

# VOLUNTEER

## news



March  
2021

A Newsletter for the Shepherd Center Auxiliary & Volunteers

### Volunteer Spotlight - Peter van den Bosch

Before the COVID pandemic, you could almost always find Peter van den Bosch down in the Livingston Gym on Tuesdays and Thursdays serving as a fitness buddy to his long-standing client of two years, Judy Kelly. Lisa Eagen, lead exercise specialist, remembers how warmly he engaged Judy in the gym, while always guiding her to get down to business quickly. Peter often laughed with Judy about the terrible playlist they were listening to during her exercises. Still, he also was diligent in encouraging her to maintain the excellent work ethic she exhibited, working to stay as strong and independent as possible.

Peter was born in the Netherlands, the eldest of four children. At age 15, when his father was relocated by his corporate employer, Peter moved to Charlotte, North Carolina. As one can imagine, Peter, who spoke very little English at the time, underwent some culture shock. Instead of riding his bike to school down the street of a small European town each day, he rode the bus to school across a large metro area. Peter soon thrived in his new environment, making friends in various groups, playing soccer for his school, and cruising his new neighborhood on his dirt bike.

After high school, Peter earned his degree at N. C. State University in economics and business management and worked in sales for a few years. Then he went back to school full time and earned his MBA at the University of South Carolina. His career path brought him to sales support for Sony Corporation in Washington, D.C., and later he became a brand manager at Kimberly-Clark Corporation in Neenah, Wisconsin. Just two years later, he moved to London for a two-year contract, but he loved the city so much he ended up working there for 18 years, enjoying the multicultural offerings there. After several years with Kimberly-Clark, Peter went on to work in the restaurant industry in a strategic procurement/supply chain role with the McDonald's Corporation, focusing on building supplier capability in new and emerging markets. He later took a similar position with another major restaurant group, then eventually joined a management consultancy. They ultimately brought him across the pond to Atlanta in 2011.

Peter lives just a mile from Shepherd Center and knew of our work from a neighbor who did outpatient rehabilitation here. Then, during the timeframe Peter was preparing to retire from work, he also visited a cycling buddy who was in inpatient rehabilitation at Shepherd Center. It was an easy decision for Peter to start volunteering here, and he began to assist with locomotor training. "I realized I like to roll up my sleeves and get down in the trenches," he shares. With that in mind, he switched to the fitness buddy volunteer role. He has received joy from his connections with his client, taking her through her circuit, pushing her a bit and seeing her progression. "What comes out from my time at Shepherd is the absolute dedication, passion and focus of the staff in terms of how they approach each individual patient and push them toward their best results," Peter shares. Our volunteers are part of that same mindset, and we are sure Judy Kelly achieved better results in the Livingston gym because she had Peter van den Bosch spurring her on!



Above: Peter has enjoyed spurring Judy Kelly on during her hard work in the gym.

soccer for his school, and cruising his



# from the AUXILIARY PRESIDENT



Dear Auxiliary members,

The weather is warming up, flowers are starting to bloom and the pollen count is on the rise, which can only mean one thing. Spring – and allergies – are around the corner. There is nothing prettier than Atlanta in the Spring! Normally this time of year we'd be planning the Auxiliary Luncheon and Annual Meeting. While we won't be able to gather as a group this Spring, we still are valued partners in the patient and family journey. We continue to provide funding for meal tickets to the cafeteria, gas cards to help families travel home, and other basic non-medical needs. This support is an important part of the patient experience so know that you are making a difference in the lives of many of our patients.

I have some exciting news, finally! We have the opportunity to make even more of an impact on patients and families as they prepare to head home. The Activities of Daily Living (ADL) suite on the 4th floor is currently undergoing renovations. It's a place where patients can do a "test run" of what life is like before they head home. They can make a bed, cook a meal, practice putting a baby in and out of a crib, and a lot more. With a fresh look comes the need to restock the space with everything from pots and pans to bed linens. Who better than the Auxiliary to take on this project? Look for an email in the coming weeks from Alex Seblatnigg with a link to a registry for the space. If you'd like to contribute, there will be a variety of options. Hopefully, there will be a virtual grand re-opening in April, where we will all be invited to see this beautiful new space. Something to look forward to!

As we continue to navigate life through a pandemic remember that "Spring adds new beauty and new life to all that is." (Jessica Harrelson) And as members of the Auxiliary we have the opportunity to do that as well to our patients and their families.

With a grateful heart,

*Kyle*

Kyle Hinson

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We welcome donations of recent or current fiction or nonfiction, both paperback and hardcover, for our book cart. Proceeds benefit the Auxiliary's Patient Aid Fund. Please bring your donation to the screener's desk at the front circle or by the parking deck.

## Shatavia (Shay) Thomas, DMFT, LMFT, Meets a Big Need for Shepherd Families



Above: Shay enjoys supporting families as one of Shepherd's counselors.

Many of our volunteers have asked what type of professional emotional support is available for inpatients and families during their time at Shepherd. No matter what their injury is, help is at hand. In a recent interview, Shay Thomas, a native of Atlanta with her doctorate in Marriage and Family Therapy, helps us understand the counselor's role.

*How long have you worked at Shepherd Center?*

I recently celebrated my one-year anniversary as an acquired brain injury (ABI) family therapist here at Shepherd Center! I have been in the mental health field for nearly 20 years and have been a licensed marriage and family therapist for 12 years.

*What is your role at Shepherd?*

I offer individual, marital, family and group therapy to family members of patients in the ABI unit. I also consult with my colleagues in other departments like nursing, chaplaincy or neuropsychology, collaborating with them on how to best support families in their unique roles.

*Why is it important for families of patients to consider therapy?*

Therapy helps to process experiences, emotions and decisions with an unbiased professional. At Shepherd Center, I help families of ABI patients cope with and adjust to their loved one's injury. While the event or incident happened to their loved one, it impacts the entire family system. Therapy is one way for family members and caregivers to take care of themselves so they can, in turn, offer support to loved ones.

*What do you love about your job?*

I love being a nonjudgmental presence for family members. It is important to cultivate a safe space to support caregivers during this time. I am blessed to serve with such talented, dedicated and supportive colleagues. It's clear that many consider this work a calling.

*How have you adapted your work to continue to help families during COVID-19?*

The pandemic adds another layer of stress to families dealing with trauma that I address during our sessions. If family members cannot travel to the hospital due to COVID-19, I've been able to offer telehealth sessions. Since last March, I have offered virtual sessions to more than 30 families across 10 states.

*What is something that may surprise people about working in your field?*

Often, what makes the difference in family therapy is the therapeutic relationship. Through the lens of my training and experience, therapy or counseling has more to do with building rapport and empowering clients than telling them how to feel or what to do. Some of my most impactful sessions involve simply sitting in silence with someone as they cry and just letting them be, as well as posing reflection questions instead of feeling obligated to offer answers.





Above: Hua Li Chang, one of our Food Services employees, created an amazing display in the cafeteria recently to celebrate the Chinese New Year, educating all of us on her native culture.



## Shepherd Center

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Newsletter Co-editors: Alex Seblatnigg 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](http://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.