



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Fiscal Year 2021 (Oct 1, 2020 - Sept 30, 2021)

WU UPLIFTING
ATHLETES

Executive Director, Rob Long

Dear Friends,

This year has taught us that we must continue to adapt and adjust to the world around us. I could not be more proud of the way the Uplifting Athletes team has done just that. Amidst a lingering pandemic, we continue to develop and grow. In July, we were thrilled to welcome Aimee Lund as our newest full time staff member. As a team, we will work to carry out our mission by serving the communities that we care so deeply about.

In 2021, we shifted gears to hold our first-ever virtual Leadership Development Conference and Young Investigator Draft. The virtual Leadership Development Conference allowed us to connect with 65 chapter leaders, more than ever before in the 14-year history of the conference. Additionally, our 4th annual Young Investigator Draft celebrated and funded 7 rare disease researchers bringing the program total to 25 researchers and \$440,000 in research funds distributed since the event began in 2018.

The 2021 Young Investigator Draft included an important new initiative, the Underrepresented Researchers in Medicine (URM) initiative. This initiative focuses on researchers that are underrepresented in the medical research population, relative to the general population, and meeting them where they are. The URM initiative provides them the opportunity to be funded and recognized alongside their peers through the Young Investigator Draft. Uplifting Athletes is making a long-term commitment to drive change in the way that we fund medical research.

Our awareness campaigns continued to prosper as we celebrated our 13th Rare Disease Champion Team and reached new heights with our Reps For Rare Diseases campaign. We added 6 new members to the long history of worthy Rare Disease Champions and the Reps For Rare Diseases campaign partnered with 54 prospective NFL athletes to use their platform at their respective NFL Pro Days to raise awareness and support for the Rare Disease community.

Our network of chapters, which was stymied by the pandemic for much of 2020, bounced back to hold 22 Lift for Life events this year. Additionally, the overall number of chapters grew again and featured our first-ever women's chapter, Eastern Illinois soccer.

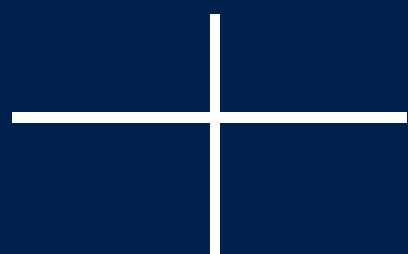
Excitingly, we were able to hold a special Uplifting Experience for 7 local Kansas City families by partnering with the MLB's Kansas City Royals. We are looking forward to continuing to build upon these inspiring experiences as we head into 2022.

In closing, I thank all of those that have continued to believe in the mission of Uplifting Athletes and what we are building. Every ounce of support carries us that much further and closer to our goals. Whatever the future holds, we will be here working relentlessly to inspire the rare disease community with hope through the powerful platform of sports.

With hope and love,



Robert Long
Executive Director





OUR HISTORY

Built on the vision of one person and pulling from his family's rare disease experience as the foundation, former Penn State University football player and student Scott Shirley founded Lift For Life® in 2003 before launching Uplifting Athletes in 2007.

Since Day 1, Uplifting Athletes focused on using the platform of college football to shine a spotlight on the rare disease cause while providing the student-athletes we are engaged with a valuable leadership experience.

Uplifting Athletes provides an opportunity for our student-athletes to enhance the valuable skills they develop on the college football playing field and hone in on transferable life and leadership skills that are necessary for careers after athletics.

More than a dozen years later, the cause is still the same. Though today, the organization has expanded its reach to include a network of athletes that consists of college football student-athlete led chapters, Uplifting Ambassadors and Team UA participants.

All the annual events and fundraisers associated with Uplifting Athletes fuel our commitment to create Uplifting Leaders, engage in Uplifting Experiences, fund Rare Disease Research, and expand Rare Disease Awareness.

MISSION

Inspire the Rare Disease Community with hope through the power of sport

VISION

Empower people to take action against rare diseases and be a catalyst for the medical community to find cures

2021 VIRTUAL YOUNG INVESTIGATOR DRAFT

The Young Investigator Draft presented by CSL Behring is the result of Uplifting Athletes' ongoing commitment to cultivate resources that accelerate scientific advancements for rare disease treatments and potential cures while facilitating the next generation of rare disease researchers.

