

**Chuck Noll
Foundation**

FOR BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH

It all starts with a
SPARK

2023 Annual Report

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SPARK TO FLAMES

2023 marks the Foundation's sixth year making grants to innovative brain injury research to better diagnose and treat brain injuries from sports. The Foundation marked several milestones in '23 including:

- Over \$3 million awarded to twenty four research projects;
- Leveraged over \$15 million in additional funding for our grantees;
- Several research grants were published in major medical and science journals;
- With our support, the National Sports Brain Bank was formally launched;
- Raised a record number of contributions with the help of some amazing people.

How have we been able to do this? **It all started with a spark 33 years ago** in 1991, when Hall of Fame Steelers coach Chuck Noll asked a simple question, "What tangible data is used to determine post-concussion return-to-play protocol?" This seemingly simple question led team neurosurgeon, Dr. Joseph Maroon, and sports psychologist, Dr. Mark Lovell, to develop the ImPACT test, now widely used by millions of athletes to establish their baseline cognitive function and determine subsequent readiness for return to play after concussion.

Fast forward to 2016 and that spark stirred once more when then University of Pittsburgh Chancellor Patrick Gallagher stressed the need for early stage, seed funding for brain injury research to Arthur J Rooney, II, President of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Seeing the necessity of this work, the Chuck Noll Foundation for Brain Injury Research began operating in 2017.

In this year's report, you will see how these first sparks in turn lit a flame that has led the Foundation to find researchers exploring inventive approaches to detecting and treating brain injuries sustained through sports. From the generosity of one young woman's story, to the groundbreaking collaborative research on the effects of concussion on female athletes, the launch of the National Sports Brain Bank at the University of Pittsburgh, and our most recent grantees, we are honored to share all that this spark has spurred with you.

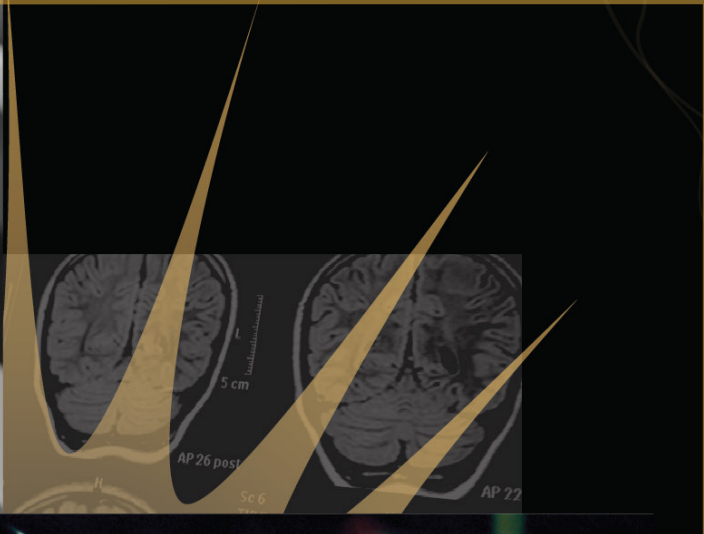
Finally, we invite you to learn more about the Chuck Noll Foundation and consider lending your support for our mission.



Arthur J Rooney II



John R. Denny



Photo, L to R: Christian Thacker, Michael F Fabus, courtesy of the Pittsburgh Steelers



Photo: Andoni Aristimuno

STOKING THE FLAME: BELLA'S STORY

This early spark has flickered into a real flame, in no small part thanks to one special young person: Bella Stosic. Bella's story starts before her connection with the Chuck Noll Foundation, on a basketball court in 2022, where she fell after colliding with another player, hitting her head — *hard*.

Without having lost consciousness, Bella's father took her home, but soon what seemed like a relatively harmless fall on the court turned into something much more alarming. Bella began stuttering and eventually struggled to speak altogether. Not long after, her worsening speech was joined by a sensitivity to light and difficulty walking without support. She was immediately admitted for three days at Children's Hospital in Pittsburgh, where no amount of testing and specialized practitioner assessment could pinpoint what was causing her symptoms.

Fast forward a year and Bella, still struggling with many of the same speech and mobility issues, launched a campaign in March for Brain Injury Awareness Month. She sold awareness bracelets for \$2 each and donated all her profits, \$5,000 in total, to the Chuck Noll Foundation.

Now, Bella is finally returning to some sense of normalcy after her Traumatic Brain Injury. It is her journey on the road to recovery that serves as a reminder of who we are really doing this work for; every athlete who made a career out of their passion for sports, along with the kids and adults out there on courts, fields, and under streetlights every chance they get simply because they love the game.

SHINING A LIGHT:

FEMALE ATHLETES DESERVE ATTENTION.

