Volunteer Spotlight: Elythia Thompson

If you’ve walked through the glass walkway connecting the parking deck with the Mar- cus-Woodruff Building at Shepherd Center on Monday afternoons before COVID hit, you most likely noticed Elythia Thompson at our welcome desk. We are sure you couldn’t help but see her smiling face and feel her joy! Born and raised in Seattle, Washington, she was the second of six children born to a couple that surrounded their kids with music, a love for people and church. Her mother, a committed Christian, was an involved stay-at-home mom who set an example of selflessness and always doing for others outside her home. Her father owned music venues in three cities and promoted musicians. Music ran deep in the history of her extended family. Her grandmother sang in the choir and was the church pianist, and her grandfather played guitar as he introduced music to Quincy Jones, who grew up in the same neighborhood as his children, and the rest of the family with their children all learning to play some type of instrument.

Elythia was involved in myriad activities growing up, including gymnastics, tap, ballet, piano and the church choir. She excelled in academics and loved learning things on her own. For example, she challenged herself to catch up to her brother’s math level by digging into his home workbooks, even though he was five years her senior. Following high school graduation, she continued her education at the University of Washington for a while. After hearing about Atlanta from her friends, Elythia decided to relocate and transferred to Clark Atlanta University. Her degree in math with a minor in computer science quickly opened doors for her, and she went to work in IT at the Southern Territory Headquarters for the Salvation Army in Atlanta. She then worked in fundraising for the Salvation Army’s School for Officer’s Training. Next, she pursued work in procurement, finance and supply chain management doing contract work for large corporations. She always made time to do for others. She volunteered in multiple ways as her mother did, including everything from fundraising to helping with intake, advertisement and hospitality for The Victory House, a program that reaches over 100,000 at-risk men.

In 2012, while working at Coca-Cola as a senior procurement specialist, Elythia was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) as a newlywed. A co-worker shared information that eventually led her to the Eula C. and Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation and Wellness Program at Shepherd Center for therapy and support. Her function in hand dexterity, balance, coordination and memory had declined, and she was unable to use her musical gifts such as playing the piano or standing up to sing. However, Elythia’s husband purchased a keyboard, which started a spark. During her time in therapy at Shepherd, Thomas Miller, music coordinator, added fuel to that spark. He first started working with her to use just one finger to play a note on a keyboard. Thomas convinced her that with her hard work, he could help her regain more and more function so she could express her passion for music. Elythia shares, “God put a talent in me, and it’s also a legacy from my family. Shepherd tapped into that and showed me I CAN be active in what I love to do, despite MS!”

In 2018, Elythia chose the welcome desk as the perfect volunteer role for her as she was striving to give back. “This environment allows me to show love and to grow. As patients and families walk in, I want them to know that it’s a great place. It’s going to be OK. We got you!” Elythia has not only encouraged countless clients passing the welcome desk, but she has also connected with other volunteers over the years. For example, one fellow volunteer gave her a keyboard he no longer needs, and a regular client at our Livingston Gym comes by sometimes and plays his ukulele after working out. “Shepherd is my safe place,” Elythia shares. “I pray for each inpatient on the census each time I come, and I thank God for the opportunity to be here.”

We are honored that you have shared your time, warmth and joy with us, Elythia, and can’t wait to see you back at Shepherd!
Dear Auxiliary members,

I really, really miss precedent times! I miss our meetings, events, the hospital and YOU!

Did you hear the exciting news? For the 12th year in a row, Shepherd Center was named among the top 10 rehabilitation hospitals in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report*, moving up the ranks from 9th place to 8th place. What an honor it is for the Auxiliary to play a small, yet meaningful role among such distinction!

As the summer starts to dwindle, and we head into a new season, I hope the Auxiliary is afforded more opportunities to make a difference in the lives of our patients and their families. While we can’t be at Shepherd right now, our presence is certainly felt, and we will continue to do what we can, even from a distance. If you have any ideas, please let me know. Hang in there and let me know if there is anything I can do for YOU!

