

# Shepherd

MEDICAL TREATMENT • RESEARCH • REHABILITATION

## Center Spinal Column®

A MESSAGE  
*for* **OUR**  
**CAREGIVERS**

We dedicate this issue to the people  
who play a vital role in their  
loved ones' lives  
after injury.

ALSO INSIDE

PARTNERSHIPS ADVANCE SPINAL CORD INJURY RESEARCH + PATIENT RETURNS TO WORK AS  
PHARMACIST AFTER BRAIN INJURY + SHEPHERD'S FAMILY HOUSING OFFERS PEACE OF MIND

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#### ABOUT THE COVER:

Eliana Trotman (left) and her mom, Christine (right), enjoy a walk in the park. Through the challenges that came with her daughter's neuromyelitis optica diagnosis, Christine learned to choose hope every day. *Photo by Joann Vitelli*

## LETTER FROM SARAH MORRISON



Dear Readers,

In this issue of *Spinal Column*, we shine a light on the loved ones who support our patients in every way: caregivers. Caregivers play a critical role in patient success – whether it's keeping their spirits up, participating in family training or being a constant source of support. In fact, from July 2020 to June 2021, Shepherd Center's 30-day rehospitalization rate – whether patients need to return to the hospital within the first 30 days after discharge – was an amazingly low 4.3%. Successful outcomes like this would not be possible without caregivers' dedication to our training programs while their loved ones are patients with us.

On page 6, you will meet four people who candidly share what they have faced on their caregiving journeys so far. Page 15 includes their advice to our readers who may be going through something similar in their lives. I encourage you to cut the tips out and place them somewhere visible where they can be a source of guidance and support.

Continuing our caregiver theme, you will learn about Shepherd Center employee Jeanice Sumwalt, OTR/L, an inpatient occupational therapist in the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, on page 5. Jeanice describes how she helps prepare families and patients to return home.

Of all the challenges families face when a loved one sustains a traumatic injury, finding a place to stay near the hospital while their loved one undergoes rehabilitation should not be one of them. That's why Shepherd Center offers a family housing program that provides up to 30 days of housing to families who live more than 60 miles away and gives them the opportunity to participate more in their loved ones' rehabilitation. Page 20 describes the program through the experience of Beth Hodge, a mom from North Carolina who lived in the Irene and George Woodruff Family Residence Center while her son JJ was a patient.

Family – whether it's the one we're born into or the one we build for ourselves – has been part of Shepherd Center's culture since the Shepherds founded the hospital in 1975. It's one reason why we work so hard to make sure caregivers are prepared for their next chapter when they go beyond our four walls. I hope you enjoy these stories and join me in celebrating these special individuals, as well as the caregivers in your own life.

Sincerely,

*Sarah Morrison*

Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA  
Chief Executive Officer of Shepherd Center

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Amy Shaw shares a laugh with her son, Holden. Read more about Amy's caregiving journey on page 11. *Photo by Jerry Borwick*



See [news.shepherd.org](https://news.shepherd.org) for additional online content.

### Gifts of Generosity

If you would like to make a gift to support the work you have read about, please contact Sarah L. Batts at the Shepherd Center Foundation at 404-350-7305 or visit [shepherd.org](https://shepherd.org).

## Scot Safe E-Scooter Safety Campaign Reveals Injury Prevention Opportunities

Scot Safe is an innovative safety campaign designed to stem the electric scooter (e-scooter) injuries and fatalities occurring on our roadways. With generous funding from the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety, Shepherd Center embarked on a targeted digital media campaign to raise awareness of the risks e-scooter riders face and preventive measures they can implement to stay safe.

Through a pilot program, which included a three-month digital advertising and social media campaign, a virtual conference, direct mailings along the Atlanta Beltline and a dedicated website, the project aimed to increase helmet use and decrease speed and intoxicated riding among scooter users. Using the cities of Statesboro and Atlanta, Georgia, as control groups, the team observed riders before and after the campaign measuring correct helmet use, excessive speed, age, gender, number of riders per e-scooter, if any conflict was observed (car, pedestrian, bike), rider location, and if the scooter rider fell or not. Pre-observations took place in April 2021 and post-observations took place in September 2021.

Initial determinations provided by this observational study revealed three targets for future interventions and provided baseline data for comparison and subsequent studies. First, is the very low rate of helmet use among e-scooter users, across all sites, both genders, all age groups and all riding



The Scot Safe campaign aimed to stem e-scooter injuries and fatalities.

locations (sidewalk, road, beltline, bike lanes). Second, wrong-way riding in the roadway is a problem for younger riders. Finally, riding with two people per scooter is common despite scooter providers' prohibitions.

Visit [scotsafega.com](https://scotsafega.com) to learn more. \*

## Shepherd Center Once Again Named a Spinal Cord Injury Model System



Photo by Louie Favorite

The Administration for Community Living's (ACL) National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) awarded a five-year grant to Shepherd Center to continue its nearly 40-year tenure as a Spinal Cord Injury Model System (SCIMS).

The SCIMS program is the largest network of research centers devoted to spinal cord injuries (SCI) in the world. NIDILRR awards the grants to institutions that are national leaders in medical research and patient care and provide the highest level of comprehensive specialty services through rehabilitation and re-entry into full community life. Shepherd Center has been designated a SCIMS since 1982, operating as the Southeastern Regional Spinal Cord Injury Model System Center.

"It is an honor to be designated as a Spinal Cord Injury Model System, and I am so grateful for my many colleagues at Shepherd Center who contributed to our successful application," says Edelle Field-Fote, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA, director of SCI research and director, Shepherd Center SCIMS Program. "From our innovative clinical programs and donor-funded programs, like recreation therapy and family housing, to opportunities to participate in world-class research, Shepherd Center continues to provide outstanding services to people with SCI and their families that go well beyond basic care."

Learn more at [shepherd.org/model-system](https://shepherd.org/model-system). \*

## 3D Printers Inspire Innovative Partnership

As the host of the Atlanta Chapter of Makers Making Change (MMC), Shepherd Center is involved in many innovative projects that connect people with disabilities to volunteer makers who build affordable assistive technologies. In 2021, Shepherd Center participated in one such project in partnership with Georgia State University. They piloted a study evaluating how effective using 3D-printed assistive devices for clients with disabilities is, both in helping meet the clients' needs and in providing occupational therapy students at Georgia State 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 participants did not initially have the hand strength to clean his dentures independently and needed a denture cup to assist him.

"The process of working with the students was easy," he says. "I only had to give them feedback to modify the 3D-printed 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."

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

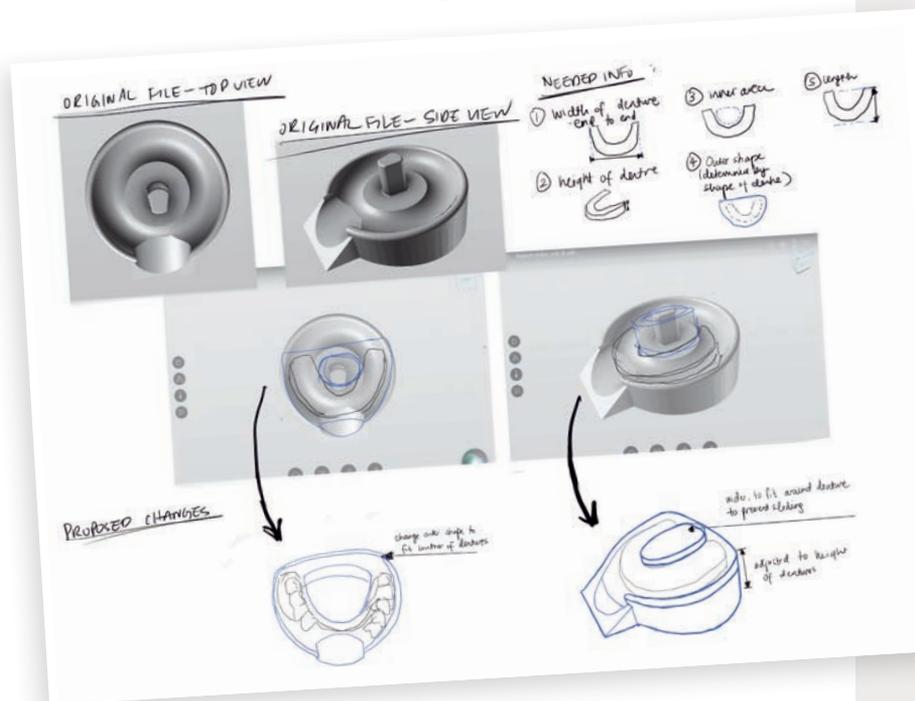
After the success of the pilot, the Atlanta Chapter of MMC is considering how to expand this type of program on a larger scale. For more information on Shepherd Center's research and innovation efforts, visit [shepherd.org/research](http://shepherd.org/research).

