive attitude, I feel like some people have a hard time seeing past my wheelchair when they look at me. They automatically put me in a box without really getting to know me. Why can't they see me for who I really am? I wish they could see me: a person with a college degree from a reputable university looking for a job opportunity; a person with aspirations and a future. I just want the opportunity to show who I really am and what I have to offer.

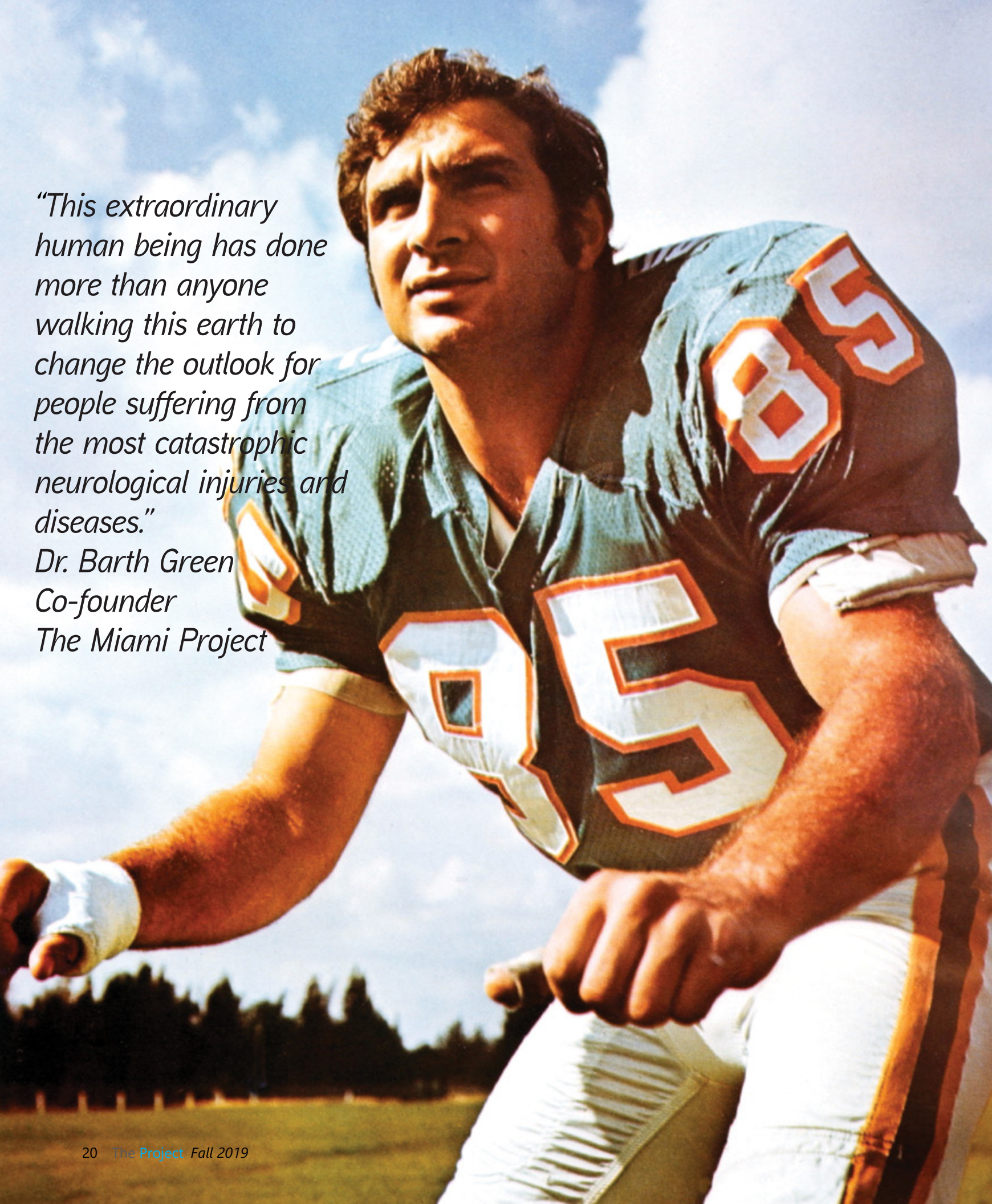
I was a little girl learning to take my first steps in life when I was injured, and, in an instant, my life changed dramatically. I had to readjust to life with a SCI, and learn how to not run people over with my chair. I had to develop tough skin to grow up in a world that is not so nice to people who look different... in a world where it's hard to be seen for more than just wheels or a person with one arm. Proving myself to the world can get exhausting, yes, but I take a deep breath, give myself a little pep talk, lift my head and move forward.