Young Investigator Draft grants fund research that is collaborative and translational in order to positively impact treatments and potential cures for the entire Rare Disease Community.

Uplifting Athletes has provided more than \$440,000 in funding to rare disease researchers through its first four Young Investigator Drafts.

UNDERREPRESENTED RESEARCHERS IN MEDICINE INITIATIVE

In May of 2020, conversations began with industry partners about ways that life sciences can promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in medicine and medical research. The vision and purpose of the URM initiative is to engage with rare disease researchers from underrepresented backgrounds and leverage the mechanism of the Young Investigator Draft to fund and celebrate underrepresented researchers.



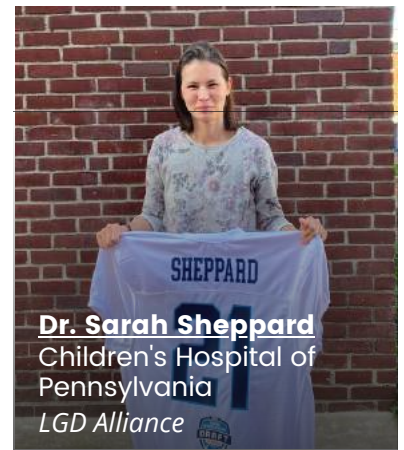
2021 DRAFT CLASS



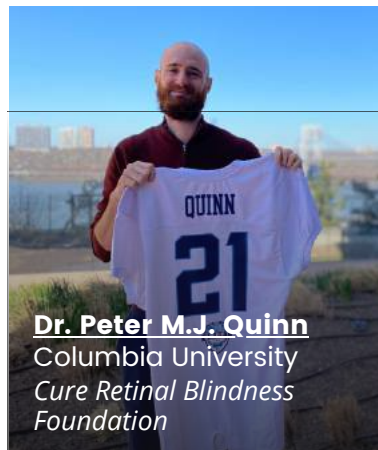
Dr. Neha Nagpal
Boston Children's Hospital
Team Telomere



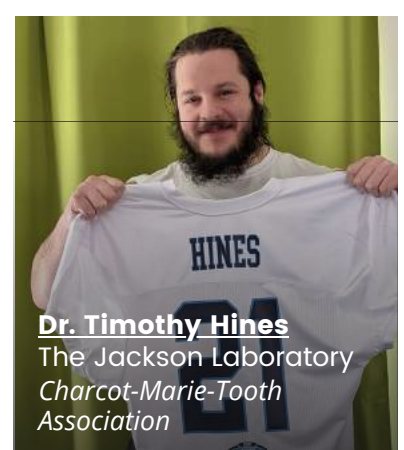
Dr. Adele Mossa
Icahn School of Medicine at Mt Sinai
DDX3X Foundation



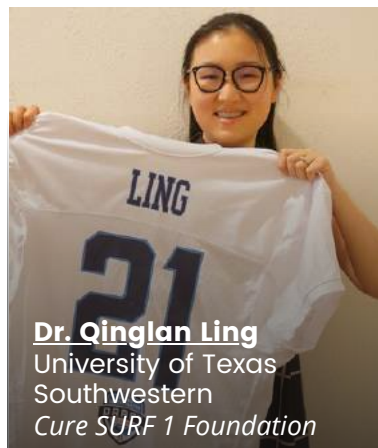
Dr. Sarah Sheppard
Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania
LGD Alliance



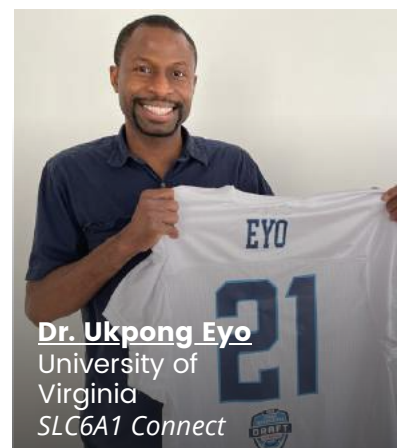
Dr. Peter M.J. Quinn
Columbia University
Cure Retinal Blindness Foundation



Dr. Timothy Hines
The Jackson Laboratory
Charcot-Marie-Tooth Association



Dr. Qinglan Ling
University of Texas Southwestern
Cure SURF 1 Foundation



Dr. Ukpong Eyo
University of Virginia
SLC6A1 Connect

"I've always been involved with the rare disease community with autoimmune disorders running in my family. This fueled my desire to want to make an impact during my academic career. Thank you for your support of my work in the drive to find a treatment."

