

TIRR Foundation Announces Partnership with Texas A&M University



TIRR Foundation is partnering with Texas A&M University in a joint effort to increase research that will spotlight spinal cord injuries. The multi-year commitment totaling \$1.4 million will enhance faculty and research to impact spinal cord injuries with at least four new faculty scholars at Texas A&M. In turn, Texas A&M University's Colleges of Engineering, Liberal Arts, Science and Medicine will match this commitment by providing for the annual salary and benefits, laboratory and additional startup support for the hired faculty through its campus-wide collaborative center, the Texas A&M Institute for Neuroscience (TAMIN).

A press release went out on Wednesday, July 27, announcing TIRR Foundation's pledge to help facilitate the hiring of at least four new faculty scholars at Texas A&M. The scholars will focus on the areas of spinal cord injury, treatment and rehabilitation through the Texas A&M Institute for Neuroscience. "This gift marks a new opportunity to bring talented faculty to Texas and new paths to chart in the arena of spinal cord injury," said Michael K. Young, president of Texas A&M University. "I am proud to have the philanthropic partnership with TIRR Foundation, which understands and emphasizes the importance of collaborative research environments and transformational learning experiences that, in turn, impact the state, nation and world."

Recruitment for four positions will commence immediately for two hires to join in 2016 and the remaining hires will happen over the next two years. The newly acquired faculty will receive the title of "TIRR Foundation Scholars" and be eligible for future consideration of TIRR Foundation grants on specific research projects. Additionally, these faculty members will aggressively pursue federal funding for their research from the National Institutes of Health and other organizations.

"We are excited to join Texas A&M University in this effort and commend the university leadership for their commitment to



impact the issue of spinal cord injury research and rehabilitation," said Cynthia Adkins, executive director, TIRR Foundation. "We hope others will join us and Texas A&M in this effort by supporting faculty and their research that can directly result in better futures for those impacted by these traumatic injuries."

"This partnership signals the potential impacts when universities, their faculty and partners who support research can have on our society," said Dr. Karan Watson, Texas A&M provost and executive vice president. "I thank TIRR Foundation for joining us in this opportunity and look forward to sharing the work of our current and new faculty in the years to come."

Professor Jim Grau, former chair of TAMIN, will coordinate the hiring of the new faculty with their appropriate academic department and colleges. "I have been very pleased by the commitments from department heads, deans, Provost Karan Watson, the vice president for research and others to making this effort possible," he said. "We wouldn't have this potential for the high-caliber new hires without the support from TIRR Foundation and the university administration."

TIRR Foundation's gift will be counted among the leading contributions to the "Lead by Example" comprehensive campaign underway at Texas A&M. The campaign is combining individual philanthropic investment across all colleges and programs to demonstrate the university's leadership in influencing the greatest challenges facing society today.

"Having a cadre of excellent faculty working towards common goals and supported by appropriate resources creates an environment for success," commented Watson. "This partnership ensures Texas A&M will continue to lead in improving the lives of those impacted by spinal cord injury."



In 2017, it will be twenty years since a small group of visionaries mobilized to start Mission Connect. Their goal was to create a collaborative platform on which researchers from multiple institutions could work side-by-side to advance spinal cord injury (SCI) medicine. Capitalizing on the immense talent within the Texas Medical Center and region, Mission Connect opened SCI research cores in three premier institutions. Today, Mission Connect research cores at Baylor College of Medicine, UTHealth, and The University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston are

contributing to the knowledge needed to resolve the devastating outcomes of SCI. Now, on the cusp of its twentieth year, Mission Connect is fortifying its existing cores through the \$3.1 million Mission Connect Spinal Cord Injury Research Hiring Initiative. TIRR Foundation has committed \$1.4 million in Mission Connect funding to establish an SCI core at Texas A&M University at College Station (TAMU), \$1 million for new hires in the UTMB Mission Connect SCI Research Core, and \$600,000 for a new SCI research hire in the BCM core. A minimum of seven prominent SCI researchers will join the ranks of Mission Connect. TAMU has matched our funding with \$1.4 in funding and UTMB matched with \$1 million. The new research core at TAMU echoes the commitment TIRR Foundation and Mission Connect made nearly 20 years ago to those who have sustained an SCI. I encourage you to read our article on Mission Connect and its new relationship with TAMU. It is at the core of what Mission Connect stands for: working intelligently, collaboratively, and passionately on behalf of those who have been injured.