To learn about Makers Making Change, visit [makersmakingchange.com](http://makersmakingchange.com). \*



# Makers Making Change

A Neil Squire Program



Shepherd Center participated in an innovative pilot study with Georgia State University to evaluate the effectiveness of using 3D-printed assistive devices for clients with disabilities and in providing Georgia State students with experience working with clients. These drawings represent initial mock-ups of a 3D-printed denture cup for one study participant.

## Bilsky Grant Established to Support Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Shepherd Center



Dr. Bilsky has worked at Shepherd Center for more than 20 years.

Gerald Bilsky, M.D., a staff physiatrist for Shepherd Center's Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program and Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, has worked at the hospital for more than 20 years.

"I am a physician here at Shepherd, but I have been in a part-time position for the last two years," Dr. Bilsky says. "The last decade or so has led me to think about how I could be a better person and perhaps assist in improving my community."

In September 2021, Dr. Bilsky established the Bilsky Grant to provide an opportunity for staff members to make a positive difference.

Through this grant, he is donating money annually to be awarded to one staff member or collaborative group to create new spaces or

experiences such as performing arts, in-person or virtual events, community outreach, or other innovative activities that support diversity, inclusion, kindness and equity.

"This grant is purposely left broad enough to allow for topics that touch Shepherd Center employees' hearts and hopefully inspire them to help make our community a better one," Dr. Bilsky says.

The recipients of the first grant were Shepherd employee Belinda Richardson and her teammate and illustrator Hollis Callis, who will write and design a children's book starring four animal characters with different physical abilities and backgrounds. The characters are challenged to make a clay pot in art class and discover that differences are not obstacles to a similar destination. \*

SPOTLIGHT

# Collaboration and Partnership are Key in Advancing Research of Acute Spinal Cord Injuries

The pipeline to research participation often begins before transferring to Shepherd Center.

BY KERRY LUDLAM

Shepherd Center has long had collaborations with trauma centers and industry partners to connect newly injured patients with clinical trials to participate in and advance research – even weeks or months before a patient arrives at Shepherd Center for rehabilitation. In two current studies, Shepherd Center is partnering with trauma centers and industry sponsors to advance research that aims to catch patients early in their recovery.

## ELEZANUMAB

AbbVie, Inc. sponsored and launched one such study in 2020, “A Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Proof of Concept Study to Assess the Safety and Efficacy of Elezanumab in Acute Traumatic Cervical Spinal Cord Injury.” Shepherd Center is one of more than 30 institutions participating worldwide in this Phase 2 clinical trial using the drug Elezanumab – a monoclonal antibody – in people with acute (new/recent) traumatic cervical (neck region of the spine) spinal cord injury. Monoclonal antibodies are human-made proteins that behave like human antibodies. In previous studies in animals, Elezanumab was shown to promote neurorestoration and regeneration.

The goal is to enroll 54 newly injured people with spinal cord injury (SCI) in the trial at trauma centers. Once deemed eligible, participants will receive their first intravenous (IV) infusion of Elezanumab or placebo within 24 hours of injury. Participants then receive monthly doses of Elezanumab or placebo every four weeks for a total of 13 doses.

“Partnerships with trauma centers are critical because they allow us to enroll patients in acute SCI studies in those critical early hours and days after injury,” says Michael Yochelson, M.D., MBA, chief medical officer of Shepherd Center and principal investigator for the study. “We offer patients the opportunity to participate in cutting-edge research that we hope will make a difference in their lives earlier in their course of rehabilitation and provide treatment options for generations to come.”

Participants will be followed for approximately one and half years post-injury to assess for the safety and effectiveness of Elezanumab.

**“Partnerships with trauma centers are critical because they allow us to enroll patients in acute SCI studies in those critical early hours and days after injury.”**

**MICHAEL YOCHELSON, M.D., MBA**  
Chief medical officer of Shepherd Center and principal investigator for the study



## MT-3921

Launched in 2021, “A Phase 2a, Randomized, Double-blind, Placebo-controlled Study to Assess the Efficacy and Safety of MT-3921 in Subjects with Acute Traumatic Cervical Spinal Cord Injury,” sponsored by Mitsubishi, is evaluating the use of MT-3921, a humanized monoclonal antibody to repulsive guidance molecule A (RGMA). Animal studies of MT-3921 demonstrated improved locomotor function and increased recovery of manual dexterity.

Participating trauma centers will enroll people who meet eligibility criteria. After the first dose within 48 hours of injury, participants receive infusions of the study drug or placebo on day 15 post-injury and then monthly through month six. Once a study participant transfers to Shepherd Center from their referring trauma center,



**“Through partnerships with our colleagues at trauma centers and industry sponsors, Shepherd Center is setting the stage now for therapies that have the possibility to change the course of acute spinal cord injuries.”**

**DONALD PECK LESLIE, M.D.**  
The study’s principal investigator and medical director emeritus at Shepherd Center

Shepherd Center provides acute inpatient rehabilitation and administers the study medication according to the research schedule. Shepherd research staff also monitor the safety and function of the participant for the duration of their care at Shepherd Center.

“While Shepherd Center is known for our life-restoring rehabilitation for spinal cord injuries, through partnerships with our colleagues at trauma centers and industry sponsors, we’re setting the stage now for therapies that have the possibility to change the course of acute spinal cord injuries,” says Donald Peck Leslie, M.D., the study’s principal investigator and medical director emeritus at Shepherd Center.

Participants will be followed for nine months post-injury to assess for the safety and effectiveness of MT-3921.

When patients enroll in these research studies at the time of injury at participating trauma centers, they have the option of selecting Shepherd Center for both world-class rehabilitation, if they meet eligibility criteria for admission, and ongoing research participation. Visit [shepherd.org/research](https://shepherd.org/research) to learn more about Shepherd Center’s work to develop and evaluate new treatments, drugs, surgical techniques, diagnostic tools and therapeutic interventions. \*

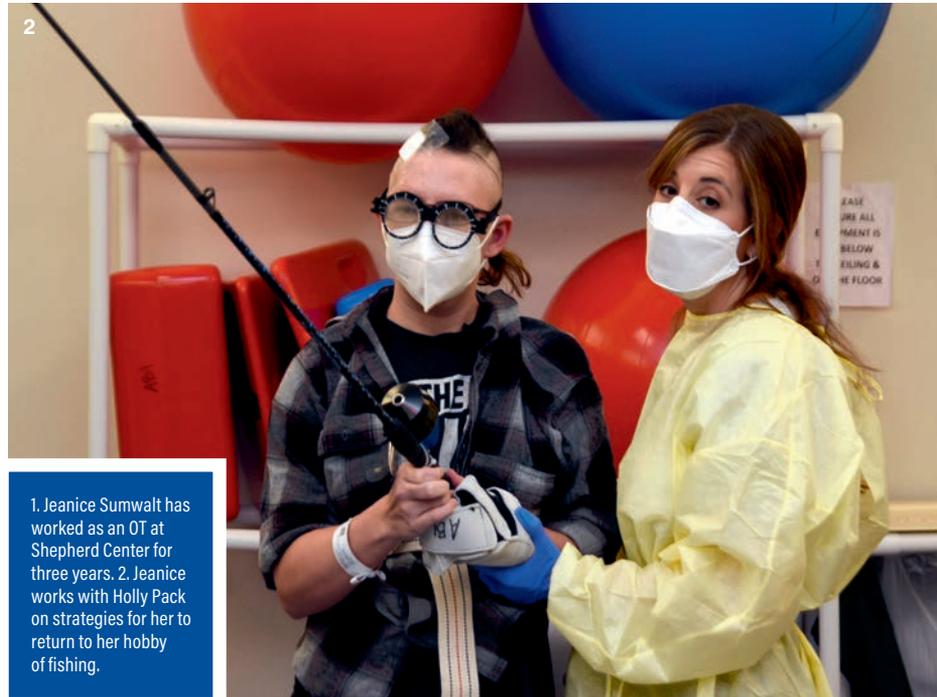
# Q+A

BY DAMJANA ALVERSON

## Occupational Therapist Explains How She Prepares Patients and Families to Return Home

Jeanice Sumwalt, OTR/L, is an inpatient occupational therapist in the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program at Shepherd Center.

