

VOLUNTEER news

A newsletter for Shepherd Center Auxiliary & Volunteers



New Housing Grant



It is with great excitement that we share that The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation has awarded a \$50 million grant to Shepherd Center dedicated to the capital expansion of our new family housing building on 1860 Peachtree Road!!!

This is the largest grant dedicated to family housing in our history. This transformational gift is a testament to the importance of Shepherd's commitment to treating not only the patient but the whole family.

We invite you to read the Atlanta Business Chronicle's announcement by clicking [here](#).

Q&A: David and Brittany Carter Discuss Relationships After Injury

David and Brittany Carter met while volunteering at Shepherd Center's Adventure Skills Workshop (ASW) in 2014, four years after David sustained a T-7 injury in a motorcycle crash in August 2010. At the time, Brittany was studying recreational therapy at the University of South Alabama. After hitting it off and beginning a relationship, the two continued to volunteer at ASW yearly; the third year of volunteering together, David proposed on the dock where they met. David and Brittany have been married since 2018.



Q: Brittany, what drew you to David initially?

Brittany: I really liked his zest for life. He was very optimistic. Didn't really see his disability. Just really got to know the person and that's how it all started. And we went from there. We didn't start dating until about four or five months after, but the rest has been history.

Q: David, can you describe beginning to date after injury?

David: Dating became a little bit of an issue with trying to interact with people and not see them see the chair. And that was one of the less difficult things when I met Brittany, because she kind of saw me for me, as opposed to seeing the injury and seeing all the

baggage that came with the spinal cord injury. So the dating scene was a little bit difficult for me for a few years until I re-established my confidence.

Q: What are some of the hardest challenges you've faced in this relationship?

Brittany: It's really hard for me to articulate because when there is a challenge that kind of presents itself, we just really work around it. Of course this was a little bit later in our relationship, but finding a house was a little bit difficult just because we had to make sure that the house was one level and it was open enough to where he could move his chair. Going on vacations, making sure that there's an accessible room, making sure that the location that we go to is accessible. Dealing with people who park in handicap spots and educating people on why they do need to reserve those spots for people that do have physical disabilities.

There's a list of challenges that we face, but we've kind of just taken each challenge one at a time, faced it head on and that's really helped us grow as a couple.

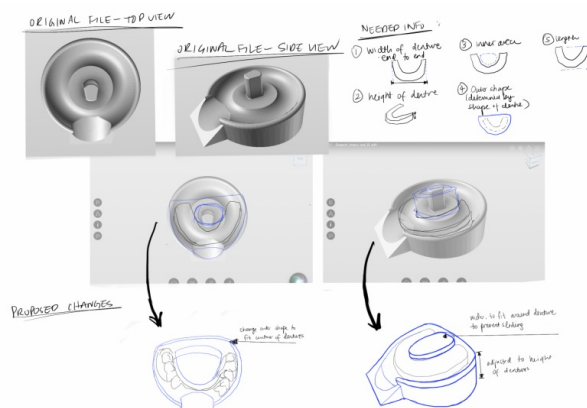
David: Our first date, we went to a restaurant. Most restaurants will have tables and booths. Well, this one only had one, maybe two tables. And they were party sized tables to be able to seat a bunch of people. Both of the tables were actually booked because they had birthday parties. So, she and I had to get into the booth. And it hasn't really been difficult for me in a long time, ever since I went through my therapy and learned how to do proper transfers and make sure I've got all the right equipment to be able to do everything, but it was her first experience seeing it. And it kind of worried me that she was going to think, oh no, is this going to be every single time we go to a restaurant?

Q: Do you have any advice for anyone who may be navigating relationships with a disability?

Brittany: Have patience. That's probably my biggest piece of advice. And just, the rock for the person and, you know, likewise, I think that David and I we've built a really strong foundation because we are a really good team. We take on the world together and you know, whatever obstacle he goes through, I'm right there with him and vice versa.