Moran Camp Xtreme Goes out to Sea

In October 2016, Moran Camp Xtreme took on a new adventure to provide an inclusive atmosphere along the ocean for children and their families. Children with all levels of ability were invited to participate in sea-based activities like sailing, fishing, and kayaking with their family.

Moran Camp Xtreme is known for an inclusive environment that creates an accessible atmosphere for everyone. This year, we took that journey to the water!

The three days of fun kicked off on October 14 in Galveston, Texas at Sea Scouts Base Galveston with a number of returning campers and a few new faces. Sea Scouts Base Camp facilitated housing for the campers and families, providing an inclusive getaway along the ocean where everyone could enjoy their time together.

Saturday afternoon, everyone boarded the Catamaran to sail over to Moody Gardens for the afternoon in a once in a lifetime adventure.

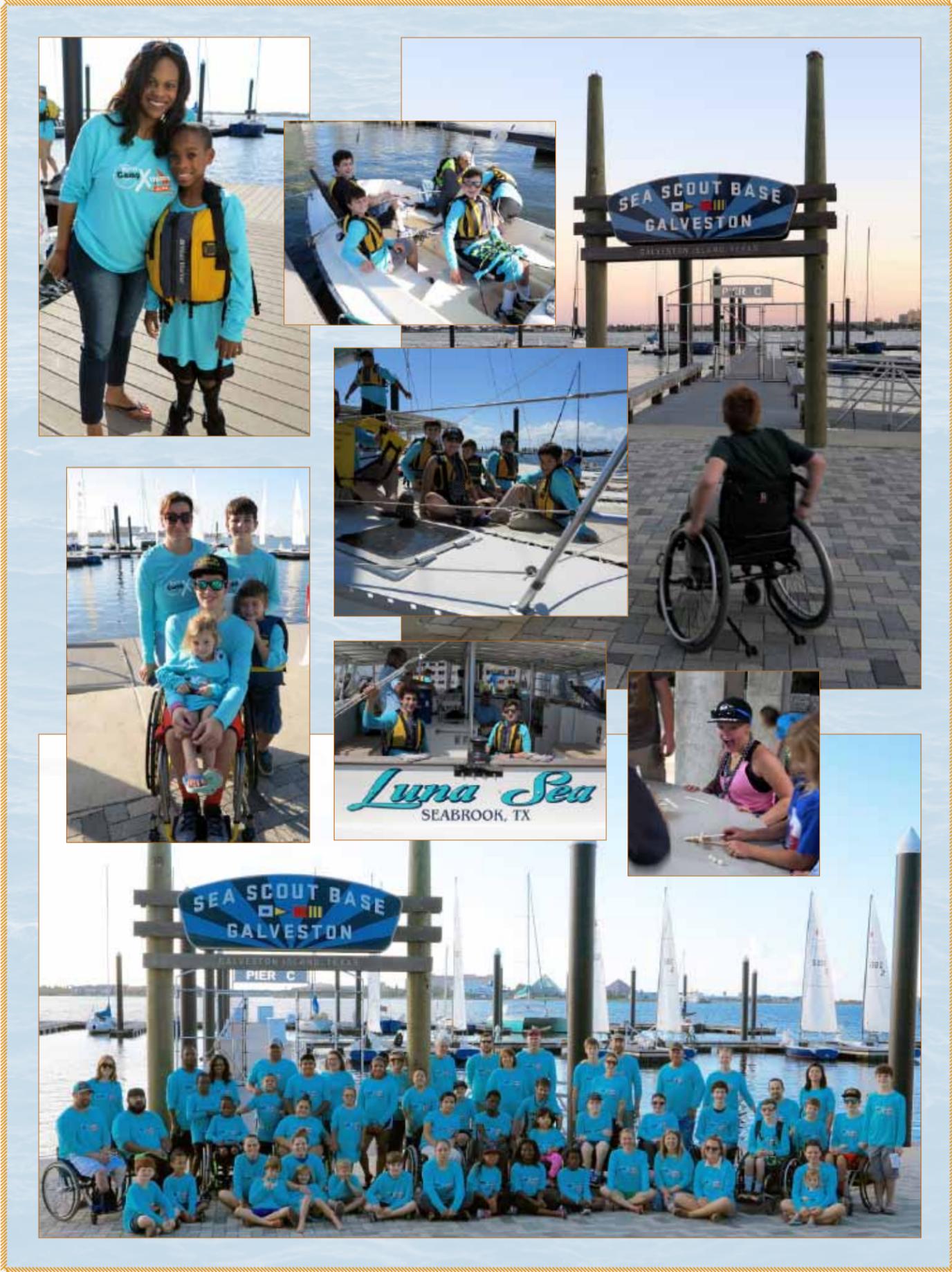
TIRR Family member, Kristin Abello, volunteered at camp and had an amazing experience.