P  
staff  
profile



### Q: What's your role at Shepherd Center?

I have worked as an occupational therapist (OT) at Shepherd Center for three years in the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program. As an OT, my goals for patients center on helping them develop, improve and maintain the skills needed for activities of daily living.

In the inpatient setting where I work, that usually starts with activities like showering, dressing and grooming. On days when we work in the gym, we target upper-extremity strength, coordination, vision and any other areas affecting daily living performance.

I work with a variety of other disciplines on the therapy team. We are always communicating about what is best for our patients overall and make sure to support each other's goals.

### Q: How do you help patients and families prepare to transition home after leaving the hospital?

As someone who works with people who have sustained brain injuries, all my patients require varying levels of assistance with their daily activities after returning home. I attempt to incorporate family training throughout a patient's stay and get the family hands-on as early as possible with helping to assist their loved one. Often, we will do several formal family training days to get everyone ready for the transition back home.

During training, I show our patients and families how to make their home environment as safe as possible. I also show the family members how to cue the patient to do things on their own instead of having the caregiver do everything for them. This helps the patient regain independence and continue to progress toward their rehabilitation goals after they leave Shepherd.

### Q: What are some examples of how to make a home environment safe?

Many of my patients discharge needing a ramp to access their home. I provide information to families on ramp specifications to ensure their loved one has a safe way in and out of the house. We also review modifications to their bathroom and bathroom equipment to set the patient up for toileting and showering in the safest and most independent way. Finally, we review strategies to modify the environment to reduce fall risk and minimize safety concerns for patients with cognitive impairments.

### Q: What do you love most about your job?

I get to go along the rehabilitation journey with our patients. I'm here day in and day out, getting to see my patients in the beginning when things are hard and at the end when we can look back and see the progress we've made. It's really special to be part of this chapter of someone's journey. \*

### INTERESTING FACTS

#### EDUCATION

- **University of Georgia**  
Bachelor of Science in Psychology
- **Brenau University**  
Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

#### FUN FACTS

- Jeanice has two dogs and a 30-year-old horse.
- She once took a six-week solo backpacking trip to South Africa and lived on a game reserve.
- Jeanice comes from a very big family and has 52 first cousins.

 More online at  
[news.shepherd.org](https://news.shepherd.org)

A MESSAGE

*for* **OUR**  
**CAREGIVERS**

Four caregivers of former  
Shepherd Center patients  
share their experiences,  
wisdom, challenges  
and triumphs.

BY PHILLIP JORDAN





# Christine Trotman

Through the exhaustion and challenges of dealing with her daughter's neuromyelitis optica diagnosis, she learned to choose hope every day.

Whenever Christine Trotman felt herself losing hope, whenever she worried her daughter could see how scared she was, whenever she needed to clear her mind — that's when Christine slipped away for some solitude on Shepherd Center's indoor track.

"That track is stained with my tears," she says, "but it brought me so much relief. I would just walk it out. I would pray for my daughter there. And I would pray for others I'd met at Shepherd Center.

"Because you quickly realize that your story is connected with others. That we're all in this together. The whole experience changed me. It gave me more empathy and an overwhelming sense of gratitude."

Empathy and gratitude were not the emotions Christine cycled through in late December 2020. That was when her daughter Eliana, now 23, first started experiencing symptoms of neuromyelitis optica (NMO), a condition that presents similarly to multiple sclerosis as it attacks the body's

nervous system. In just two weeks, Eliana went from having a suspected stomach virus to nonstop vomiting, loss of all sensation, an inability to control her bowels and paralysis from the neck down. It took two urgent care visits and three emergency room visits to get a correct diagnosis.

On January 8, Eliana's doctors at Atlanta's Emory Saint Joseph's Hospital recommended a transfer to Shepherd Center. Upon her arrival, clinical staff from the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute had already helped develop a treatment plan and a daily schedule for her. Christine's transition to Shepherd Center was tougher.

"Everyone was great, but I had to mentally catch up. I hadn't even come to terms with the diagnosis yet."

1. Eliana reads to Christine from her children's book manuscript. The book is based on Eliana's recovery story focused on hope, hard work and determination amidst uncertainties and challenges.
2. Christine Trotman learned how to choose hope during difficulties in life after her daughter was diagnosed with neuromyelitis optica.



“Everyone was great, but I had to mentally catch up,” she explains. “I hadn’t even come to terms with the diagnosis yet. Shepherd Center had a great psychologist, but I wasn’t ready to talk yet. I barely knew where I was.”

Christine says her mind finally accepted reality when she had to call her daughter’s dream job — a health technology company where Eliana was soon to begin work — and tell them Eliana couldn’t come.

“I broke down doing that,” Christine says. “But I decided I was going to do everything possible to help my daughter come back.”

Being hands-on in her daughter’s daily routine helped Christine mentally. Another boost came with Christine’s decision to continue working remotely from a makeshift “office” in Eliana’s room at Shepherd Center.

“I know not everybody would feel this way, but work was a tremendously positive distraction for me,” she says.

Mother and daughter also committed to daily pick-me-ups for their mental health. For Christine, it was a French press coffee. For Eliana, a rejuvenating shower — achieved each time with Christine’s help.

“I have the most awesome respect for the nurses and techs in this field, especially seeing them up close and all the complications the pandemic brought. They truly are heroes. They taught me what I needed to take care of my daughter. They prepared me for all that life could bring,” Christine says.

While only Christine could be with Eliana at Shepherd Center due to COVID-19 restrictions, the duo had a large circle of support outside. That includes Eliana’s dad, Floyd, and

her siblings — Micah, 36, Imani, 27, and Eliana’s twin brother Ezra — as well as extended family, neighbors and friends.

All have much to rejoice in now. Eliana has recovered far more rapidly than anticipated. With NMO, there are always concerns about relapses. But at the moment, she’s walking with crutches and working on her driving. Her family is still proceeding with house modifications to make life easier at home and to be prepared in case Eliana’s condition ever regresses.

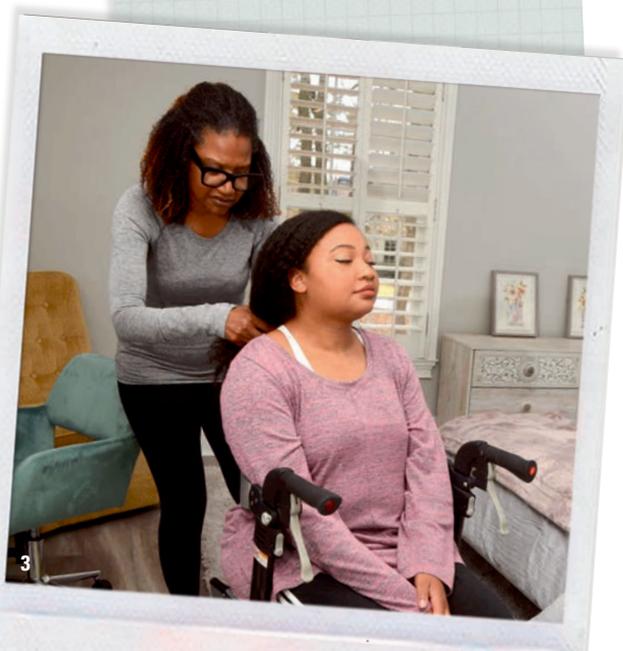
For now, there is optimism. Eliana works out at Shepherd Center’s ProMotion Fitness Center and goes on art and horticultural outings through the hospital’s recreational therapy program. She’s also writing a children’s book about her journey.

