

# Rossetti Creates Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund

## Actor Christopher Reeve Visits with Rossetti, Dodd Hall Patients at Ohio State

On June 13, 1998, **Rosemarie Rossetti** (B.S., agriculture, 1975; M.S., agricultural education, 1979; Ph.D., agricultural education, 1982) and her husband, **Mark Leder**, of Columbus, Ohio, were riding bikes. Without warning, an 80-foot tree weighing three-and-a-half tons fell on Rossetti, leaving her paralyzed. Now, five years later, Rossetti credits both Ohio State and her positive attitude with helping her along the road to recovery.

"Ohio State is more than the educational institution that comes immediately to mind," Rossetti said. "I received three degrees from Ohio State in eight years and then spent 11 years as a faculty member. My life revolved around the university."

A year and a half before her accident, Rossetti left her job at the Department of Agricultural Education to try something new. Then, in an instant, she was back at Ohio State, but in a far different capacity.

"Suddenly, I was back on campus, but this time in a hospital bed," she said. "I couldn't believe I was there in that type of situation." Discussions with medical staff during the course of her five-week stay, coupled with the drastic change in her physical abilities, motivated Rossetti to want her life back.

For the next two years, Rossetti came to Ohio State's Dodd Hall Rehabilitation Center three days a week for physical and occupational therapy. "It became a part-time job to work on myself," she said.

In August 2001, Rossetti decided to become involved in advancing the cure for spinal cord injuries by forming the



**Rosemarie Rossetti discusses motivational strategies and spinal cord injury research with actor Christopher Reeve during his visit to Ohio State in June. Reeve, who suffered an accident similar to Rosemarie's while horseback riding in 1995, spoke at spring commencement and spent time with patients and physicians at Dodd Hall.**

Rosemarie Rossetti Spinal Cord Injury Research Fund. A professional speaker, trainer, consultant, and author, Rossetti donates some of her speeches in exchange for the hiring organization/corporation making a donation to her fund. She also donates a portion of the proceeds from the sale of her inspirational items, such as "Own the Power" bracelets and "Yes I Can" signs.

On August 6, she released a book, *Take Back Your Life!*, offering motivational strategies.

Some of the proceeds from the book, which features 20 of her syndicated columns, support the fund, as well. Currently, Rossetti is seeking funding to provide an "encouragement gift" of a bracelet and a copy of her book to each newly injured spinal cord patient entering Dodd Hall.

As of August, the fund totalled \$7,255. The monies are helping researchers by supporting basic treadmill patient research and by helping with the development of a new therapeutic drug trial. The new drug is made to enhance reflex ability in an injured spinal cord to help the patient recover and possibly walk again.

"My long-term goals for the fund would be to try and model it after one like the Stephanie Spielman Breast Cancer Fund," Rossetti explained. "We have been searching for a defining factor to achieve such a status like that. I keep asking myself what else I can do to help, how many more books I can sell, how much more we can do to get it to that kind of level."

On June 13, Rossetti had the chance to

give a draft copy of her book to actor **Christopher Reeve**, who was in Columbus that day to speak at Ohio State's spring quarter commencement. Afterward, Reeve attended a small reception at the Dodd Hall Rehabilitation Center. The date marked the fifth anniversary of Rossetti's accident, making the timing of Reeve's visit especially significant.

"The best thing about meeting Christopher Reeve was being able to talk to him and thank him one-on-one," she said. "When I gave him the copy of my book, it was like giving him my pride—and it was an awesome experience to share that with him."

Amazingly, one year and one day before her accident, Rossetti had heard Reeve talk during an appearance in Columbus. That day, she had a picture taken of Reeve, which she later kept on her wall in her room at the rehabilitation center. She would look at the photo every day to remind herself to have a positive attitude and not to focus on self-pity.

"That photo helped me to realize all that I can do with my life, rather than worry about how my life had been permanently changed," Rossetti related. "Five years later, I was able to show him that picture and thank him for inspiring me."

"Our treatment at Dodd Hall is always a team effort and the patient is always an active member of the team. However, Rosemarie has gone beyond her own health-care needs to join the team at Dodd and help us in raising important funds for our research efforts," said **Dr. William Pease**, chairman, Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. "This effort to help future patients at Dodd is occurring along with her public speaking efforts that are helping to educate the community about the importance of the rehabilitation program.

"Rosemarie's energy and enthusiasm for these projects overflow to the staff and other patients at Dodd, and are a great influence on all of us," he said. More information can be obtained about the fund at [RosemarieSpeaks.com](http://RosemarieSpeaks.com).



**Christopher Reeve with William Pease, M.D., chairman, physical medicine and rehabilitation; Anthon Brooks, administrative director, Dodd Hall; R. Reed Fraley, vice president for health services; and Fred Sanfilippo, M.D., Ph.D., senior vice president of health services and dean, College of Medicine and Public Health.**