I understand that some people still see me as a little girl who needs protection. But, I want the world to see me for who I really am — a woman with big dreams, love to give, a voice that wants to be heard and a desire to contribute to society. If people could take a step back, they might just see me, and not my chair. So, I ask that the next time you see somebody in a wheelchair — please, take a breath, ignore the chair, and try to see the person for who they really are — you might be surprised by the hidden strength and value they have.



"This extraordinary human being has done more than anyone walking this earth to change the outlook for people suffering from the most catastrophic neurological injuries and diseases."

*Dr. Barth Green
Co-founder
The Miami Project*



Legacy is a word that many use when describing people and their achievements over the course of their lifetimes. When you speak of NFL Hall of Famer and Miami Project Co-Founder, Nick Buoniconti, his is clearly a legacy of greatness: All-America at Notre Dame, AFL All-Star, NFL All-Pro, NFL Pro-Bowler, and two-time Super Bowl Champion. Those achievements alone make for an outstanding legacy. However, Nick was also an accomplished lawyer, agent, corporate leader and sports television personality. His most significant achievement will be how he turned a life-changing tragedy into triumph. He and his family transformed Nick's promise to Marc, that he would do everything possible to find a cure for Marc's paralysis, into a scientific revolution that has changed the way the world thinks about paralysis and attendant



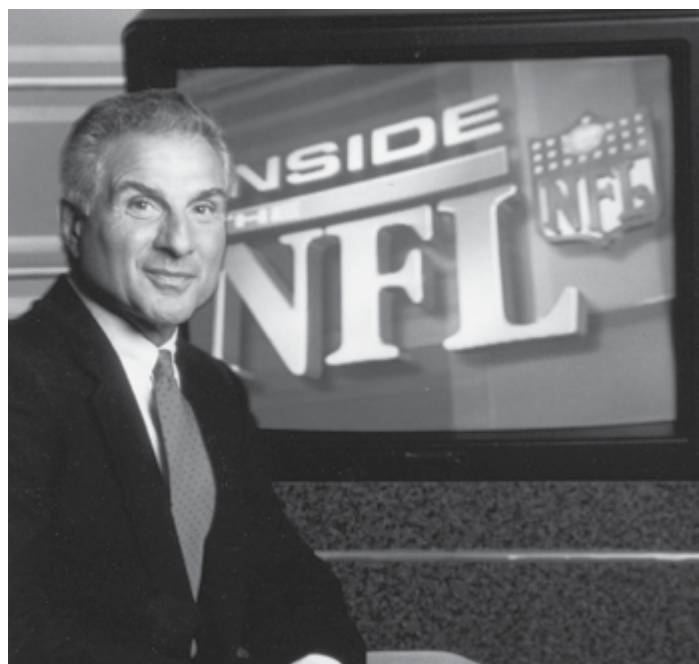
"On behalf of the entire University community, I would like to thank Nick for his visionary leadership. His dedication, and commitment to his son is leading to transformational change that will impact generations to come."

University of Miami President Julio Frenk.

difficulties. Throughout his entire life, Nick had been a man of action. In his passing, Nick's true legacy will be measured by the many who are touched by that transcendent promise to find a cure for paralysis, not just for Marc, but for all living with spinal cord injuries.

To find the true measure of a man, it is best to hear from those who knew him well and worked closely with him over the decades. At the recent public remembrance ceremony for Nick, his former coach, NFL Hall of Famer Don Shula, sent a message that was read from the podium. Shula said, "He started as a player who wanted to hit as many people as possible to knock them down, and he finished as a humanitarian who wanted to touch as many people as possible to help them stand back up."