Oh, and that job Christine had to turn down on Eliana’s behalf? The company has been so impressed with Eliana’s resilience that

they’ve told her whenever she’s ready, she’ll have a job waiting for her.

“It’s all about hope,” her mom says. “You have to choose hope. Every day. Shepherd Center is great at training you to do that. We’ll never lose that.”

1. Christine, her husband Floyd, Eliana, and Eliana’s twin Ezra, spend time in East Cobb Park. 2. In November 2021, Christine and her family spent their first morning home together since Eliana was hospitalized in December 2020. 3. Christine assists Eliana with her hair in Eliana’s new, accessible bedroom. 4. The Trotman family’s neighbors gave Eliana a surprise potting bench table for her plants. While an inpatient at Shepherd, Eliana was introduced to horticulture therapy.



# Brian Kelly

Brian Kelly relied on his Shepherd Center training – and his children’s optimism – to overcome his fears and become the caregiver his wife needed.

As Thanksgiving 2018 approached, Shepherd Center staff decided Laurie Kelly could return home, to Kennesaw, Georgia, for the holidays. She had made significant improvement since experiencing a brain aneurysm on the Fourth of July. Laurie’s children – Caiden, 7 at the time, and Berkleigh, then 5 – were ecstatic. They happily sacrificed, and decorated, their own playroom downstairs as it was converted into a makeshift bedroom for their mother. And they counted down the days.

Their dad, Brian Kelly, did, too. But his countdown felt different.

“I don’t want to say it was fear but... yeah, it was fear,” Brian says. “I kept thinking, ‘How the hell can I do this?’ I knew Shepherd had taught me what I needed, but still, all I could think was, ‘This just feels impossible to do alone.’”

Occupational and recreational therapists at Shepherd Center assured Brian that his wife would benefit from being at home again, with the familiarity and motivation it would bring.

Brian remembers his response: “I said, ‘Get out of here,’” he recalls with a laugh. “Look at this place. The doctors, the lifts, the equipment. How can home be better than here?”

“But they were right,” he says. “Getting Laurie home, with the kids loving on her and tugging on her was better than just about any therapy session at that point. I was putting the equipment – and quite

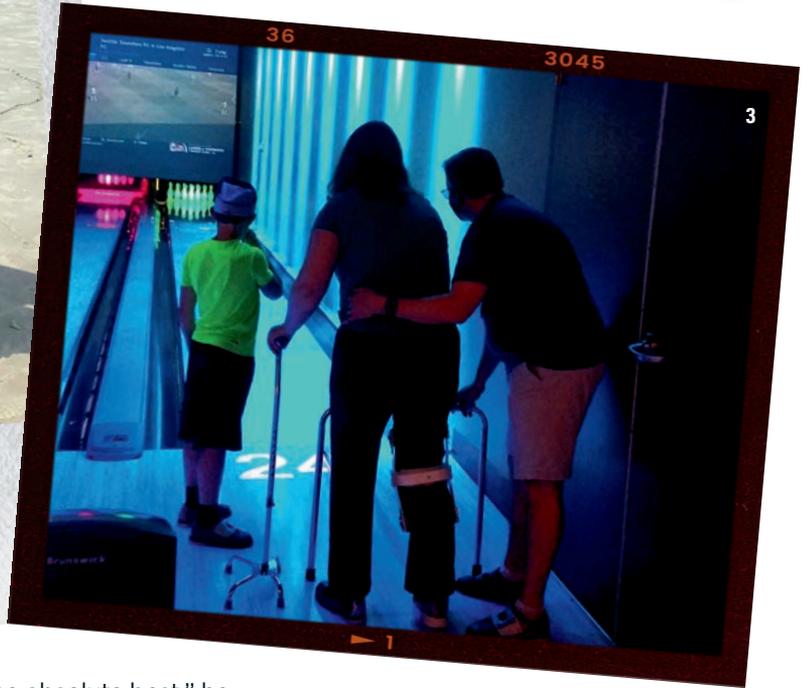


The Kelly family spends its first outing together following Laurie’s recovery at Zoo Atlanta.

“I soaked up every opportunity to grieve with others and learn from others. Caregivers would come in and seem light years ahead of me, but they made me feel like I could do this.”



2. Laurie celebrates her first time back on the sand in four years in July 2021 at Sunset Beach in North Carolina.  
3. The Kelly family enjoys outings now that seemed improbable a couple of years ago. Here, Brian assists his wife Laurie at a bowling party for Caiden's tenth birthday.



frankly, the ease of things at Shepherd Center - over the TLC Laurie needed at home."

Still, the transition had its challenges for Brian: He was taking on the kids' school schedule for the first time; working through the onslaught of paperwork required for health insurance and Medicaid assistance; constantly replacing at-home nurses for Laurie and babysitters for the kids, particularly tough tasks during the pandemic; and juggling his job as senior associate athletic director at Georgia State University. All while taking care of Laurie and their children.

"Caregiving never stops," Brian says. "It's like the ocean. The tide is always rolling in. You're just checking to see how big the waves are each day."

He tries to practice what Shepherd Center preaches about self-care. Once a month, he goes bowling, hiking up Kennesaw Mountain or out to dinner with a friend. Something to recharge his batteries. And he reflects often on the family therapy sessions he attended at Shepherd Center.

"Those were the absolute best," he says. "I soaked up every opportunity to grieve with others and learn from others. Caregivers would come in and seem light years ahead of me, but they made me feel like I could do this."

Brian is thankful for the help he's received, especially from Laurie's sisters, Carolyn and Jackie, who both live in the northeast. Carolyn stayed in the ICU from the start and then made monthly trips back once Laurie returned home. Jackie, meanwhile, picked up her life, moved into the Kelly home and worked remotely for 10 months in order to help.

Most of all, Brian's thankful that Laurie, his college sweetheart, is still making progress. She now stays independently at the house for an hour each day, something that was unfathomable to Brian even a year ago. Laurie attends Beyond Therapy® at Shepherd Center three times a week and she'll return to the hospital's outpatient program, Shepherd Pathways, for a second time this spring.

"Her progress is tangible now. She can see it," Brian says. "Things feel

within her reach and that really helps keep her momentum going."

Best of all, his children and their mother have a more powerful bond than ever.

The one time Brian cries while recounting his caregiving journey is when he recalls his first conversation with their kids after Laurie's aneurysm.

"I didn't even know what kind of conversation to have with them," he says. "I didn't know if Laurie was going to survive at that point. That talk was harder than anything I've had to do since."

He thinks about that often now when he watches Caiden and Berkleigh play with Laurie. Or when he simply sits back and takes in his family together at home.

"Where we are now was hard to even hope for back then," he says. "I mean, it was nine weeks in an ICU. Five months in hospitals. The transitions we each had to make coming home. It's just incredible. It's all so, so worth it to be where we are today."



# Amy Shaw

When her son sustained a spinal cord injury, they made a deal to limit their bad days and focus on how to make the most out of life.

Bad days are inevitable for everyone. Survivors of spinal cord injuries are no different. But Amy Shaw and her son, Holden, 17, had a rule when it came to bad days. Those days when the anger or grief snowballed. When the what-ifs returned around the four-wheeler accident that caused Holden's spinal cord injury. When the road ahead seemed too long.

"We were having one of those days early in our time at Shepherd Center," Amy says. "And I told Holden, 'OK, one day. We can have a bad day. We'll give ourselves today. But not tomorrow. We can't go down that path. I won't let you. We'll let today be today and figure out how to make tomorrow better.'"