- Dr. Peter Quinn-



There are many roles that make up the Rare Disease Community. We are patients, families, caregivers, researchers, medical professionals, advocates and policy makers. Individually we are passionate allies. Collectively, we are stronger than any one piece of this vitally important and diverse ecosystem.

It is our connection to the rare disease cause that unites us, and it was inspirational to see so many different and vital pieces of the Rare Disease Community join forces during the 2021 Uplifting Athletes 7,000 Mile Challenge presented by Sanofi Genzyme.

The second year of the 7,000 Mile Challenge, saw 36 teams cover more than 12,000 miles, including 264 individuals who contributed at least one mile - eclipsing our 7,000 mile goal in recognition of the more than 7,000 known rare diseases. In total, the 2021 event raised more than \$35,000.

Sure the number of miles each person posts is relevant, but those numbers aren't the measuring stick for the 7,000 Mile Challenge. What really matters is the inspiring message sent to the Rare Disease Community when each person who joins the team commits to doing their part to help make a difference. Every single mile contributed has meaning.

"It wasn't a long challenge at all, it was the right amount of days to contribute miles. The way it's set up and formatted, it works really well. Rare diseases are something we need to focus on more and more because they take a lot of research and a lot of work."

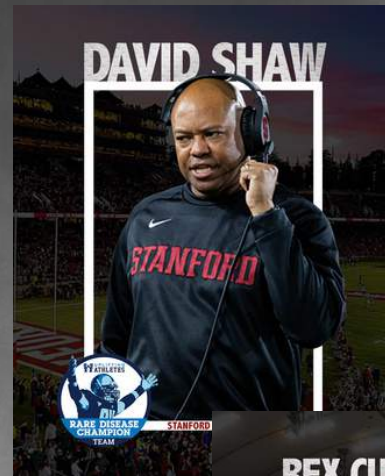
- Rich Connell, 7KMC Participant-



2020 RARE DISEASE CHAMPION TEAM

For more than a dozen years, Uplifting Athletes has celebrated leaders in college football that have made a positive and lasting impact on the Rare Disease Community through its Rare Disease Champion initiative. The Rare Disease Champion Team is part of the National College Football Awards Association (NCFAA), and celebrated annually as part of the Uplifting Athletes' Young Investigator Draft in Philadelphia.

Sculpted by world renowned artist Brian Hanlon, the Rare Disease Champion trophy is in the likeness of Mark Herzlich, the former Boston College and New York Giants linebacker who provided the inspiration for the award after overcoming a life threatening battle with the rare disease Ewing's sarcoma in 2009.




UPLIFTING LEADERS

The catalyst for the Uplifting Leaders Program is the annual Leadership Development Conference. We encourage two leaders from each current and prospective chapter to attend this two-day conference focused on the development of transferable life skills, rare disease advocacy and leadership.

This is a unique rare disease education initiative for student-athletes to learn to maximize their platform on their campus to raise awareness on behalf of the Rare Disease Community.

The skills the student-athletes develop at the conference are applied through managing the chapters on campus. This provides a much needed internship-like experience for student-athletes that otherwise would have to sacrifice offseason training in order to obtain a competitive internship.

In 2021, 65 student-athletes from chapters and prospect chapter universities attended the late-January virtual conference. Our first virtual Leadership Development Conference provided an opportunity to expand the chapter playing field beyond football with the addition of Eastern Illinois women's soccer.