David: I'd like to add that our level of communication I think it's one of the biggest things and as Brittany talked about after we met it at adventure skills workshop, we didn't go on a date until about four months afterwards, but we still talked and we built a good friendship off of communication. So whenever there are difficult obstacles that have to be worked through, we're able to talk it through, whether that be in our relationship or whether that'd be something physical as far as some kind of limitation with where we're at or what we're doing.

3D Printers Inspire Innovative Partnership



The maker movement, a cultural trend that places value on an individual's, or "maker's," ability to employ do-it-yourself techniques to create technology products, has made a positive impact on many industries, including the healthcare space – and especially at Shepherd Center.

"At Shepherd Center, we innovate to transform patient care at our hospital and around the world," says Deborah Backus, PT, Ph.D., FACRM, vice president of research

and innovation at Shepherd Center. "One way we do that is by encouraging employees to think outside of the box, whether that be using existing assistive technology in new ways or creating unique solutions to meet patients' needs."

In 2019, Shepherd Center did just that by becoming the host of the Atlanta Chapter of Makers Making Change (MMC), an organization that connects people with disabilities to volunteer makers who build affordable assistive technologies. Kristen Webber, MOT, OTR/L, BCPR, ATP, is a former Shepherd Center therapy manager who started the chapter, which now has 16 staff members from various backgrounds and disciplines, along with numerous outside volunteers. Webber passed the reins of the Atlanta Chapter over in October 2021 to Jasmin Brumby Smith, MOT, OTR/L, an occupational therapist in Shepherd's Inpatient Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program, who will continue this exciting work.

In early 2021, the Atlanta Chapter of MMC hosted a virtual meeting where Webber spoke about using 3D printing to create assistive devices for patients. Emily Buchman, OTD, OTR/L, clinical assistant professor at Georgia State University and assistant director of the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program, was one of the attendees.



"After the meeting, I chatted with Kristen about a joint project we could do that would combine academics and clinical practice," Dr. Buchman explains. "We agreed to do a pilot study evaluating the effectiveness of using 3D-printed assistive devices for clients with disabilities, both in helping meet the clients' needs and in providing OT students with real-world experience working with clients."

Students were divided into three groups, each with one client. Clients were patients at Shepherd Center who had sustained spinal cord injuries. The students consulted with the patients via telehealth sessions.

After sustaining a C-5 level spinal cord injury, one of the patients who Webber contacted to participate came to Shepherd Center for rehabilitation from January through July 2021. In the early days after his injury, he did not have the hand strength to clean his dentures independently and needed a denture cup to assist him. The 3D printer study offered a perfect opportunity to create one.

"The process working with the students was easy," he says. "I only had to give them feedback to modify the denture cup once before it worked. It was good to give creative input that would help both of us. They got help practicing working with patients, and I got something that would help me day-to-day."

Since then, the client's hand strength has improved, and he does not need the assistive device anymore.

"You always hope people will grow out of needing assistive technology as they progress in their rehabilitation," Webber says. "It's great that he doesn't need the device anymore, and I'm glad we were able to help him get to that point."

The students agree. As one student explained in their feedback of the course, "It was great to work with an actual client and see the impact the devices we made for them had on their functional ability!"

After the success of this pilot, the Atlanta Chapter of MMC is considering plans for even more extensive programming using 3D printers. The group partnered with the [Georgia Rehabilitation Services Volunteer Partnership \(RSVP\)](#), a free clinic hosted at Shepherd Center that provides outpatient rehabilitation care for people who are uninsured who have spinal cord injuries and/or brain injuries, including stroke.

Dr. Backus adds, "Innovative strategies like 3D printing have a lot of potential in rehabilitation, and Shepherd Center is uniquely positioned to test the possibilities. I look forward to continuing to explore this space."

For more information on Shepherd Center's research and innovation efforts, visit shepherd.org/research. To learn more about Makers Making Change, visit makersmakingchange.com.



*Volunteer Services will be closed on Monday, May 30
in observance of Memorial Day.*

Visit our Website