Dr. Barth Green, who co-founded The Miami Project with Nick said, “His courage, strength, and perseverance are historically unparalleled. This extraordinary human being has done more than anyone walking this earth to change the outlook for people suffering from the most catastrophic neurological injuries and diseases. Nick is no longer walking this earth, but I am confident that every day when I wake up and go to work, and as his son Marc wakes up and goes to work, that Nick is watching us closely to make sure we are unwavering in our commitment to carry the torch that he lit in 1985.”

Nick’s youngest son, Marc, shared at the close of the ceremony, “My father was always by my side, especially when I needed him most. From my darkest moments he was always there. Along with Dr. Green, my father and I would form an

“An individual who never shied away from the challenges of life. If someone told him there was something that he could not do, or that he could not accomplish, those comments only sought to galvanize him. These are the very same traits that helped him to inspire others.”

Leo Armbrust, longtime Miami Dolphins Team Chaplin



unbreakable bond that would start a medical revolution. For the last 34 years, my father dedicated his life to help me and the millions of others who he considered his own sons and daughters, even though he never met them. A legend is a person who lives to serve a purpose rather than self-achievement. A legend focuses on what they can give, rather than what they can get. A legend does the right thing, regardless of the outcome. A legend leaves the world a better place. I’m sure that everyone agrees with me, that defines Nick Buoniconti. I will continue to try and follow in your footsteps and deliver on our promise to find a cure. I only wish that we could have finished it together.”



“When Nick decided to do something, it got done. Not just done, but no one could have done it better.” Miami Dolphins Teammate and Buoniconti Fund Board Member, Dick Anderson

“His name is synonymous with Miami and our treasured Miami Dolphins, but will one day be hailed as one of the champions responsible for finding a cure for paralysis and for making a difference in the lives of so many people, including my own.” Grammy Award Winning recording artist and Buoniconti Fund Board Member, Gloria Estefan



“Every single person in a wheelchair he thought of as his child, and it was his goal and his determination to get every single one of them out of their wheelchairs. We haven’t done it yet, but we’re going to do it. We have it from here pops.” Nick Buoniconti III



Bob Griese, Nick Buoniconti and Dick Anderson



Victoria Ranger Nunez, Mark Dalton and Chris Evert



Terry Buoniconti



Nick Buoniconti with Mark Dalton and Chris Evert



Scott Erickson, Marc Buoniconti, Swanee DiMare and Collin Egglesfield



Alex Rodriguez



Cynthia Vijitakula and Marc Buoniconti with Alex Rodriguez and Jennifer Lopez



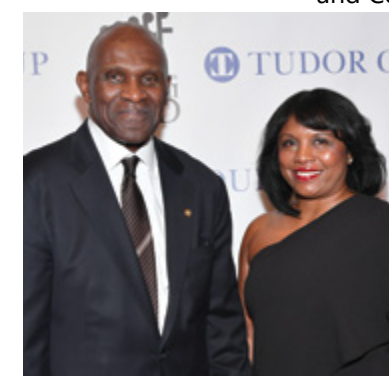
Dr. Barth Green with Nat Moore



Nick and Marc Buoniconti with Jim Ferraro



Nick Buoniconti with Mike Smith



Harry and Maribel Carson



Jennifer Lopez and Alex Rodriguez with Mark Dalton



Christine Lynn with Ignacio "Nacho" Figueras and Delphina Blaquier



Amy Purdy



Paul and Swanee DiMare with Ray Allen



Alex Rodriguez and Jennifer Lopez with Bob and Jill Costas



Bob Griese



Christine Lynn and Nick Buoniconti



Ray Allen and Alex Rodriguez



Chris Evert, Brian Boitano and Amy Purdy



Dr. Barth Green



Ray Allen with Marc Buoniconti and Andre Dawson



2018 Great Sports Legends Dinner



KC and The Sunshine Band

Golf Legend Jack Nicklaus Hosted 17th Annual Buoniconti Fund Celebrity Golf Invitational Presented By Tudor Group



Over the years, The Buoniconti Fund has been fortunate to have many friends stand up for our cause. One of those remarkable friends just happens to be someone who was tremendously moved after being honored by Nick Buoniconti at the Great Sports Legends Dinner. Shortly after that event in 1999, the greatest golfer in history, Jack Nicklaus, told Nick he wanted to do more. More than 17 years later, the Buoniconti Fund Celebrity Golf Invitational is still going strong. Each year, Jack joins us in our goal of seeing millions around the world rise from their wheelchairs and walk again as he joins us in our mission to find a cure. His home course, The Bear's Club in Jupiter, Florida, is the pristine venue for the event.