Seeing how our work can impact the lives of athletes on fields across the country simply wasn't enough. This year, we felt the need to not only encourage and fund collaborations – we wanted to partner with organizations actively pursuing the data and knowledge that led our namesake to ask, “*Why?*”

That's why we teamed up with the UPMC Magee Women's Research Institute (MWRI) to take our blazing passion for brain injury research and marry it with what we need most: a better understanding of how concussions and brain injury impact women's health and the neurobiology underlying these effects. Together with MWRI's renowned expertise in women's and reproductive health, we launched the Women's Multi-Domain Evaluation of Neurobiological Health Following Concussion Study with the University of Pittsburgh's Concussion Research Lab and the UPMC Sports Medicine Concussion Program.

The study will evaluate 150 female participants, two thirds with concussion and one third with an orthopedic injury, from occurrence/enrollment, at 90 days, and other intervals through 12 months.

Their research is the first of its kind to collect data on this often overlooked, but at-risk population. Researchers anticipate their findings will be used to inform better and more targeted assessments and interventions to improve clinical care and reduce the effects of concussion on women's health outcomes. It is our privilege to shine a light on this much needed research and we have every intention to continue our pursuit of answers to the, “*What?*”, “*Why?*”, and “*How?*” questions in sports-related brain injury.





Photo: Christian Thacker

PASSING THE TORCH

TOWARD A FOREVER FREE OF SPORTS-RELATED BRAIN INJURY

Unfortunately, some neurodegenerative diseases can't be definitively diagnosed until death. Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, or CTE, is one of them. While there has been plenty of attention and articles focused on CTE, at the end of the day, we still have much more to study and learn.

In the spring of 2023, the University of Pittsburgh, with funding support from the Chuck Noll Foundation, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and the R.K. Mellon Foundation, announced the creation of the [National Sports Brain Bank](#) under the leadership of Dr. Julia Kofler. Housed in the University of Pittsburgh's Neurodegenerative Brain Bank, one of the largest brain banks in the country, the NSBB will serve as both

a donation registry for former contact-sports athletes, as well as the epicenter of long-term observational studies. Among the anticipated studies, Dr. Kofler and her team at the NSBB will be conducting a longitudinal assessment of participants' medical, behavioral, and mental health throughout their lifespan until donation.

Chuck Noll Foundation board members, Jerome Bettis and Merril Hoge, along with National Science Advisory Committee members Drs. Joseph Maroon and Regis Haid were among the first to volunteer to participate and donate to the NSBB. To learn more about the brain bank, scan the QR code at the top right or [use this link](#).



SOME FAMILIAR FACES

WITH NEW
CONCEPTS TO TEST

In our fifth grant cycle, we are proud to share that we have surpassed \$3 million in grants awarded across twenty-four research projects. This year alone we awarded five new grants to the following researchers and institutions:

“MRI as an Imaging Biomarker for Recovery of Brain Bioenergetics Following Repetitive Mild Traumatic Brain Injury”

Drs. Shaun Carlson and Yijun Wu

University of Pittsburgh
\$125,000

“DeepVibe: A Maximally Minimally-Invasive Non-surgical Technique for Steerable Deep Brain Stimulation for TBI Treatment”

Drs. Pulkit Grover and Boyle Cheng

Carnegie Mellon University & Allegheny Health Network
\$125,000

“Cerebellar Neuroinflammation after Mild Repetitive Traumatic Brain Injury: The Forgotten Therapeutic Target”

Drs. Patrick Kochanek and Ruchira Jha

University of Pittsburgh
\$125,000

“Evaluation of Four Different Web- or Mobile Phone-based Digital Neuropsychological Testing Platforms for Tracking of Longitudinal Cognitive Trajectory in Former Contact Sport Participants”

Dr. Julia Kofler

University of Pittsburgh
\$125,000

“Using a Mobile Assessment Tool to Examine Concussion Recovery in Under-Served Populations”

Dr. Len Lecci

University of North Carolina - Wilmington
\$30,000

FINANCIALS

GRANTMAKING & MORE

22/23 Grants

New Grants	5
Grant Dollars Awarded	\$649,224
Total Funds Raised	\$1,504,006

Total Grants

Total Grants Awarded	24
Average Grant Size	\$134,115
Clinical Research	\$2,213,749
Basic Research	\$1,005,000

Total Dollars Awarded

\$3,218,749

Additional Funds Leveraged

\$15,049,000

*“As a member of the Chuck Noll Foundation’s National Science Advisory Committee, I am so impressed with both the quantity and quality of research proposals we have been receiving. **I’m confident that the research we are funding will lead to new discoveries that will inform future approaches to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of brain injuries.**”*