In the year-plus since that moment, Holden has had more good days than bad. That's largely due to Holden's positive personality and older-than-his-years maturity, but it's also a tribute to the family and friends in his corner — none more so than his mom.

During Holden's first few weeks at Memphis' Regional One Health, Amy and her husband Jonathan took turns staying with Holden, due to coronavirus restrictions. When he moved to Shepherd Center, Jonathan stayed home to care for the rest of their kids, while Amy remained by Holden's side.

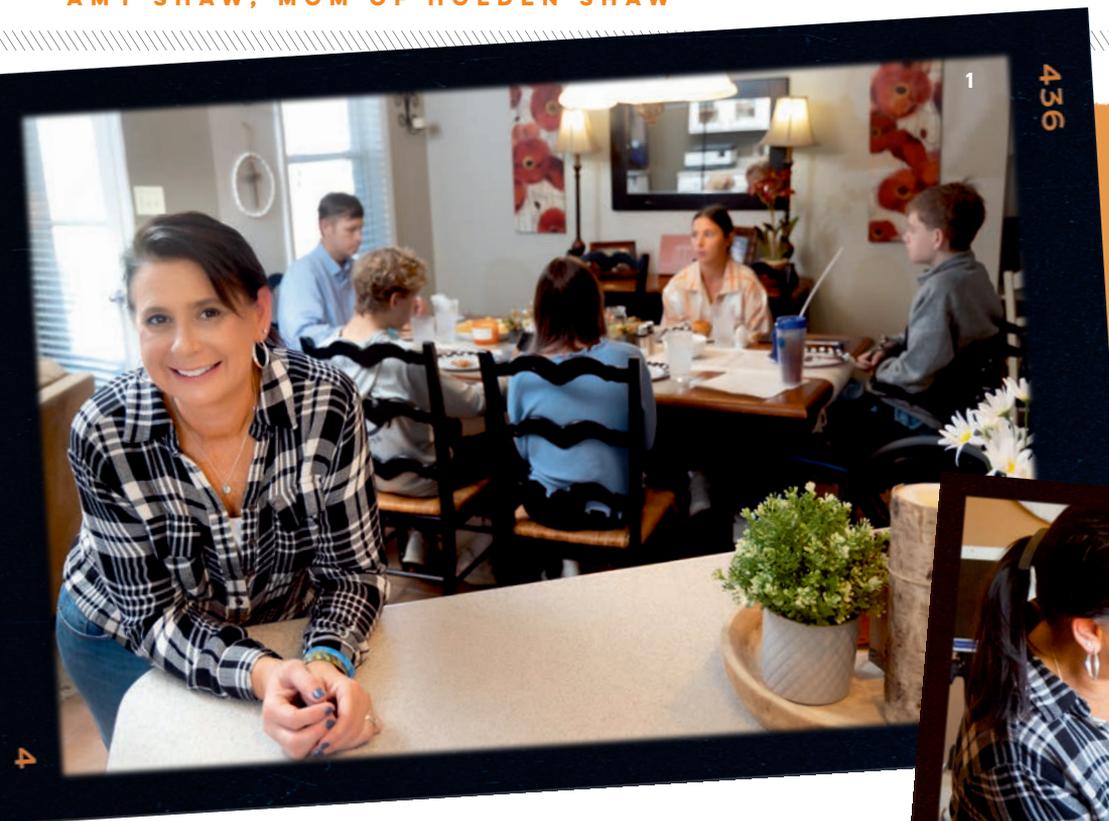
"Jonathan was heartbroken not to be with Holden and I missed the kids so much, but we made it work," Amy says. "I couldn't have done this without what they did at home."



1. Amy Shaw remained by her son Holden's side the entire time he was at Shepherd center. 2. Amy prepares lunch for most of her family including her kids Olivia, Taylor and Holden, and husband Jonathan.



“We were able to stay in family housing, so it was like having training wheels. Best thing we could have done. We got to figure some things out on our own while still being able to call the nurse if we needed to.”



1. Amy and her family are very close. They all relied on each other while going through the challenges and triumphs during Holden's rehabilitation. 2 & 3. Amy assists Holden with zipping his shirt and adjusting his Gloves for Life wheelchair push gloves.



Her oldest, Taylor, had just graduated from college and put her career on hold to pick up many of her mom's duties, both at home and alongside her dad at their family-owned business. Meanwhile, Amy's other daughter, Olivia, was starting college and her youngest son, JD, was beginning eighth grade — each persevering despite dramatic changes around them.

In addition to going through Shepherd Center's inpatient Adolescent Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program, Holden spent nine weeks in the outpatient Spinal Cord Injury Day Program.

"We were able to stay in family housing, so it was like having training wheels," Amy says. "Best thing we could have done. We got to figure some things out on our own while still being able to call the nurse if we needed to."

"With inpatient, you're almost in a bubble. Everything is safe, accessible, wonderful. Holden made friends for a lifetime, and so did I. But I was scared to death of being responsible for everything Holden would need when we were back home."

By the time they got home, Amy was ready for those challenges. The only thing she wasn't prepared for was mustering the daily energy required to be a full-time caregiver.

Her weekdays start around 4:45 a.m. After Amy gets ready, she and her husband get Holden in his chair. Amy handles the cathing, the bathing, the dressing and the meds. Next, it's getting Holden's little brother ready for school, transfers to the car, and, finally, drop-offs for school. The evenings reverse the process.

"The biggest thing is the exhaustion," she says. "And giving up your life. It's a full-time thing. For a year, until Holden went back to school, I didn't have time for myself. You lose some of who you are when that happens. And I'm fortunate! I have a ton of support from my family and Holden's friends. Not everybody has that."

Holden has now progressed to a manual wheelchair, so outings with friends are easier. He's doing well in his senior year of high school. And he and his mom still have their agreement: Don't let bad days multiply.

She's also learned, more often than not, how to give the best version of herself to her son. And flip her own bad days around.

"When I'm tired or frustrated, I step back and think, 'Come on, how

would I feel in Holden's shoes?'" she says. "He's way stronger than I am. It amazes me all the more at what a happy, bright kid he is. Seeing him smile, that makes anything I have to do so beyond worth it."



# Vicki Figiel

With a sense of humor and support from family and friends, Vicki cares for her wife who experienced a stroke in October 2020.

The squeaky toy seemed like a good idea at first. And a funny one in a household with two dogs and two cats.

It was for Vicki Figiel's wife, Carole Cooper, who had sustained a brain injury after a stroke in 2020. Her speech is improving, but her voice still doesn't go much louder than a whisper.

Thus, the squeaky toy, for when Vicki's out of earshot. "Oh, boy, that was a mistake," Vicki jokes, deadpan. "Squeaks at all hours, the dog starts barking, it's an event every time. That damn thing. I'm going to run it over with the car."

She pauses.

"But then it'd just squeak at me again."

Vicki comes by her wry sense of humor honestly; her last name means "prankster" in Polish. For nearly two years now, she's had to draw on her reservoir of drollery more than ever before.

In the spring of 2020, Carole started having headaches that kept getting worse. Doctors discovered she had glioblastoma, an aggressive brain tumor. Stage 4. Carole had surgery a couple of days later, followed by chemotherapy and radiation. And seizures.

By October, Carole was doing better, her condition improving. Then, she had a stroke.

Since then, Vicki herself has survived a bout with kidney cancer and lost her mother. To top it off, the couple has had to say a final goodbye to two of their beloved pets.

"Getting old ain't for the faint of heart. I'll tell you that," Vicki says.

The silver lining with Carole's condition is that her long-term memory and personality are both intact; it's only the routine, day-to-day things that prove fleeting.

"So, we're still able to talk, remember and laugh," Vicki says.

And for that, she adds, they have Shepherd Center to thank, where Carole's speech therapy paid huge dividends. It's also where Vicki learned to be her wife's caretaker.

"We were absolutely blessed to be at Shepherd Center and Shepherd Pathways," Vicki says. "The level of care for Carole, but also the ability to teach me how to handle



Carole (left) and Vicki (right) together in 2013. The couple's sense of humor has helped them bear any challenges they have faced.