"The rare disease community definitely has a special place in my heart, and I was looking for a long time for a way I could give back to them. Just really glad and excited I was able to find such an incredible place to do exactly that"

*- Storm Monroe
Davidson Chapter President*



2020 TOUCHDOWN PLEDGE DRIVES

During the 2020 COVID-19 college football season, several chapters felt they were in a position to resume their support of the Uplifting Athletes mission by holding a Touchdown Pledge Drive. Traditionally Touchdown Pledge Drive games are held inside a one-month window, but during the COVID-19 season it was a task just to get the event up and running and approved.

We were extremely grateful to all the chapter leaders who went above and beyond during the already difficult COVID-19 season to hold a Touchdown Pledge Drive to raise funds and awareness for the Rare Disease Community.

During the COVID-19 season 6 chapters participated in Touchdown Pledge Drive, and \$18,488 was raised to support the Rare Disease Community. Uplifting Athletes chapters are run by college football student-athletes. So, for fans, this is a great way to support the players on your favorite team in their off-the-field efforts by supporting their on-field performance.

"Through all of the challenges our chapters faced in 2020; cancelled games and seasons, Covid protocols, and the unknown of what was around the corner, our student-athletes remained committed to supporting the Rare Disease Community. Those that were able to hold a Touchdown Pledge Drive in 2020 truly went above and beyond expectations for such an unprecedented year.," Uplifting Athletes Chapter Success Manager, Levi Norwood said. "We are so grateful to those universities, chapter leaders, and fans for supporting the mission of Uplifting Athletes."



LIFT FOR LIFE

Lift For Life is the signature fundraising event for each Uplifting Athletes Chapter led by college football student-athletes. Each chapter embraces the mission of Uplifting Athletes by using college football as a platform to inspire the Rare Disease Community with hope through the power of sport.

One year after all scheduled Lift For Life events were postponed in 2020 because of COVID-19 restrictions, our chapters came back stronger than ever showing up to make the Rare Disease Community a priority by holding a record 22 signature fundraising and awareness events through Uplifting Athletes. All of the 2021 Lift For Life events were private and not open to the public to comply with all safety protocols in place for the student-athletes. Still, the chapter leaders went above and beyond to find a way to make it work and \$94,549 was raised through Lift For Life events.



\$94,549

Amount raised by the 22 university chapters who held Lift For Life events in 2021.



REPS FOR RARE DISEASES

For the seventh consecutive year, Uplifting Athletes empowered NFL prospects with the opportunity to use the NFL Combine or NFL Pro Day as a platform to give back by raising funds and awareness in support of the Rare Disease Community.

The Reps For Rare Diseases campaign is one of the first opportunities for these athletes to create an impact using their platform as professional athletes. Uplifting Athletes is excited to work with these outstanding individuals to help them give back during this very pivotal time of their lives.



\$111,804

Amount raised by the 54 NFL prospects during the 2021 Reps For Rare Diseases campaign.





UPLIFTING EXPERIENCES

The focus and purpose of Uplifting Experiences is to share the spotlight afforded to athletes with rare disease patients, families and caregivers. With COVID-19 the opportunity to hold in-person Uplifting Experiences through 2020 and into 2021 was eliminated.

Earlier this fall we reengaged the Uplifting Experiences initiative on a limited basis by teaming up with Major League Baseball player Michael A. Taylor and Royals Charities to hold Uplifting Athletes' Event at Kauffman Stadium for several Kansas City families impacted by rare disease.

Going forward our hope is to continue to enhance and grow this program with the health and safety of everybody involved remaining the No. 1 priority.



UPLIFTING AMBASSADORS

Through the NFL's My Cause My Cleats campaign, players across the league support their favorite cause by wearing custom designed cleats representing their cause. At Uplifting Athletes, we team up with former chapter members turned NFL players and UA Ambassadors to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity to raise awareness for the Rare Disease Community.