“Wow! Moran Camp Xtreme At Sea was an absolutely amazing day! So incredible in every way. My heart was forever touched with the excitement and joy on every child’s face. It

was priceless. I loved to see the kids ready to sail and have some fun! Regardless of their ability, nothing was stopping them,” she recalled.

A special thank you to all of the TIRR volunteers who joined the campus to assist with various activities on shore and off shore!

“Sea” you all next year!





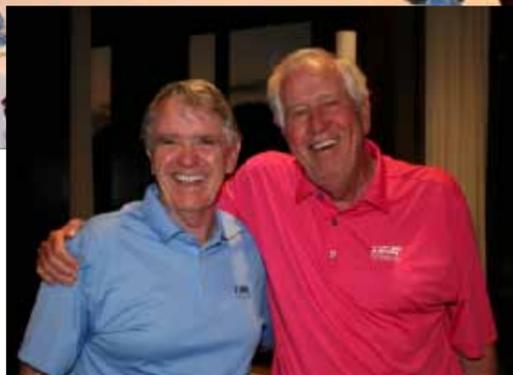
Tee It Up with TIRR 2016

TIRR Foundation hit the course at BraeBurn Country Club on October 24, 2016 to a sold out tournament. 144 golfers disbursed over 36 teams for the shotgun start, participating in a spectacular round of golf that was complete with a potato gun that launched your score to an automatic eagle for hole 12. Friendly competition took over hole 9, where players were challenged to Beat the Pro. Everyone was sure to go home a winner with over 30 raffle items including baskets of wine, dinner gift certificates, and golf clubs.

It was a phenomenal day that benefitted Mission Connect, a program of TIRR Foundation.

Chairs Bob MacIntyre and Shaw MacIntyre

Golf Committee Kristin Abello, Andrew Bean, Andy Beaupre, Jaime Brochu, John Carter, Genny Gomez, John Harrell, Kay Holmes, Janet McCarter, Louis McCarter, Trey McCord, Robert Walker, and John Ware





Moran Camp Xtreme 2016 marked the 17th summer camp for TIRR Foundation! This year we welcomed kids throughout Texas and beyond with one of the largest groups of new campers we have ever seen. A number of kids returned from previous years, rekindling bonds in an annual reunion of sorts with their camp friends. It was a great turnout with nearly 50 campers and a great group of new and returning staff.

The transition from spring break camp to summer camp allowed a few campers the opportunity to work on their independence and attend both sessions at Camp for All, just outside Brenham, TX. This is encouraging to other campers, and staff who are able to witness the empowerment associated with being in a barrier-free environment.