"We were absolutely blessed to be at Shepherd Center and Shepherd Pathways. The level of care for Carole, but also the ability to teach me how to handle her physically in a way that keeps us both safe."



1. Vicki, Daniel and Carole are very close.
2. Carole holds Daniel when he was a baby.
3. Daniel smiles at his mom, Carole. He spends as much time as he can with her.



visits they get from their son Daniel, a senior at the University of Georgia.

"It's been really hard on him to lose the mother that he knew," Vicki says. "Her liveliness, her loving nature. He doesn't want to miss a minute with her now. He's so good to us, but I have to tell him, 'You still need to live a good, young man's life. Go on dates. Go out with friends. Don't worry about these old people.'"

Vicki says she struggles to take her own advice when it comes to making time for herself. She worked at AT&T for 37 years, earned a doctorate in business and taught college courses online after she retired. She's stopped teaching, though, and has yet to fill that creative void.

Understandably so.

"Even beyond taking care of Carole, the household workload is all me now. So, when I have free time, I'm choosing between eating and a nap. And I usually pick a nap," Vicki says. "I'm a nightmare-ish person if I don't get enough sleep, so that's what I focus on. I think we're

all still learning how to find some balance again."

But the laughs, those never went away. These days, their running joke harkens to a long-ago date at a Thai restaurant when Carole got tongue-tied trying to order pad thai.

"She kept saying 'tad pie' and trying to correct it and then saying it again," Vicki says, delighting in the retelling. "We both started laughing and could not stop. The waiter just gave up and walked away. So, now, when it's time to eat, I'll ask her, 'tad pie for dinner?'"

"We don't take ourselves too seriously, even with all this going on. We can always find something stupid to laugh about."



her physically in a way that keeps us both safe."

Still, quite literally, that responsibility isn't an easy burden to bear.

"I've lost 45 pounds since I started taking care of Carole," Vicki says. "It's a terrible but very effective weight-loss program! I'm usually sweating within 30 minutes of getting up. It's all-consuming."

Vicki's siblings have been an immense help. And nothing boosts their spirits more than the near-daily

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY VICKI FIGIEL



# FINDING *Hope* Everyday

We hope you found these heartfelt caregiver stories meaningful and motivating. Everybody's story is different, and none of us can truly know how to handle something until we've been through it. Whether you are new to the caregiving journey or have been on it for a while, hearing from others who have been in your shoes can help.

**[ WE ASKED OUR CAREGIVERS WHAT TIPS THEY WOULD GIVE TO READERS AND INCLUDED THEM HERE FOR YOU. ]**

## CAREGIVER *Tips*

Feel free to cut out these tips and place them in your home as daily reminders.

Don't beat yourself up too bad. There is so much pressure to perform, and you're going to mess up. Daniel Tiger gave us the best advice: When this happens, take a deep breath and count to three.

- BRIAN KELLY

Talk with others who understand, as they know about resources you may not know about.

- VICKI FIGIEL

Celebrate all progress. When you take one day at a time, it is easier to see the blessing in every progression.

- CHRISTINE TROTMAN

If your loved one was a social person, remember to invite people to safely visit in person or on video, but keep those connections going. Carole was considered the office mom, and really misses that role from her work. She is so happy when her work friends and neighborhood friends visit.

- VICKI FIGIEL

*Laughter is sometimes the best medicine.*

- AMY SHAW

Take care of yourself. You will hear this a million times, but it is the most important thing you can do. Even if it's 15 minutes, every little bit helps.

- BRIAN KELLY

Listen to the medical team. I cannot imagine where we would be without the knowledge these special people gave to us.

- AMY SHAW

Don't make impetuous emotional decisions regarding home modifications and equipment. Take your time and exercise wisdom.

- CHRISTINE TROTMAN

P

patient  
profile



PRESCRIPTION FOR A  
**SECOND  
CHANCE**

BY PHIL KLOER

# After Will Rich sustained a traumatic brain injury, he wasn't sure if he could return to work as a pharmacist. With help from his family and Shepherd Center, he achieved his goal.

Looking back, Will Rich is surprised he didn't know how severe traumatic brain injuries (TBI) could be. After all, he was a pharmacist with a fair amount of medical knowledge.

"I had known about concussions when I played football in high school," he says, "but I had no idea what a true TBI is and what it involved."

Then he found out. On October 27, 2017, Will crossed a street in Memphis, Tennessee, with two friends when he was struck down by a hit-and-run driver. He had a broken right leg and left wrist, and most serious of all, a traumatic brain injury.

The driver was never caught, but Will and his wife Autumn say they are just grateful Will survived and recovered.

Autumn is a nurse case manager and knows a lot about arranging the best

talk and read after his injury, he then had to determine if he was going to return to work as a pharmacist.

"The physical stuff came pretty quick," he recalls.

But when Shepherd therapists started showing him the kinds of information he would need to master as a working pharmacist, such as comparing medications, he realized the road to recovery would be more complex than he anticipated.

"I said OK, something about learning is different. It's not going as easy as it previously did," he says. "Early on, it was a little frustrating."

"It was a long journey," says Autumn, who stayed at Will's side throughout his time at Shepherd. The couple has been together 10 years, married for six and a half.

"They put a club in his hand, and the very first time he swung, he hit it in the basket," Autumn says. "That put a huge smile on his face and made him think, 'Wow, I really can get back to doing things I love.'"

Four years later, back at work as a pharmacist in Memphis, Will is a regular golfer and says he enjoys the game more than ever.

"Before, I was out trying to hit balls really hard, but now I see that it's important to just go out and be healthy," he says. "It helps to know I can do things that are fun but are also beneficial."

Will's injury and recovery didn't just change his life, it changed Autumn's, as well. She transitioned to being a nurse case manager for catastrophic cases, mainly brain injuries.



treatment for patients who need post-hospital care. So, after Regional One Health Medical Center in Memphis, Tennessee, took care of Rich's physical injuries, she requested a stay at Shepherd Center in Atlanta to make him truly whole again.

Will, now 35, has no memories of his first month post-accident, even though he was conscious and communicating.

But starting around Thanksgiving 2017, he can remember the multiple therapeutic approaches Shepherd provided.

"With a brain injury, nothing about it is easy," he says. "The first thing I had to do was learn how to talk again. Then I had to learn how to walk again. Then I had to learn how to read."

Before his injury, Will was a biochemistry major at the University of Tennessee who attended both pharmacy school and a master's of business administration degree program. Once he relearned how to walk,

"He went through a phase for about two weeks where he was really aggressive and angry with me, but that was just part of the brain injury. Once he came out of that and showed signs of improvement, it was like, 'wow.'"

Will stayed about a month and a half as an inpatient at Shepherd Center, then spent a month at Shepherd Pathways, the hospital's comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury.

"All the therapists worked together," she explains. "All the sessions intertwined. It was a very intense two or three months while we were there."

The therapy team incorporated one of Will's favorite pre-injury pastimes, golf, into his therapy. Once Will was strong enough, a Shepherd therapist drove him to the PGA Superstore in Atlanta, a big box store for all things golf.

1. Will and Autumn attend a friend's wedding in 2019. Will has made a remarkable recovery after sustaining a traumatic brain injury. 2. Will and Autumn spent time outside on their first day at Shepherd Center. 3. Will and his friends posed for a photo during his inpatient stay at Shepherd Center. 4. Will spent about a month and a half as an inpatient at Shepherd.

"This is what I'm the most passionate about, based on his experience, seeing patients go from zero level of function to being functional and being able to return to their community," she says.

"Will would not be as far in his recovery were it not for the people at Shepherd who gave him his life back," Autumn adds. "This thing changes you forever, and they made it so much easier. We are forever grateful. He has his life back, and we have our lives back together." ✨

Shepherd Alums:

# From “I Can’t” to “I Can”

## Marcel Burns

WILMINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

When **Marcel Burns, 26**, arrived at Shepherd Center in early 2021, it took great effort for him to speak in short bursts. But that didn’t stop him from still trying to crack people up — especially his wife, Lorrany.