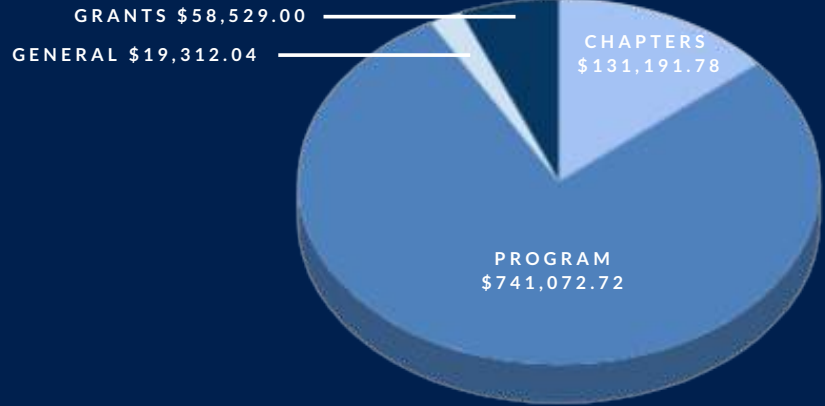
During the 2020 NFL season, two Uplifting Ambassadors supported the Rare Disease Community through My Cause My Cleats. Sterling Hofrichter of the Atlanta Falcons and Zaire Franklin of the Indianapolis Colts.





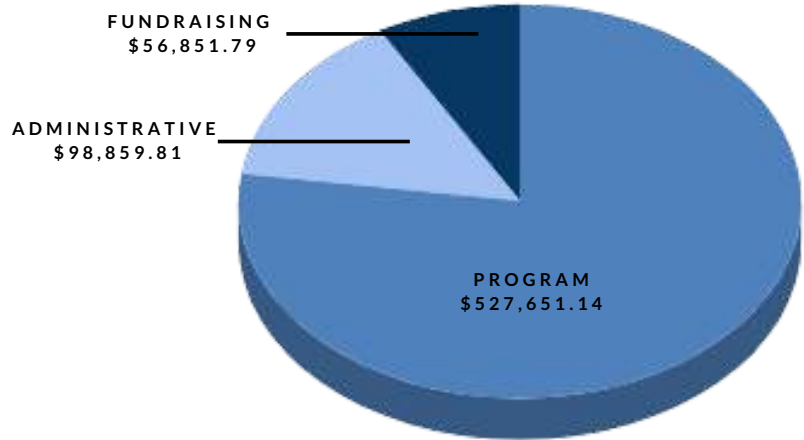
FISCAL YEAR 2020

Revenue



Total: \$950,105.54

Expenses



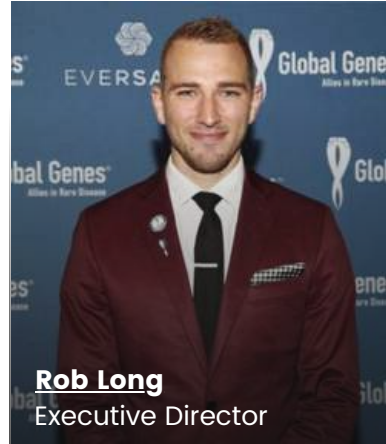
Total: \$683,362.74

*Charts represent unaudited financials for FY2020 (10/1/20 to 9/30/21)

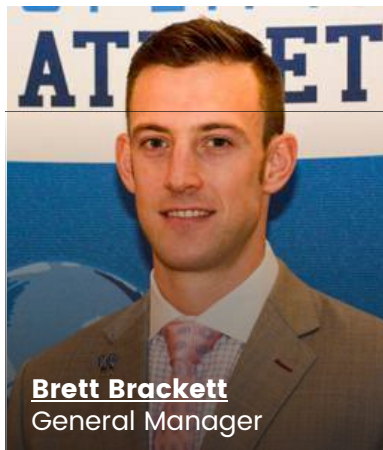
We take pride in being good stewards of every dollar donated to Uplifting Athletes and work diligently to utilize those funds to carry out our mission.



