



## Robert Pritchard-Worthy

Sugar Hill, Ga.

**N**atalie Pritchard was at home when she got the phone call that her son, **Robert Pritchard-Worthy**, had experienced a seizure. It wasn't until she arrived at the hospital that she learned he'd experienced a stroke.

"My first thought was, they must be wrong," Natalie says. "He had never been sick in his life."

At the time, Robert and his cousin were in downtown Atlanta driving to meet up with some friends when he noticed something felt "off."

"It was really hard for me to talk," Robert recalls. He tried to put it out of his mind, but while driving, he noticed the car kept drifting into the right lane. When he opened the

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**Robert Pritchard-Worthy**

driver-side door, he says he practically fell out of the car, sliding and landing face down on the pavement. He continued on, lifting and dragging his left leg behind him for more than two blocks. But a strange sensation would soon overcome him and trigger a seizure. His friends called 9-1-1.

"It's kind of crazy," he says. "You go from being totally active and into sports to being in a wheelchair, not being able to hold your head up, and you're completely dependent on others. I couldn't do anything."

Robert, then 22, had just graduated from the University of Central Florida in Orlando, where he played football

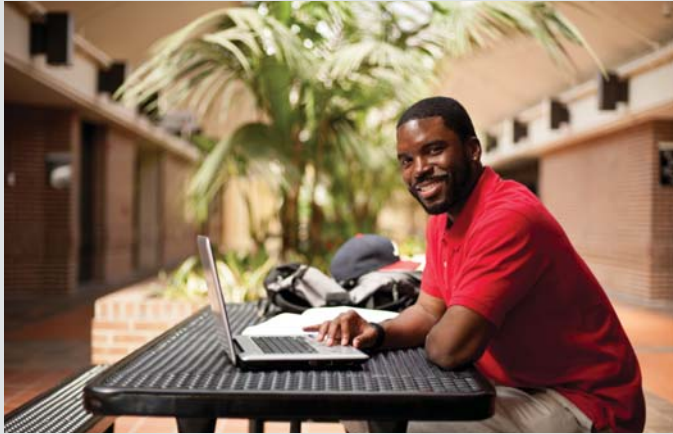
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ROBERT PRITCHARD-WORTHY CONTINUED



and earned a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. He was planning on returning to the school to pursue his master's degree in criminal justice. In fact, when he first woke up in the hospital, the first thing he did was ask his mother to call his academic adviser as he didn't want to lose his place in the program.

But first he had to recover.

Robert came to Shepherd Center's intensive young stroke rehabilitation program, where he quickly progressed from being in a wheelchair to using a walker and then only

needing a brace on his left leg. He participated in occupational, physical, speech and recreation therapy both in Shepherd Center's inpatient program and later at Shepherd Pathways, the hospital's post-acute rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury.

"When we got there everyone was so wonderful," Natalie says. "The feel of family made you feel like it was going to be OK, and it was. Words cannot describe the gratitude that we have for Shepherd Center."

Robert also appreciated the friendly, caring environment at Shepherd Center. "When you're in that kind of state, it's important for people to be supportive and kind," Robert says. "Everyone is like that there. They really care about you."

Robert has regained full movement in his arm, but admits it does not function quite like it used to. Still, he is making improvements all the time – so much so that he has been able to return to his studies at the University of Central Florida. He plans to finish by spring 2015 and is considering law school.

"I wouldn't be here without the people at Shepherd Center," Robert says. "For me to be standing up and walking on my own two feet and being independent is a real blessing. I give thanks to God, my family, my doctors and my therapists."

Read more about **Robert Pritchard-Worthy** and view a video interview with him at:  
[news.shepherd.org/strokes-striking-younger](http://news.shepherd.org/strokes-striking-younger)





## Amanda Berryman Francis

Gaffney, S.C.

**I**t was like any other weekday morning for **Amanda Francis**, a first grade teacher living in Gaffney, S.C. She woke up and quickly jumped in the shower to get ready for work. But from there, things took a turn for the worse. Amanda passed out. When she came to, she frantically tried calling out to her fiancé, Derek, who found Amanda and called 9-1-1.

At Spartanburg Regional Medical Center, emergency physicians ran a battery of tests and soon discovered the cause of her fainting spell. Amanda – who was 24 at the time – had experienced a stroke, which left her unable to speak or use the right side of her body.

*“I remember being scared to talk when I first got to Shepherd. I just couldn’t put the words together right.”*

**Amanda Berryman Francis**

“The scariest part was not knowing what was going on with my body,” Amanda says, recalling that she had a heavy feeling on the right side of her body in the days leading up to the stroke.

She eventually transferred to Shepherd Center where she received a month of intensive rehabilitation and another eight weeks at Shepherd Pathways, Shepherd’s post-acute rehabilitation program in nearby Decatur, Ga., for people recovering from brain injury.

“I remember being scared to talk when I first got to Shepherd,” Amanda says. “I just couldn’t put the words

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AMANDA BERRYMAN FRANCIS CONTINUED

together right." But the support and encouragement she received from her therapists was unparalleled, she adds. "They were so excited to see how quickly I was progressing, and that gave me so much motivation to improve."

Amanda left Shepherd Center walking and talking, and has made remarkable progress. While her goal from the beginning was to get back to teaching – a job she loves – she had a short-term goal, as well – walking down the aisle at her wedding. She and Derek married on June 22, 2013, just a little more than three months after her stroke.



To ease her return to teaching, she spent the 2013-14 school year at Cooley Springs Elementary in Spartanburg, volunteering in the kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms, helping the teachers wherever they needed it.

"I love working with children and interacting with them," Amanda says. "They are cute, funny, innocent and have such positive energy." She hopes to return to a classroom of her own as a full-time teacher soon.

Amanda is grateful for all the people at Shepherd Center who helped her get better, especially the speech therapists. "I knew speech therapy was the one thing I needed more than anything to get me where I am today," she says. "They worked with me and encouraged me every step of the way. When I would get frustrated, they would just tell me to 'take a deep breath.' They helped me so much."

Read more about **Amanda Berryman Francis** and watch a video interview with her at: [news.shepherd.org/strokes-striking-younger](http://news.shepherd.org/strokes-striking-younger)