– Shelly Timmons, MD, PhD, FACS, FAANS,
NSAC Member

FUNDRAISING

2023 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, the Chuck Noll Foundation for Brain Injury Research achieved an incredible milestone, raising a remarkable total of \$1,504,006. This achievement was made possible through the unwavering support and generosity of our dedicated donors and supporters. Below are highlights of the fundraising events that made a significant impact on our cause:

Naples, Florida Cocktail Party (March 11, 2023)

On March 11, 2023, our Chuck Noll Foundation Treasurer, Bob Denove, and his wife Renee graciously hosted a fundraising cocktail party at their Naples, Florida home. Over 40 guests gathered and were entertained with speeches from Chuck Noll Foundation Board Member, Merrill Hoge and Chuck Noll Foundation Grantee, Dr. Amelia Versace. This event raised over \$11,000 for Brain Injury Research.

Steelers Run & Walk (September 4, 2023)

Another highlight in our fundraising calendar was the Steelers Run & Walk, a heartwarming event dedicated to supporting the Chuck Noll Foundation for Brain Injury Research. Held on Monday, September 4, 2023, at Acrisure Stadium, this event raised an admirable \$28,555. These funds will directly contribute to our ongoing initiatives aimed at improving the lives of individuals affected by brain injuries.

2nd Annual Chuck Noll Foundation Celebrity Golf Outing (September 18, 2023)

One of the standout moments in our fundraising journey was the 2nd Annual Chuck Noll Foundation Celebrity Golf Outing, a prestigious event hosted by our esteemed board members, Jerome Bettis and Merrill Hoge. This memorable occasion took place at the prestigious Club at Nevillewood on September 18, 2023. We were honored to welcome 120 enthusiastic golfers and supporters, all driven by a common purpose: advancing brain injury research. Together, we raised an impressive \$251,619 during this event. These funds are instrumental in furthering our mission to make a difference in the lives of individuals affected by brain injuries.





Steelers Rock The Runway Fashion Show (October 6, 2023)

On Friday, October 6, 2023, Steelers players and their families hit the runway at Rock Steelers Style 2023, the team's annual fashion show. This year's theme was 'Gameday: Fashion Edition,' featuring everything from sideline gear to game day outfits. The show was co-chaired by Art and Greta Rooney and Mike and Kiya Tomlin. The event raised \$27,500 for the Chuck Noll Foundation for Brain Injury Research.

Pittsburgh Steelers Hall Of Honor (October 28, 2023)

On Saturday, October 28, 2023, the team officially inducted this year's Hall of Honor class during a special ceremony at Acrisure Stadium. The Hall of Honor Class of 2023 includes four Super Bowl champions, appealing to fans from all generations, and includes legends James Harrison, Ray Mansfield, Gerry Mullins, and Aaron Smith. At the event, \$30,000 was raised for the Chuck Noll Foundation for Brain Injury Research.

Save The Date: 3rd Annual Chuck Noll Foundation Celebrity Golf Outing (September 16, 2024)

We are excited to announce our upcoming event in 2024! Save the date for our 3rd Annual Chuck Noll Foundation Celebrity Golf Outing, which will take place on Monday, September 16, 2024, at the prestigious Club at Nevillewood. This event promises to be another remarkable day of golf and camaraderie, all in support of brain injury research.

For sponsorship and foursome information, please email Alexis Leyh at alexis@valiant3communications.com.

OUR GUIDING LIGHT

THE PEOPLE OF CNF

Our National Science Advisory Committee

The NSAC includes five nationally recognized and highly respected neurosurgeons. These five members provide insights and knowledge of traumatic brain injury research to the board of directors. Each grant cycle includes a thorough review of submitted proposals with recommendations by the NSAC.

Joseph C. Maroon, M.D. FCAS
Julian E. Bailes, M.D.,
Regis W. Haid, Jr., M.D.
Shelly Timmons, M.D, PhD, FACS, FAANS
Don Whiting, M.D.

Our Board of Directors

The board is responsible for the governance and fiscal responsibility of the Foundation. The board also approves all grants and oversees staff.

Arthur J. Rooney, II, *Chair*
Jerome Bettis
Merril Hoge

Tony Quatrini, *Secretary*
Dusty Kirk
John Siebart

Our Staff

John Denny, *Executive Director*
Robert Denove, *Treasurer*
Anna Havrilla, *Grant Program Manager*

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Richards, David
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Chuck Noll Foundation

FOR BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH

OUR VISION

To diminish the impact of sports-related head injuries.

OUR MISSION

To award grants in order to advance research related to the diagnosis and treatment of injuries to the brain occurring primarily from sports activities.