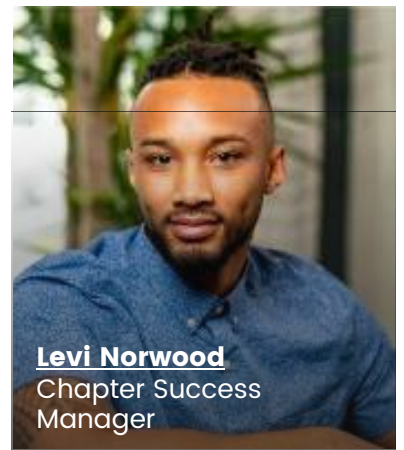
STAFF



Rob Long
Executive Director



Brett Brackett
General Manager



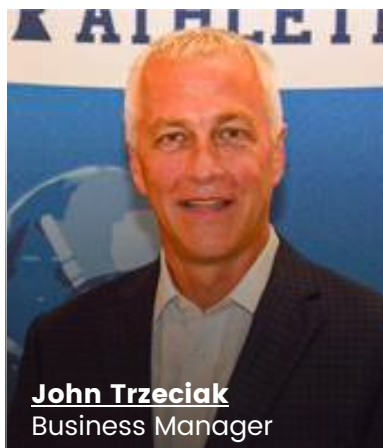
Levi Norwood
Chapter Success
Manager



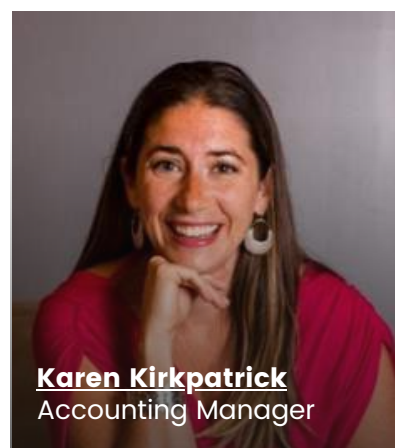
Aimei Lund
Manager, Rare Disease
Engagement



Andy Shay
Community Relationship
Specialist

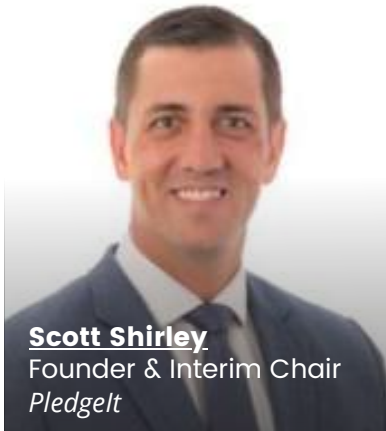


John Trzeciak
Business Manager

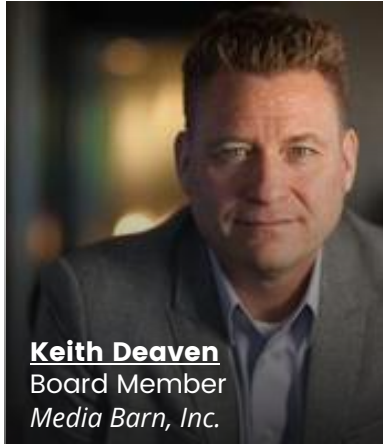


Karen Kirkpatrick
Accounting Manager

BOARD



Scott Shirley
Founder & Interim Chair
Pledgelt



Keith Deaven
Board Member
Media Barn, Inc.



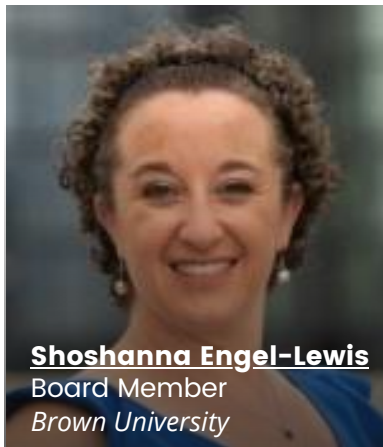
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Vice Chair
Lincoln Financial Group



Kerwin Stetler
Treasurer & Secretary
Pyramid Construction Services



Scott Schliebner
Board Member
2M Clinical



Shoshanna Engel-Lewis
Board Member
Brown University





95%

of rare diseases are without an FDA approved treatment or therapy.

1 in 10 Americans will be diagnosed with a Rare Disease

50% of people diagnosed with a rare disease are children

7,000

Approximate number of different rare diseases that collectively affect more than 30 million Americans.

It is estimated that 350 million people worldwide suffer from rare diseases

A Rare Disease is one that affects fewer than 200,000 Americans at any given time.



#WETACKLE RARE

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR 2021 CORPORATE CHAMPIONS

