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BACKBONES Receives Multi-Year Grant to fund Leadership Programs for Adults and Youth with Disabilities.

(January 18, 2022) BACKBONES, a local nonprofit, is proud to announce that it has been awarded a \$102,000 multi-year grant from the Craig H. Nielsen Foundation as part of the Creating Opportunity & Independence (CO&I) portfolio which supports non profit organizations providing programs and services that are community-driven, empowering, and inclusive of all ages and backgrounds to enhance quality of life.

BACKBONES will use the funds for their Leaders Program which equips ten adults with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D) with skills to become leaders in their communities. The participants commit to a year-long development program where they learn from guest speakers and participate in educational in-services on topics like advocacy, self-care, public speaking, conflict resolution, community organizing, intersectionality and more. In summer 2022 BACKBONES will also launch the Youth Leaders Program with the goal of supporting ten teenagers with SCI/D as they learn skills in leadership and a knowledge base on how to navigate employment, apply to college, practice self-care, health & wellness, recreation and advocacy. BACKBONES Youth Program emphasizes the importance of supporting disabled youth and helping them reach their goals and potential.

The Leader Participants for 2022 include: Matt Ludolph (Illinois); Sergio Muniz-Munoz (Wisconsin); Shannon Chisholm (North Carolina); Maria Sutter (Ohio); Jason Leuck (Nebraska); Ashley Llorens (Illinois); Cory Moses (New York); Nicole Llorens (Illinois); Jose Alzati (Illinois); Vanessa Osman (California). Read their bios here: <https://tinyurl.com/bdh6x52r>

“Now in its third year, the program alumni have utilized what they learned and been able to find internships, gain employment, write a book, get involved in policy, and speak on panels or conferences. This grant ensures that we are able to continue this work and support more individuals with SCI/D on their journeys to reach personal and professional goals.” says Reveca Torres, Executive Director of BACKBONES.

About Craig H Neilsen Foundation:

Inspired by the Founder, Craig H. Neilsen, the Foundation is committed to changing the world for those living with spinal cord injuries and those who care for them to live full and productive lives as active participants in their communities. Craig H. Neilsen Foundation’s funding is

dedicated to supporting both programs and scientific research to improve the quality of life for those living with spinal cord injury.