Alongside the Summer Paralympic games, Moran Camp Xtreme introduced new activities this summer around the theme of the major international multi-sport event of the

Paralympics that took place in Brazil. Pole vaulting, shot put, powerlifting, 400-meter race, and human curling made their debut to all the campers this year, as everyone joined in with fun, healthy competition and team spirit. The first-ever color race made a lasting (and beautiful!) impression on campers, as they experienced a version of the popularized 5K. Additionally, campers participated in a new game truck, Xtreme horseback riding, and a carnival-themed pool party.

The surrounding community continues to support Moran Camp Xtreme with their resources, even sending a fleet of fire trucks to the inquiring minds at camp. With a parade of horns, The City of Burton Fire Department put on an amazing water war that left a smile on the face of every camper and staff member. With over 90-degree temperatures, the water war brought welcomed relief from the gorgeous sunny skies, with memories that are sure to last a lifetime.



TWO STEPPIN' with TIRR 2016

A lively gathering of more than 250 guests ready to two-step the night away joined TIRR Foundation in support of Moran Camp Xtreme at Two Steppin' With TIRR on September 24 at The Astorian.

ABC 13 News sports reporter and anchor, David Nuño welcomed the crowd to an evening before introducing Kristin Abello's inspirational story and tribute. Tracy Lawrence gave a lively performance, including song "As Any Fool Can See," with the Houston skyline in the background before the charitable auction took off to eager supporters. Auction items included a getaway to Belize, a trip to Pebble Beach, Houston Texans tickets, and a vacation to Meadowood Napa Valley.

Pat Green provided after-dinner entertainment with hits "Wave on Wave" and "Carry On." Proceeds from the evening are earmarked for the children's camp that is dedicated to providing a positive, traditional camp experience for children in wheelchairs.

The event included a wonderful dinner buffet by Cordua, a sold-out Bling and Bling table with jewelry from local Houston designers, and a Palmaz Dinner to take place early next year.

CHAIRS: April and Carlos Abello, Kristin and Raul Abello, Pauline and Chris Borally, Martha and Dan Rutledge, Selin and Sy Salerian

PARTY COMMITTEE: Angie and Posie Clinton, Gretchen and Ross Coleman, Alice Colvin, Toni and Sammy Giammalva, Heather and Brandon Gunn, Stacey and Ryan Hamilton, Caroline and John Harrell, Shelley and Billy Iglesias, Keely and Kale Krhovjak, Lindsay and Paul Laudadio, Holley and Jeff Madden, Heather and Patrick Mahan, Vickie and Patrick McCarthy, Kendall and Trey McCord, Janna and Sam Moore, Leslie and Steve Shofner, Nikki Simpson and Scott Bean, Erica and Wes Yeary



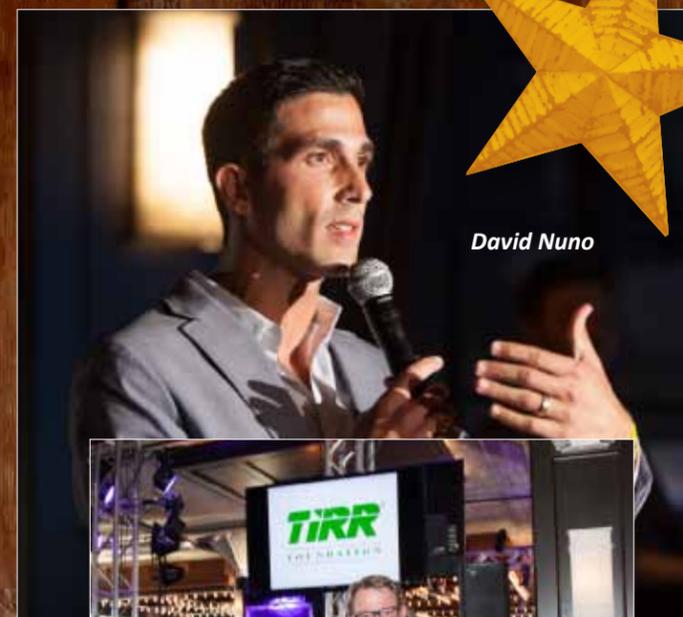
TIRR Foundation Staff and Volunteers



Nansen Saleri, Marina Saleri, Selin Salerian, Sy Salerian, Gregory Salerian, Pauline Borally, and Christopher Borally