This year, the 17th Annual Buoniconti Fund Celebrity Golf Invitational, Presented by Tudor Group, was held on April 28th and 29th. The event included a Sunday night dinner with a buy-it-now store including unique sports memorabilia, jewelry, experiences and getaways, an 18-hole golf tournament with on-course contests and first class golf gifts. Celebrity friends included: 1972 Miami Dolphins Perfect Season member Dick Anderson, NY Yankee pitching great Stan Bahnsen, former Dolphins Receiver Fred Banks, 1968 Olympic Long Jump Gold Medalist



Cynthia Vijitakula, Jack Nicklaus, Marc Buoniconti and Barbara Nicklaus



Mark Dalton and Marc Buoniconti



Bob Griese



Mark Dalton, Dr. Barth Green and Jack Nicklaus

Bob Beamon, New York Giants Hall of Fame linebacker Harry Carson, retired Bengals Running back Ki-Jana Carter, former MLB catcher Rick Cerone, retired Dolphin Offensive lineman Jeff Dellenbach, World Series Champion Pitcher Scott Erickson, 1980 Olympics Gold Medal winning "Miracle on Ice" Team Captain, Mike Eruzione, NFL Hall of Fame Quarterback Bob Griese, former Major League pitcher Bill Gullickson, retired New York Giants linebacker Brian Kelley, retired Dolphins Punter John Kidd, Dolphins receiving legend Nat Moore, Super Bowl MVP with the Washington Redskins Mark Rypien, Actor Kevin Sorbo and former NFL tight end Jed Weaver.

The 18th Annual event is scheduled for Spring 2020. For sponsorship and golf information, please visit www.TheBuonicontiFund.com/bears-club/



The Pittsburgh Chapter hosted their **15th Annual Golf Tournament** on June 15 at Carmichaels Golf Course with another *sell-out* crowd of golfers, volunteers and sponsors including Jeremie Synder Electrical and Pro Builders Concrete. The tournament received a special donation of \$50,000 from Mission for Miracles and the Throckmorton family to support The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.



Pittsburgh Chapter with Throckmorton / Mission for Miracles donation



John and Meg Throckmorton with Chapter Director, Jim Hoy

The Woody Foundation held its **8th Annual Golf Classic** on April 25, 2019 with nearly 100 golfers, sponsors and volunteers to support this great day of golf, community and spinal cord injury research awareness. The Woody Foundation has designated The Buoniconti Fund as an event beneficiary and partner for this tournament since 2012, raising more than \$275,000 to support the research at The Miami Project. The Woody Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not for profit organization formed in 2011 to raise funds for the recovery of spinal cord injured persons. James “Woody” Beckham suffered his spinal cord injury making a rugby tackle in January 2011.

On January 19, the Miami Chapter hosted the **10th Annual Block Party**. The milestone event celebrated nearly 400 guests and community partners for an amazing night under the stars with sumptuous food by Hillstone Coral Gables, local craft beer and desserts, live music, dancing, emcee NBC6 Roxanne Vargas and an auction.



NBC6 Roxanne Vargas with Marc Buoniconti



Tom Jelke presents Marc Buoniconti with Red Door Classic proceeds



Adaptive Team from Jackson Memorial Recreation Therapy

FIU SigEp Alumni and the Thomas B. Jelke Foundation teamed up again to host the Red Door Classic on March 8, 2019. The mission was to have a golf tournament that attracted a crowd who cared about giving back to the community. The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis has been one of the event beneficiaries since inception in 2015. The Miami Chapter has participated as a Hole Sponsor, as part of the tournament committee, and assisting with an adaptive team. The relationship began with FIU SigEp undergraduates, their philanthropic efforts raising \$25,000 since 2009. An additional \$50,000 has been raised through the annual golf tournament.