With a grateful heart,

Kyle

Kyle Hinson
kylehinson@atlantafinehomes.com
Shepherd Center has been recognized as a Best Hospital for Rehabilitation for 2020-21 by U.S. News & World Report. The 2020 rankings mark the 12th consecutive year Shepherd Center has ranked in the top 10.

The annual Best Hospitals rankings and ratings, now in their 31st year, are designed to assist patients and their doctors in making informed decisions about where to receive care for challenging health conditions or for common elective procedures. This year, Shepherd Center was ranked No. 8 – up one place from last year’s ranking. Shepherd Center tied for the No. 8 spot with Craig Hospital in Denver, Colorado.

“For nearly 45 years, Shepherd Center has served as the bridge between ‘I can’t and I can,’ for thousands of patients living with spinal cord and brain injuries, multiple sclerosis and other neuromuscular diseases,” said Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, president and CEO of Shepherd Center. “To be recognized by U.S. News and World Report as one of the top 10 rehabilitation hospitals in the country enhances the pride we have in our superior clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction. I am truly grateful for all of our staff members who dedicate themselves to providing the highest level of medical care while also fostering a culture of humor, hard work and hope.”

For the 2020-21 rankings and ratings, U.S. News evaluated more than 4,500 medical centers nationwide in 26 specialties, 10 procedures and conditions. In the 16 specialty areas, 134 hospitals were ranked in at least one specialty. In rankings by state and metro area, U.S. News recognized best regional hospitals based on high-performing rankings across multiple areas of care.

“For more than 30 years, U.S. News & World Report has been helping patients, along with the help of their physicians, identify the Best Hospitals in an array of specialties, procedures and conditions,” said Ben Harder, managing editor and chief of health analysis at U.S. News. “The hospitals that rise to the top of our rankings and ratings have deep medical expertise, and each has built a track record of delivering good outcomes for patients.”

The U.S. News Best Hospitals methodologies in most areas of care are based largely on objective measures such as risk-adjusted survival and discharge-to-home rates, volume, and quality of nursing, among other care-related indicators. Rankings in the categories of Ophthalmology, Psychiatry, Rehabilitation and Rheumatology are based solely on expert opinion as determined by a physician survey. In the Rehabilitation category, physiatrists (physical medicine and rehabilitation doctors) are surveyed, and the ranking reflects a composite of results from the past three annual surveys.

Best Hospitals was produced by U.S. News with RTI International, a leading research organization based in Research Triangle Park, N.C. The rankings will be published in the “Best Hospitals 2021” guidebook (ISBN 9781931469951), available in stores October 6. For more information, visit Best Hospitals and use #BestHospitals on Facebook and Twitter.
WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS

Shepherd Center
2020 Peachtree Road, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309-1465
404-352-2020 shepherd.org

Spotlight

CEO Circle
Live with Sarah Morrison

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
11 A.M. - 12 P.M.

Join us for an exclusive virtual gathering with Shepherd Center’s very own CEO & President, Sarah Morrison. In this live feature, Sarah will report on the current state of the Center and share the latest insider updates. Guests will have the chance to join the inner circle with an interactive question and answer session.

Registration to follow

Volunteer News

Sarah Batts, Executive Director, Shepherd Center Foundation
Alex Seblatnigg, Director, Volunteer Services & Internal Engagement
Alaina Case, Volunteer Services Coordinator
Gale Eckstein, Family Support Services Coordinator
Newsletter Co-editors: Alaina Case and Gale Eckstein

Membership in the Shepherd Center Auxiliary, Peach Corps, and Junior Committee is open to all volunteers. Members provide ongoing fundraising and volunteer support to Shepherd Center. For more information on becoming a member of one of these groups, contact Alex Seblatnigg at (404) 350-7315 or visit www.shepherd.org.

Shepherd Center’s mission is to help people with a temporary or permanent disability caused by injury or disease rebuild their lives with hope, independence, and dignity, advocating for their full inclusion in all aspects of community life while promoting safety and injury prevention.