



## “Roll Models” and Designer Wheelchairs Add New Spin to Famed New York Fashion Week

Jan.10, 2007, Fresno, Calif.—We invite you to consider: What would a St. John wheelchair look like? Rich in color, elegant and sophisticated, like their collections? How about a Kimora Lee Simmons Baby Phat wheelchair? Pink, funky and fabulous? And then there’s Nicole Miller, Zang Toi, Marc Bouwer, Lloyd Klein and Thom Browne.

After New York’s Fashion Week, you won’t have to rely on your imagination. You can see firsthand that a wheelchair can be more than an empowering mobility aid, but also a bold fashion statement. *Discovery Through Design*, a not-for-profit organization founded by four remarkable women, has tapped a host of top designers to participate in its new fashion event, the Rolling with Style Gala, set for Tuesday, Feb. 6, at Cipriani at 42nd Street during New York’s couture Fashion Week.

This veritable who’s who of designers are donating their time and considerable talent to create one-of-a-kind designer Quickie wheelchairs, as well as complementary fashion ensembles, for their “Roll Models,” four women who were chosen in a national search for their inspirational responses to their disabilities.

The Rolling with Style Gala, hosted by Lesley Stahl, of *CBS 60 Minutes*, will offer a full evening of celebration: a black-tie dinner; a fashion show with super models, as well as Roll Models; and live entertainment. “A sense of beauty and self is vital, and this event is the first step in our campaign to change the way our society perceives women in wheelchairs,” proclaims co-Chairwoman Ashley Lauren Fisher.

All proceeds from the gala, plus the donations of generous sponsors, will benefit the Christopher Reeve Foundation, The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis and The Spinal Cord Injury Project at Rutgers University.

The four founders of *Discovery Through Design* and “Chairwomen” of Rolling with Style include Marilyn Hamilton (Carmel, Calif.), the co-inventor of the ultra light, compact, maneuverable Quickie wheelchair, plus disability champions Ashley Lauren Fisher (Morristown, N.J.), Wendy Crawford (Miami Shores, Fla.) and Julia Dorsett (Boca Raton, Fla.). Each were on a fast track to dynamic, high-powered lives in sports, the arts, fashion or business when varying accidents robbed them of their mobility and landed them in wheelchairs. However, they refused to allow their disability to strip them of their dignity or passion for life. As Hamilton says, “Properly fitted wheelchairs that look great not only give us confidence, but also allow us to get out there and go after our dreams in other areas of our lives. Full participation and integration into society is what all people want, whether in a wheelchair or not.”

It was Crawford who first came up with the idea for these exceptional women to join forces in *Discovery Through Design*. The Chairwomen came together with these objectives: to banish stereotypes of women with disabilities; to celebrate the accomplishments of disabled women; to promote unbiased treatment, and to raise funds for women’s healthcare initiatives and spinal cord injury research.

“I approached Marilyn, Ashley and Julia because there was something remarkable about each of them that rounded out my vision,” Crawford explains. “Although we each have our different passions, we demonstrate that our accidents may have changed our method of mobility, but they did not take away our joie de vivre. We have the same needs as able-bodied women for beauty, adventure, achievement and respect—for well-lived lives.”

“I’ve found that sports level the playing field,” continues Chairwoman Julia Dorsett. “When able-bodied and disabled athletes compete, there is more going on than scorekeeping. We’re all winners when perceptions shift from disability to ability. That’s what we are aiming to accomplish through Rolling with Style.”

The Roll Models exemplify the same philosophy, and on Feb. 6 they will travel down the Rolling with Style runway in highly customized, couture wheelchairs, amidst a blaze of lights and high tempo music with their respective designers. The Roll Models, each an example of personal courage and achievement, are Michelle Boardman (Harleysville, Pa.), Melissa Holley (Nashville, Tenn.), Rosemarie Rossetti, Ph.D. (Columbus, Ohio), and Jenny Smith (Louisville, Ky.).

Joining Quickie/Sunrise Medical as sponsors of the Rolling with Style Gala are Pazzo Pazzo, Vestar Capital Partners, Delphi, Park Avenue Equity, Thornfish, and Team Metedeconk.

For more information about *Discovery Through Design* or to purchase tickets online for the Rolling with Style Gala, visit [www.discoverythroughdesign.org](http://www.discoverythroughdesign.org). For ticket information or to become a sponsor, contact: State of the Art Enterprises; (212) 317-1421.

#### About Sunrise Medical

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