Joe McGrath and daughter Tina from past Comedy Show 2014

The Boston Chapter presented their annual **Comedy Show**, in memory of Joe McGrath. The show was a success again this year, featuring regional and national comedians, including Lenny Clarke, performing to a *sell-out* crowd on May 30 at Giggles Comedy Club and Prince Pizzeria in Saugus, MA.

Let us know if your community could benefit from a Volunteer Chapter which develops fundraising events and awareness campaigns to help us reach our goal of finding a cure for paralysis. There's no better time to create SCI awareness in your community! Email bfchapters@med.miami.edu or call (305) 243-3863 to get started. Visit www.thebuonicontifund.com/chapters for the latest events and community outreach and join the Buoniconti Fund Chapters on Facebook.

Chapters Challenge is in its ninth year as a successful campaign that encourages our volunteers and supporters participating in local, national and international races to utilize our web-based program to raise funds and awareness on behalf of The Buoniconti Fund and The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis. Race participants can establish their own page, fundraising goals, contact friends and family, track their success, and make donations directly to The Buoniconti Fund. Our goal is to have our supporters walk, run, swim, bike or wheel their way across the finish line! <http://chapterschallenge-helpcureparalysis.everydayhero.do/>





Through good fortune and a ton of blood, sweat, and tears, Darrell was able to rekindle a new relationship with The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, an organization he had aligned himself with prior to his life-threatening mishap. From that moment on, the man and the cause were permanently one.

Darrell Gwynn has spent most of his adult life caught between the twin poles of a blessing and a curse. In 1990, 29 years ago at the age of 28 he left his arm, racing career and ability to walk against a stretch of cold, unforgiving British retaining wall when a race car he was piloting collided with it at more than 200 mph.

Within seconds, the NHRA Champion's entire world changed forever. Through good fortune and a ton of blood, sweat and tears, Darrell was able to rekindle a new relationship with The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, an organization he had aligned himself with prior to his life-threatening mishap. From that moment on, the man and the cause were permanently one.

The Miami Project and its fundraising arm, The Buoniconti Fund, along with their amazing staff of scientists, physicians and clinicians have since enabled Darrell to have a family and enjoy a high level of function and independence. During the past 28 years, and most recently through his work leading the **Darrell Gwynn Quality of Life Chapter of The Buoniconti Fund**, he has witnessed the relentless and unwavering pursuit of research to find a cure for paralysis. In 1990, Darrell had to put the brakes on his promising racing career and he has never been more committed to his partnership with The Miami Project and The Buoniconti Fund.

As the scientific progress continues, Darrell continues to dedicate his life to enlist and inspire a unique and unparalleled team of friends and associates to join in this final push for victory over paralysis. In 2019, the Darrell Gwynn Quality of Life Chapter will use this 29-year milestone to fund this final drive to ***Put the Brakes on Paralysis***



Darrell Gwynn with NASCAR drivers and Owen Johnson, wheelchair recipient 2018

Hot Rods & Reels Charity Fishing Tournaments pair NASCAR drivers and legends with philanthropic supporters, executives, and racing fans for a truly one of a kind, exciting day of fishing on the in-field lake during the Ford Championship Weekend at Homestead-Miami Speedway in November and the Daytona 500 at Daytona International Speedway in February.

NASCAR drivers and legends team up with NHRA Hall of Fame former drag racer Darrell Gwynn to raise awareness for spinal cord injury research and people living with paralysis. The Darrell Gwynn Quality of Life Chapter of The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis is the event host and benefiting charity.

Hot Rods & Reels participants, tournament sponsors, event partners and guests also have the unique opportunity to witness a special wheelchair donation presentation. The tournament would not be possible if it weren't for event partners, including BASS PRO SHOPS, Bass Online, and lead sponsors such as HUK.



In 2011, The Miami Project and The Buoniconti Fund launched its largest ever social media campaign designed to challenge people across the country to help us find this cure. The **Stand Up for Those Who Can't** campaign's intent was to create a national conversation about what it means to be paralyzed among private citizens, corporate and international partners, public policy advocates, celebrities and the media and to bring this condition "out of the closet" and into the national spotlight.