“I sound like a robot,” he told her one night with a grin as he spoke through his ventilator.

Marcel was an athlete growing up in Wilmington, North Carolina. He was on the wrestling, track and football teams in high school and played safety at North Carolina Central University. He and Lorrany met in high school and have been together ever since.

Early on the morning of August 31, 2020, Marcel was driving to the gym and was hit by a drunk driver. He sustained a spinal cord injury and a brain injury that required 42 surgeries, including the amputation of his right leg below the knee due to sepsis.

Among the many treatments Marcel received at Shepherd over seven months were speech pathology sessions. “They had him speaking every day, getting his voice stronger,” Lorrany says. “Now, he can speak all day long.”

The Burns family moved to a house in Acworth, Georgia, in July 2021, and Marcel was reunited with his sons Marcel III, 4, and Leo, 1.

“I feel like Shepherd gave him the push and motivation that even though you are limited physically, you can still achieve and do things and be with your family,” Lorrany says.

“I loved working with Marcel and his wife,” says Anna Choo Elmers, M.D., the physical medicine and rehabilitation physician overseeing his care. “It brings me so much joy to see him home and out and about now.” Dr. Elmers played a key role in Marcel’s new life when she arranged for Kelly and John Moore, parents of a former patient of hers who had passed away, to donate their adaptive van to Marcel at no cost to him.

“You don’t really realize how much God means or does for you until you go through something like this,” Marcel says. “Even though I can’t move, I’m still in a position to teach others what it means to be strong. So, I’m serving my purpose in the world.”

**Marcel Burns passed away shortly after this article was written. We honor his family’s wishes to move forward with publishing Marcel’s story in hopes that it motivates anyone who reads it. Marcel and those who love him are in our thoughts.**

Marcel and his wife Lorrany met in high school.



## Michael Bowbliss

DACULA, GEORGIA

**Michael Bowbliss** credits the Dean Stroud Spine and Pain Institute at Shepherd Center not only with easing his pain, but also saving his life.

“I was close to suicide,” Michael recalls. “I would not be here today – and have the life I have – without Dr. Shaw and his team.”

On May 7, 2009, Michael was getting a routine blood draw for a life insurance policy when the technician missed his vein and accidentally hit a nerve. The injury resulted in a condition called chronic regional pain syndrome (CRPS-II), causing Michael to have debilitating nerve pain “24/7” from his fingers to his elbow.

“The pain was unbearable,” Michael says. “It was like constantly banging your funny bone, but there was no bang.”

He saw several doctors, but no one could find a solution.

“They dismissed me,” he says, “telling me there was nothing they could do. I was struggling as a father, my marriage failed and I thought my life as I knew it was over.”

Finally, in spring 2011, Michael was referred to the Spine and Pain Institute. There, he met with Erik Shaw, D.O., the medical director of the Institute. Dr. Shaw listened to his story, diagnosed him and laid out a plan for treatment. The solution was an infusion-based therapy that provided him with real relief.

In addition to his visits with Dr. Shaw, Michael saw a psychologist and a physical therapist to complement the treatment he was receiving.

“For the first time, I felt people were hearing me,” he says.

Michael says that through it all, the reason he kept getting up every morning was for his three children.

“Shepherd gave the abilities and treatments to improve, yet the drive to find a sense of normalcy was because of my children and wanting to be a better dad to them and for them,” he says. “Shepherd helped make that possible.”

Though Michael was not cured overnight, and he still receives infusions every few months, the improvements gave him a new lease on life.

He is now a special education teacher at Mountain View High School in Lawrenceville, Georgia, and also coaches wrestling and football at the school.

“If it wasn’t for Shepherd Center, I wouldn’t be alive today,” Michael says. “I am now a college graduate, a well-respected coach and I’m living a life I thought was gone. It is an amazing place.”



Michael Bowbliss, a wrestling coach at Mountain View High School, has helped coach the team to 10 regional championships.

## Charlotte Anderson

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

No matter what type of exercise she chooses, **Charlotte Anderson** loves to get her blood pumping – for the obvious health benefits and for how it helps manage her multiple sclerosis (MS) symptoms.

“For me, exercise just helps my body overall, and that helps me mentally,” she says. “I do high-intensity training three to four days a week. I love doing weights, and I love running. I feel great when I’m done.”

MS is an unpredictable disease that occurs when the body’s own defense system attacks the myelin that protects the nerve fibers of the central nervous system. Charlotte explains that the disease can be physically and mentally draining.

“I also sit and do brain exercises, and my brain gets fatigued,” she says. “I have this feeling of pressure in my head. It’s like a fog.”

The staff at the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute at Shepherd Center has been working with the 43-year-old Atlanta resident since March 2018.

“I love everything Shepherd Center has to offer,” she says. “I love everyone there. It’s a great facility.”

Charlotte’s MS first showed up when she experienced a seizure in 2016. Even after her diagnosis, she says, the symptoms were not that bad for the first four years. Now, she sometimes has pain from her knees to her feet that makes walking difficult and causes hand tremors, vision problems and cognitive difficulties.

“My long-term memory is good,” she says. “But I could have a conversation with you today, and if you ask me about it tomorrow, I might only remember a little of it. Then six months from now, I would remember more.”

What keeps her going is an indomitable spirit, a refusal to give in and the people she calls the highlights of her life: son Jalon, 25; daughter Chloe, 11; and granddaughter Khloe.

In addition to regular speech, recreation and occupational therapy at Shepherd Center, Charlotte participates in two of the hospital’s research studies: One to learn more about the long-term effects of MS treatments like Ocrevus®, which she credits with slowing her symptoms, and one for measuring how effectively a new tool can evaluate MS symptoms.

Lending her experience to studies like this makes her feel like she is taking control of fighting the disease.

“If you let MS control your mental and emotional states, it wins,” she says. “And I refuse to let MS win.”

Charlotte Anderson uses exercise to help manage her MS symptoms.



## Tim Doherty

SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA

For many people, plunging their hands into thousands of bees would be their worst nightmare come true.

For **Tim Doherty** and others, it’s therapy.

Tim is an Army veteran who sustained physical injuries, a mild traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after his unit was attacked in Afghanistan in 2015. Beekeeping helped him heal, as did Shepherd Center’s SHARE Military Rehabilitation program for post-9/11 veterans.

“When I came home, I didn’t think it was me; I thought it was everybody else,” Tim says. “I didn’t know I had a brain injury, so I didn’t know my emotional regulation was thrown off. When I was admitted to Shepherd Center, I was in such a dark place. After SHARE, I felt like I had control over my life again.”

Tim, 52, is an assistant principal at Riverwood High School in Sandy Springs, Georgia. Even before he turned to Shepherd for help, his sister had shown him beekeeping after he returned from Afghanistan.

“She said, ‘Why don’t you work the bees with me?’ So, I did, and it’s just so invigorating. You just focus on the bees,” he says.

Tim started a nonprofit organization called Doc’s Healing Hives to help other veterans with PTSD through beekeeping.

Through donations, Doc’s provides veterans with free bees, equipment and training; about 65 veterans had taken the training before COVID-19 curtailed in-person instruction in 2020. Doc’s is an approved Shepherd Center activity for veterans, and Tim plans to expand the program to the land he owns in north Georgia.

“Beekeeping is a positive adrenaline rush,” he explains. “You open up this hive, and there’s anywhere from 10,000 to 100,000 bees looking at you. Any one of them could decide to sting you. You can’t be thinking about anything else. If you are like Cool Hand Luke and move the frames nice and slow, they’ll let you inspect the entire hive.”

“One of my veteran friends who went through the program, his wife says it was like he was a little kid, and it was Christmas when he brought home the bees,” he continues. “She had not seen him so excited in years.”



SHARE and beekeeping helped Tim Doherty heal after he came home from serving in the Army.

BY SARA BAXTER

# Offering Peace of Mind & a Place to Stay



In September 2019, 16-year-old JJ Hodge sustained an incomplete C-5 to -6 spinal cord injury (SCI) when he was run over by a car. After he transferred from Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist near his home in North Carolina to Shepherd Center for rehabilitation in November, his family faced a three-month stay in Atlanta.