Sy Salerian, Selin Salerian, Raul Abello, Kristin Abello, Pat Green, Martha Rutledge, Dan Rutledge, Pauline Borally, and Christopher Borally



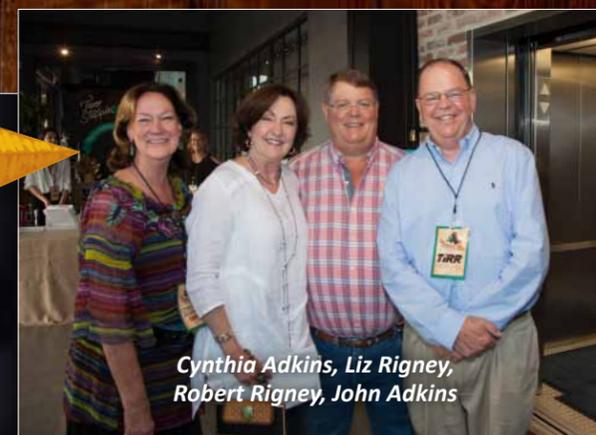
David Nuno



Selin Salerian, Kristin Abello, Pat Green, Martha Rutledge, Pauline Borally



Tracey Lawrence, Gretchen and Ross Coleman, Pat Green



Cynthia Adkins, Liz Rigney, Robert Rigney, John Adkins



Heather Gunn, Kristin Abello, Dr. and Mrs. Nansen Saleri



Robin Williamson, Genny Gomez, Paola Gasca



Tracy Lawrence, Kristin and Raul Abello, Pat Green

VolunTIRR Day 2016

On July 14, 2016, more than 20 volunteers headed out past Brenham, TX to volunteer with Moran Camp Xtreme. It was a phenomenal event that not only raised awareness for TIRR Foundation, but also demonstrated the heart of Moran Camp Xtreme for the 50 campers.

Gretchen Duff and Trey McCord sparked the idea for a volunteer day, to donate their time and energy, while also increasing awareness for TIRR Foundation and Moran Camp Xtreme by inviting their friends to participate. Volunteers assisted with the obstacle course, the color run, capture the flag, and water wars with the Burton Fire Department.

A Special Thank You to our volunteers: Elizabeth Adkins, Diana Bridger, Elliott Bridger, Emarchele DeVilla, Gretchen Duff, Paola Gasca, Mehdi Hindi, Glende Killough, Michael Lam, James R. McCord III (Trey), Kendall McCord, Craig McKenna, Dawn Modic, Sarah Mouton, Tiffany Nguyen, Perkins Pringle, Cody Sabol, Travis Secor, Katherine Tomberlin, Yen Vo, and Grant Williamson

A SPECIAL
THANK YOU
TO OUR
VOLUNTEERS!



Mission Connect[®] Research Spotlight

Mission Connect scientist Raymond J. Grill, PhD, University of Mississippi Medical Center is researching the neuroprotective effects of a combination of two drugs with the intent of assessing the therapeutic efficacy of a combination of riluzole and minocycline. TIRR Foundation is honored to help facilitate this project.

TRANSLATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF COMBINED RILUZOLE AND MINOCYCLINE IN A PRE-CLINICAL MODEL OF RAT SPINAL CONTUSION INJURY

Funded in: 2016, 2017, 2018

Problem: SCI activates a broad range of pathological mechanisms, thus an effective clinical therapy will likely involve a combination of interventions.