"Most people in the United States and around the world have never met someone who is spinal cord injured let alone contemplate what life must be like for the person paralyzed and their family members," said Marc Buoniconti. "But the reality of today's statistics can't be disputed. Every 30 minutes, another person in the United States will become paralyzed. That is simply unacceptable. Each of us must promise to do something."

In 2011, when we first launched September as National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month with our "Stand Up for Those Who Can't" campaign, more than 600 national media outlets have covered this story reaching an estimated audience of more than 23 million people. Marc Buoniconti was on 20 regional and national radio shows talking about the need to find this cure.

We have been building upon that success ever since. Last year, when we launched our ***"Faces of Paralysis"*** campaign we could never have imagined the amazing support and feedback we received from people around the world thanking us for helping to share their story and bringing attention to this issue. Our goal was to make it a global conversation and we did just that! It was exciting to see so many other organizations participating in this movement.

We need your help to expand this campaign and make our voices heard even louder.

Throughout the year, post your video and/or pictures and share your story about the challenges you have overcome living with a spinal cord injury and why this cure is so important. Post your messages on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter using the hashtags #facesofparalysis and #buonicontifund. You can email us your story to BFSocialMedia@med.miami.edu.



Ethan and Julie Ruby with Amy Rosenthal, Jeremy Mor and Bae Schwartz

Poker4Life 2019 (P4L) was recently held in New York City at The Pensey to benefit The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis. The 14th edition of the event did not disappoint as more than 200 players vied for the coveted P4L bracelet and a seat in the World Series of Poker Main event.

The evening event was one of our best and that is 100% thanks to the efforts and generosity of our supporters and volunteers. The night began with a few firsts, including the singing of our national anthem by P4L co-founder Jeremy Schwartz's 7 year-old son. His rendition set the tone for a memorable poker tournament. The evening also included the recognition of Kevin Graham with the All In Award. Kevin has been our reliable tournament director, and the voice of our night since the first poker event 16 years ago. Kevin's business, Tumbling Dice, helps charities raise money by hosting various themed casino nights. Thank you for helping us honor him and Tumbling Dice.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our Poker4Life 2019 leading sponsors, Jewelry on 5th, Semper Funds, and ZYR Vodka as well as to Chris "Hanrahan" Murney and "Goumba" Johnny Sialiano who have chosen to never miss an event in support of our cause.



Ethan Ruby with Kevin Graham and Jeremy Schwartz



Jeremy Schwartz with winner Doug Rassner

Congratulations to all final table players including our Poker4life.org Charity Poker Champion, Doug Rassner, runner up, Mike Cintolo and 3rd place winner, David Ostrow. It was an incredible run by all 3 individuals and we wish you all the very best of luck at the WSOP and the WSOP satellites.

Each year, we continue to be humbled and proud of what we accomplish together. So many have been steady participants year after year. The gratitude we have for the continued support is more than we can put into words. We may have created this environment, however, you all built the community and its your contribution to society that is something we all can be proud of. Thank you!

Congrats again to the other seven 2019 Final Table Winners: 4th – Andrew Yakubovich, 5th – Jake Meany, 6th – Jane Wasman, 7th – Joe Raffio, 8th – Jordan Girardi, 9th – Sandeep Bangar, 10th – Vincent Teutonico. We hope to see everyone next year at the 15th Annual Poker4Life™ Charity Poker Championship!

23rd Annual Ricky Palermo Spinal Injury Golf Tournament



In 1981, at the age of 21, Ricky Palermo was in an automobile accident that left him paralyzed. Five years later, Ricky contacted The Miami Project and became one of our organization's earliest research participants testing the effects of functional electrical stimulation.

According to the Rochester Business Journal, Ricky was inspired by late, great Rochester basketball official Pete Pavia, who raised tens of thousands of dollars for Camp Good Days and Special Times while battling terminal cancer, Palermo and his family started a golf tournament in Batavia in 1997 with modest fundraising expectations.

This year, Ricky and the Foundation supporters held the 23rd Annual Ricky Palermo Spinal Injury Golf Tournament on August 4th at Terry Hills Golf Course. More than 200 golfers participated in the tournament and 400 people attended the dinner that followed at Genesee Community College in Batavia, New York. The golf tournament has raised more than \$1.5 million over the past 23 years to help those suffering from the devastation of paralysis.

