



Press Release

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Contact: Lauren Bailey
(213) 687-857
grants@cciarts.org
www.cciarts.org

Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) Announces Recipients of the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Artist Innovator Fund

Los Angeles – With support from the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI) today announced the ten *Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Artist-Innovator Fund* grantees' funded projects.

The *SCI Artist-Innovator Fund* is the first to offer artists, innovators, inventors, makers, and entrepreneurs with spinal cord injury financial capital for social-impact oriented creative entrepreneurship projects. The Fund provided \$75,000 in grants of up to \$7,500 each to 10 individual artist-entrepreneurs with spinal cord injuries who are inspired to innovate by opportunity-based entrepreneurship. CCI recognizes that having an underserved perspective, living with challenging circumstances, and applying creative practice can yield important solutions for not only the innovator but for the benefit of society. This opportunity recognizes that the combination of SCI populations, craftsmanship and creative practice, and positive social impact can yield powerful results.

Out of 50 applicants from across the country, the 10 selected are:

Dale Ahn (Flushing, New York)

To prototype a software solution for home care providers to schedule and coordinate client cases so that clients get the best care and support.

Quemuel Arroyo (New York City, New York)

To use his dance background to create an aerodynamic waterproof rain gear designed for a person in a seated position such as a wheelchair.

Seth Arseneau (Albuquerque, New Mexico)

To develop a modular AFO (Ankle-Foot Orthotic) brace that integrates into a shoe system using 3D printing. The system will be serviceable and easily custom fit to the end user.

Kevin Henry Bailey (Raleigh, North Carolina)

To create a prototype of a device that will allow a drummer with a spinal cord injury to operate a hi-hat pedal on a drum set with the drummer's mouth as opposed to having to use a foot.

LOS ANGELES
244 S. San Pedro Street
Suite 401
Los Angeles, CA 90012
P: 213.687.8577

BAY AREA
1448 Market Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
P: 415.288.0530

cciarts.org

April Coughlin (New York City, New York)

To create and produce an adaptable raincoat for wheelchair users that is functional, stylish, and designed with a user's specific needs in mind.

Carrie Kaufman (Chicago, Illinois)

To create sexual health materials and resources for disabled people with an emphasis on pleasure and informed communication. Drawing from her own arts background, the materials will be interactive and illustrated with representations of those of varying abilities.

Kelsey Peterson (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

For a film featuring and co-directed, written, and produced by someone with a disability – the applicant herself– about her life 7 years following her spinal cord injury. Funding affords the film score and its composers, who include musicians from the disability community.

Vincent Pierce (Roosevelt Island, New York)

For start-up costs to begin a music composing school that emphasizes music production and the business aspect of distribution for disabled and disadvantaged students at New York City high schools.

Gabriel Rodreick (Minneapolis, Minnesota)

To stage a second and expanded production of the original dance performance “A Cripple’s Dance” at Chicago’s Southern Theater, which is accessible for both performers and audiences and, thus, intended to reach a larger audience.

Arthur Torrey (North Billerica, Massachusetts)

To design, manufacture, and distribute a simple device – the Wheelie Scale-- that allows manual wheelchair users to adaptively use an inexpensive bathroom scale for weighing themselves, which will help the target market track health gains. Projected revenue will also go towards creating a low cost wheelchair repair and maintenance service in Greater Boston.

This opportunity is unique because it helps artists and innovators with SCI think differently about what their injury and disability means and how it has impacted their lives. More often, this type of injury is viewed negatively with feelings of loss and helplessness when it could instead be perceived as offering unique opportunities for the person and society. CCI President and CEO Angie Kim said, “There are so many problems to solve, innovations to be made, and solutions to be generated, and not through homogenous or cookie-cutter approaches. Rather, we need diversity to be leading innovation. We need people who move through the world uniquely to be at the center of inventions, hacking, and fixing.” The SCI Artist Innovator Fund celebrates the SCI experience as one that can impact one’s life positively and helps cultivate creativity and problem-solving. The program’s support is meant to boost confidence and nudge someone to move forward with an idea or project that can change their career and impact their communities.

A panel of distinguished experts assisted CCI in reviewing the *SCI Artist-Innovator Fund* applications, including:

- **Todd Crawford:** the Creator and Director at a website development and digital marketing company in Louisville, Kentucky. As a person with SCI, he is also the Executive Director of the not-for-profit, Todd Crawford Foundation to Cure Paralysis, Inc.
- **Grace Jun:** a thought leader and community builder for diversity and inclusion. Working at the intersection of universal design & fashionable technology, she is an Assistant Professor of

Fashion at Parsons School of Design, and Executive Director at Open Style Lab (OSL), a nonprofit dedicated to making style accessible to people of all abilities.

- **Richard Bell:** a Los Angeles-based visual artist with a spinal cord injury showing his work at various galleries and rehabilitation centers in California. He is dedicated to giving back to the SCI community.

For more information about the *SCI Artist-Innovator Fund*, please visit: www.cciarts.org.

About Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI)

Center for Cultural Innovation was founded in 2001 as a California 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. Its mission is to promote knowledge-sharing, networking, and financial independence for individual artists and creative entrepreneurs by providing business training, grants, and incubating innovative projects that create new program knowledge, tools, and practices for artists in the field. For more information, please visit cciarts.org.

About the Craig H. Neilsen Foundation

The Craig H. Neilsen Foundation vision is for individuals with spinal cord injuries, and those who care for them, live full and productive lives as active participants in their communities. Its mission supports both programs and scientific research to improve the quality of life for those affected by and living with spinal cord injury. For more information please visit chnfoundation.org.

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