Target: Neuroprotective effects of a combination of two drugs

Goal: Assess the therapeutic efficacy of a combination of riluzole and minocycline

Despite years of research effort as well as a significant number of clinical trials, there remains no effective therapeutic intervention that will preserve function following spinal cord injury (SCI). SCI activates a broad range of pathological mechanisms that contribute to chronic deficits such as motor dysfunction and neuropathic pain. We therefore believe it logical

that an effective clinical therapy will likely involve not simply one therapeutic, but a combination of interventions, each of which targets a discreet range of pathological mechanisms.

Riluzole is a drug approved for the treatment of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) that recently was the target of a Phase I clinical trial for the acute treatment of SCI run by Dr. Robert Grossman, a co-investigator on this study. Riluzole treatment was shown to be safe and to result in higher motor scores in patients with cervical spinal injuries. Riluzole suppresses neuronal sodium channels and reduces neurotoxicity following injury or in cases of CNS disease. Minocycline is an antibiotic shown to have potent anti-inflammatory properties in animal models of CNS disease and trauma. Minocycline demonstrated therapeutic potential in a recent Phase II clinical trial for the acute treatment of SCI.

Our goal in this study is to assess the therapeutic efficacy of a combination of riluzole and minocycline in order to target a broader range of pathological mechanisms than could be achieved with either drug delivered alone. We will determine whether this novel combination can both preserve motor function and prevent neuropathic pain in a clinically-relevant rodent model of SCI. This proposal brings together experts in pharmacokinetics, SCI modeling and human clinical trial design and implementation in order to optimize our ability to quickly translate our results into the clinic and improve function for those who have suffered an SCI.



Mission Connect[®] Welcomes . . .

a program of TIRR Foundation

Join the Mission Connect Facebook page at facebook.com/tirrsmissionconnect



TIRR Foundation formed a unique community of researchers when it was determined if scientists in related areas of neurobiology were given a collaborative environment in which to interact, pose questions, and share information, the pace of discovery would accelerate. Joining this exclusive initiative are:

JACOBA (COBI) J. HEIJNEN, PH.D.
Professor
Department of Symptom Research
Division of Internal Medicine
UT MD Anderson Cancer Center

AMIT K. SRIVASTAVA, PH.D.
Instructor
Department of Pediatric Surgery
UT Health Science Center at Houston

Mission Connect 2016 Funded Proposals

SCI Proposals

PI	Institution	Title
Carmen Dessauer, Ph.D.	UTHSC	Targeting EPAC after spinal cord injury to relieve chronic pain, as assessed by FMRI imaging
Robert G. Grossman, M.D.	Hou Meth	A Stereotactic Atlas of the Human Spinal Cord
Michelle A. Hook, Ph.D.	TAMU HSC	Functional consequences of acute opioid use in traumatic SCI patients
Gwendolyn Levine, BS, DVM	TAMU AgriLife	Mapping of Chromosomal Loci Associated w/ Injury Severity Recovery in Dogs

TBI Proposals

PI	Institution	Title
Supinder Bedi, Ph.D.	UTHSC	Imaging Biomarkers of TBI-induced Neuroinflammation: Targets for Cell Therapy
Pamela L. Wenzel, Ph.D.	UTHSC	Modeling Immune Response to Traumatic Brain Injury in Humanized Mice
Ryan S. Kitagawa, M.D.	UTHSC	Transforming Research and Clinical Knowledge in Traumatic Brain Injury



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Upcoming Events:

**2016 Mission Connect
Annual Scientific Symposium**
December 2, 2016 | Cooley Life Center

**2017 Junior VolunTIRRs Present:
TIRR'N Around the World**
January 21, 2017 | Hughes Manor

Moran Camp Xtreme Spring Break Camp
March 9 – 12, 2017 | Camp For All

Connect the Docs
May 4, 2017 | River Oaks Country Club

Moran Camp Xtreme Summer Camp
July 9-14, 2017 | Camp For All

Keep up to date on all our happenings on Facebook!
[facebook.com/TIRRFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/TIRRFoundation)