The Miami Project is grateful to the Palermo family and the Batavia community for their support of The Miami Project's research programs. This year, Miami Project scientist Dr. Mark Nash spoke at the event. In addition, Ricky's niece, Dr. Annie Palermo, has dedicated her professional life to improving the lives of people with spinal cord injury. She is a licensed physical therapist pursuing her PhD under the instruction of Dr. Nash at The Miami Project.

The 21st Annual Kevin Kitchnefsky Golf Tournament

To date, the Foundation has raised more than \$600,000 to fund spinal cord injury research.

In 1996, while on the job for a construction company in New Jersey, Kevin Kitchnefsky was unloading two stacks of chain-link fence from a tractor-trailer when 27 units of chain-link fence, each weighing about 100 pounds, slid off the truck and pinned him against the tractor-trailer, leaving him paralyzed. Determined to improving the lives of those living with a spinal cord injury, Kevin launched his first golf tournament in 2000 to fund paralysis research.

Kevin and The Kitchnefsky Foundation for Spinal Cord Research held its 21st Annual golf tournament at the Tunkannock Stonehedge golf course. More than 144 golfers and friends attended the event for a day of entertainment and celebration. To date, the Foundation has raised more than \$600,000 to fund spinal cord injury research. An additional \$150,000 has been raised to provide quality of life grants to individuals in Pennsylvania who are living with a spinal cord injury. The Miami Project is grateful to Kevin and his family for hosting this tournament.

“My Mom wanted to make sure my brother Timothy, who is paralyzed, and the millions like him could one-day benefit from stem cell research and find a cure for paralysis.”

We all seek financial security for ourselves and our families and we all wish to make the world a better place. There is a way to accomplish both – either through a bequest or a planned gift.

Margaret Ripley passed away a few years ago made a five hundred thousand dollar bequest to The Miami Project for stem cell research. “Through the bequest, my mother was able to make a significantly larger donation to The Miami Project than she otherwise could have. The bequest allowed her to take care of her family while she was alive while at the same time knowing that she left a legacy that will last forever through medical science,” said St. Clair Ripley. “My Mom wanted to make sure my brother Timothy, who is paralyzed, and the millions like him could one day benefit from stem cell research and find a cure for paralysis.”

There are many reasons for the popularity of charitable bequests. The opportunity to memorialize one’s personal life values, the satisfaction of perpetuating an important cause for future generations, the increased financial ability we now have to make generous bequests. Through a bequest, a family can make a significant donation that doesn’t affect their current financial situation but will leave a lasting legacy. If you would like to include us in your estate plans, please use the following sentence: *I bequeath the sum of _____ dollars to the University of Miami, a charitable organization located in Coral Gables, Florida to be used only by The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis.*



BECOME INVOLVED TODAY AND HELP CURE PARALYSIS!

Join our team and become involved! Use your creativity, your passion, your drive and your contacts to take an active role in fundraising, donating, or spreading awareness of The Miami Project through The Buoniconti Fund’s Help Cure Paralysis Campaign. It only takes a few minutes to get your own page and story ready to go! This is a great tool to raise funds and awareness whether it’s your birthday, wedding, holiday, mitzvah project, a 5k, and so much more!

Help us find a cure for paralysis by creating a fundraiser today. It’s an easy and fun way to make a difference in the lives of millions living with paralysis.

- Visit <http://helpcureparalysis.everydayhero.do>
- Click Start Fundraising to create your page.
- Customize your page with a photo and your reason for dedicating your special occasion for The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis.
- Share your efforts with your family, friends, and network, asking for their help.

With your fundraising efforts we can:

- Support some of the world’s most novel FDA approved clinical trials targeting spinal cord and brain injuries
- Provide funding for some of our dozens of clinical research studies underway at The Miami Project.
- Fund high-tech research exploring paralysis cures

For more information about creating a fundraiser, or if you have questions about the process, please email tbendell@miami.edu or call (305) 243-2267.

In Memoriam



John Sullivan

1939 - 2018

Longtime Miami Project and
Buoniconti Fund supporter



The Project

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For Those Who Can't

#StandUpForThoseWhoCant #CureParalysis



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