Dear Friend,

Did you know that Jonas Salk struggled to fund his research right up until the time his team announced the discovery of an effective polio vaccine? Imagine if funding had fallen short.

It’s not a far-fetched idea... Research into finding the cause and cure of diseases has always been a rocky road. Necessary funding is difficult to secure. Progress is typically slow and incremental. Promising leads often end up going nowhere.

The truth is, behind every breakthrough discovery is one or more brilliant, persistent scientist with a brave heart and tireless work ethic. People like Jonas Salk... and Marcy Carlson Speer.

You might not know Marcy’s name, but I’ll tell you more about her in a moment...

First, though, let me remind you that breakthrough discoveries also require something else: generous people like you. Without funding there would be no innovative research, no new therapies, no cures.

That’s even more true for little-known afflictions like Chiari malformation (CM) and syringomyelia (SM). Without widespread public awareness, you see, it’s virtually impossible to secure federal funding for the research that leads to important discoveries.

That’s extremely unfortunate – because even though CM/SM are not on many people’s radar screens, these devastating neurological diseases cause untold pain and suffering to hundreds of thousands of children and adults across our country.

But there is hope...

As you can see from the names listed on this stationery, the Chiari & Syringomyelia Foundation, Inc. (CSF) research board includes some of our nation’s leading scientists. They are 100% engaged in the fight against CM/SM. Now, we just need you –

Please will you send your most generous gift you can to support our Marcy Carlson Speer Research Endowment? Every gift, small or large, will build the endowment, which will ensure sustainable funding for projects that will lead to better therapies – and ultimately, to a cure – for people battling CM and SM.

Before I say anything more, I want to tell you about Marcy Carlson Speer and (over, please)
Marcy Carlson Speer lived too short a time, but she gave so much to the things she cared about. Her contributions as a Duke University scientist dramatically advanced our understanding of CM/SM. Will you help us continue the work she started to bring relief and hope to children and adults struggling to live with Chiari malformation and syringomyelia?

Marcy was director of the world-renowned Duke Center for Human Genetics and one of only ten female scientists ever tenured in Duke University’s Department of Medicine.

In her short lifetime, she worked on over twenty genetic conditions, but none as important to her as Chiari malformation. She spent nearly 15 years establishing a genetic repository to identify specific genes associated with developing Chiari. (Her patient population remains one of the few Chiari genetic data sets in the entire world!)

Marcy also published the first genetic screen on Chiari which identified several chromosomal regions that contain genes implicated in the development of the disease.

In addition to being a world class scientist, Marcy was an excellent teacher, a caring friend, and a devoted mother and wife. Tragically, Marcy died of cancer last year, two months short of her 48th birthday...

Her death was a terrible loss for all of us working to defeat CM/SM. But the annual research endowment drive now underway is a memorial to her and a way to build on the groundbreaking work she started… Please, will you make a donation to help?

Your gift today will enable us to advance our research efforts by:

• Helping to develop novel therapeutics and surgical interventions for the treatment of CM/SM. Therapies to treat pain and neurological symptoms are the highest priority so all patients can experience healthy, productive lives.

• Continuing to uncover the underlying biological mechanisms that contribute to the development of CM/SM – and especially identifying pre-symptomatic individuals who may benefit from early medical intervention.

• Fostering enthusiasm and providing training for the next generation of CM/SM clinicians and scientists to follow in the footsteps of pioneers like Marcy.

Please remember, our brightest scientists depend on and are thankful to caring friends like you. Without your support, their best ideas cannot be pursued. So please help today by rushing back the most generous gift you can.

Thank you and remember that every single gift, no matter the size, is greatly appreciated and will help lead us to new discoveries, better therapies, and ultimately to a cure!

With Gratitude,

Dorothy Poppe
Executive Director

P.S. We all have people in our lives like Marcy Carlson Speer who inspire us – not only for what they have accomplished, but because they influenced us in some profound way. Why not make your gift today “in honor of” or “in memory of” a person who has impacted your life? If you’d like to let a loved one know you’re honoring them, just indicate so on the reply form. We’ll send a letter acknowledging your gift in their name. Thank you again for all your support.