

SPECIAL ADVERTISING FEAT

CIGNA PRESENTS **The Power Of Caring**

Christopher Reeve Hero For Paralysis

Two months before he died of heart failure on Oct. 10, Christopher Reeve was interviewed for this edition of *The Power Of Caring*.

Christopher Reeve became a movie star playing the strapping Superman, vulnerable only to Kryptonite. So the difference between fantasy and reality could not have been starker when, in 1995, Reeve broke his neck in a horseriding accident.

Reeve's wife, Dana, and his foundation will carry on his legacy of activism.



He was paralyzed below shoulders and faced doctors' gloomy forecasts that he'd likely never regain any movement.

He defied that prognosis through the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, became a different kind of hero. Until his death at age 52, Reeve put his private battle in the public eye. By devoting himself to overhauling the status quo within the field of paralysis treatment, he helped those who faced similar challenges but lacked his resources. "We were galvanized by him in life," CRPF president Kathy Lewis says, "and now we rededicate ourselves to his mission."

While lobbying for increased research funding, Reeve urged scientists to think boldly and collaboratively as they discovered new ways to help patients, both immediately after injury and in rehabilitation. Researchers marveled at how well-versed Reeve was on spinal cord trauma. "He energized young scientists and brought a wealth of new ideas and approaches to the field," says Oswald Steward, chair of CRPF's scientific advisory council.

The results stirred Reeve's hopes. "If the goal is to stop paralysis or reverse it," he said, "to give people as much normalcy as possible, there's tremendous progress being made."

Reeve chaired the board of CRPF, which aids independent projects and also has created a consortium to share research successes and failures. Worthy

funding since its inception. CRPF also runs a paralysis resource center and funds quality of life initiatives chosen by a committee Reeve's wife, Dana, heads.

Beginning his own rigorous rehab program in 2000, Reeve used aqua therapy, exercise bike sessions and electrode stimulation to work his muscles. He eventually could open and close his arms and move his legs when lying down or in a pool. He could also feel sensation over 70% of his body, as opposed to 12% when he was first injured.

Reeve covered vast ground physically and emotionally, thanks to his indomitable will and his partnership with Dana. When talking to people who had been recently paralyzed, those who felt hopelessness closing in, he would counsel patience while describing advances and possibilities. "I'm not lying," he said. "You can't call up somebody in the depths of despair and feed them lies. That would be the ultimate act of cruelty." In fact, with his superhuman efforts, he sent a message that was just the opposite.—Alec Morrison

For information or to contribute: Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, 500 Morris Ave., Springfield, NJ 07081; (800) 225-0292; ChristopherReeve.org/caring.