One of the concerns JJ's mom, Beth Hodge, did not have to worry about was where her family would stay while JJ was at Shepherd Center. She was able to be with her son in his room, and when her husband and two daughters traveled from Greensboro, North Carolina, to visit on the weekends, they could stay at no charge in

the Irene and George Woodruff Family Residence Center located adjacent to the hospital on Shepherd Center's campus.

"Because we had a place to stay, we could all be together on Thanksgiving and Christmas," Beth says, noting that JJ was at Shepherd Center from November 6, 2019, until February 13, 2020. "It was such a relief, and it was so convenient. It also provided JJ with a level of comfort, knowing that we were there."

The Woodruff Family Residence Center has 84 fully furnished wheelchair-accessible apartments.

"Housing is one of the biggest concerns for families when they are choosing a

rehabilitation center," says Victoria Denson, Shepherd Center's housing manager. "They wonder where they are going to stay and how they are going to pay for it. By offering 30 days of complimentary housing to families of newly injured patients, we can ease that concern."

The other advantage to family housing is easy access to the caregiver education program, which combines classroom training, demonstrations and hands-on practice. If families are staying at Shepherd Center (or live close by), they can participate in training over time, which can be helpful. Caregivers have an opportunity to practice what they learn while at the hospital and ask questions of the staff.

"Caregiving training helps ensure a safe transition back to home and prevents complications down the road that could lead to rehospitalization," says Diane Johnston, MSPT, Shepherd Center's director of professional education. "Shepherd Center has the highest rate of returning patients to home over other rehabilitation facilities, and training caregivers is key to that success. Having families on-site helps prepare patients and families for a successful transition home."

To Beth, that caregiver training and being with JJ was invaluable.

"To be able to be there and learn how to do things 'real time' was so helpful," she says. "If I didn't understand something, I could just ask the nurse right then. You don't know what you don't know until you try and do it yourself."

In May 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced Shepherd Center to temporarily close the hospital to visitors and limit family members to one person who stayed with the patient in their room. Families could still stay in the Residence Center to be nearby and visit patients in the Anna and Hays Mershon Secret Garden, as well



1. JJ with his family, including his dad, mom, and sisters Carly and Josie, during his first inpatient stay in 2019. 2. JJ spends time in the Residence Center during his Day Program stay in August 2021. 3. JJ spends time outdoors during his most recent stay at Shepherd Center.



as stay with patients participating in the outpatient SCI Day Program.

Beth and JJ returned to Shepherd Center in August 2021 so JJ could resume his rehabilitation in the Day Program. They both stayed in the Woodruff Family Residence Center. JJ went into the hospital every day for therapy, but because of pandemic restrictions, Beth could only go over once a day to have lunch with JJ in the

cafeteria. She says staying in the apartment was also good for JJ's independence.

"He got up and got ready himself, opened up the door, and off he went," Beth says. "He was able to go to the Center and his therapy sessions by himself."

On October 5, 2021, Shepherd Center reopened housing to more family members and allowed access to the hospital.

"We are happy to be able to once again offer this program to our families," Denson says. "It's such an incredible gift. It helps in the healing process for both families and patients."

Beth Hodge agrees completely.

"Aside from the excellent care that Shepherd Center is known for, the second-best thing is the family housing," she says. "It is the cherry on top."

Now back home in North Carolina, JJ is continuing with physical and occupational therapy, finishing up some online classes and working on getting his driver's license. His mother says he is looking forward to returning again to the Shepherd Center Day Program. ✨

## Shepherd Center's Delores Ann and Goodloe Yancey Family Housing Program

is entirely donor funded. In order to qualify for housing, both the patient and family/ caregiver must live more than 60 miles from the Center. For inpatient stays, they are allowed 30 days of housing at no financial cost, and those days do not have to be used consecutively. Patients in the Shepherd Pathways outpatient program are provided up to eight weeks of housing and Day Program participants are given six to eight weeks. This is in addition to their initial 30-day inpatient stay.

Learn more at [shepherd.org/housing](https://shepherd.org/housing).



# Providing a Lifeline

For years, Jessica Rodriguez fought to get her husband help. Finally, they found Shepherd Center – and help for them both.

BY SARA BAXTER



In 2015, Jessica Rodriguez walked through the doors of Shepherd Center, holding onto her husband, Jorge, with one hand and a carrier with her 9-month-old baby in the other. Her 4-year-old clung to her leg. Jessica was the primary caregiver of all three members of her family. And they came to Shepherd Center for help.

Jorge Rodriguez served in Iraq as a Fleet Marine Force Corpsman in the U.S. Navy. When he returned home in 2006, he was experiencing short-term memory loss, processing issues, balance problems and would get lost when driving. Jorge sought help from the Veterans Administration (VA) hospital close to his home in Griswold, Connecticut. In 2007, he was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a closed skull traumatic brain injury (TBI). According to Jessica, Jorge was only treated for the PTSD.

Jessica grew increasingly frustrated as Jorge's symptoms worsened, including memory issues, seizures, nightmares, speech problems and trouble walking. Over a six-year period, her husband was slipping away. Though she was a relentless advocate for him, drove him to appointments and kept up with his long list of medications, nothing was working. Jorge was plunging further into depression, and Jessica was at the end of her rope.

"The man who helped so many in his service couldn't get help himself," Jessica says. "It was heartbreaking."

In 2015, the Rodriguez family became aware of Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative. As soon as they were



1. The Rodriguez family visits a lavender farm in July 2020. 2. Jorge attends a Shepherd's Men event with Shepherd's Men co-founder, Travis Ellis. 3. Jorge participates in a Shepherd's Men event in 2019. 4. Jorge and Jessica's daughters, Ava and Gabby, learn beekeeping from Jorge, who is now a Master Beekeeper.

# GUIDED BY A PHILOSOPHY OF Always Giving Back

**Since 1977, Duncan Beard has had a presence at Shepherd Center and plans to continue to give back after he's gone.**

When he was a young boy, Duncan Beard remembers his father piling his brothers and sister into the car and driving them to see the new Sunday school building at Moultrie Presbyterian Church. His father had helped fund the project.

"I just remember feeling so proud of my father and the fact that my family had helped pay for that building," he says.

That feeling has stayed with Duncan, as he has made philanthropy, and the desire to make the community in which he lives a better place, a guiding philosophy in his life. He's also wanted to set an example for his own son.

"Children learn by what you do, not what you say," Duncan says. "So I have always tried to lead by example."

Shepherd Center has been a big beneficiary of that philosophy.

In 1977, Duncan was introduced to late Shepherd Center co-founder James Shepherd by a mutual friend, and James asked Duncan to serve on the board. At the time, Shepherd Center was only a six-bed hospital, utilizing rented space in another hospital. He can remember having board meetings in the dining room of James' parents and co-founders Alana and Harold Shepherd's home.

"I was relatively new to Atlanta, and I wanted to establish myself and get to know people in the community," Duncan says of his reason to join the board.

He also had another connection: His wife's cousin, who was injured in a car accident, was one of the hospital's first patients.

Throughout the years, Duncan, who spent his career in the life insurance industry, has been a consistent contributor and a regular presence at Shepherd events. He has played in the Shepherd Center Cup – an annual golf tournament that raises money for Shepherd Center – every year but one since its inception in 1989. Currently, Duncan can still be seen in the hospital, volunteering to feed the patients breakfast in the mornings.

"Shepherd Center is the best facility of its kind," he says. "They put peoples' lives back together. Everyone is so



Duncan Beard continues to serve on the Shepherd Center board as an emeritus member after more than 40 years of giving back to the hospital.

upbeat, including the patients, and I'm happy to be involved in such a positive, inspiring place."

Duncan has served on the Shepherd Center Board of Directors for more than 40 years – helping to guide Shepherd Center's growth from a small hospital in a shared space to a nationally-renowned rehabilitation hospital on a sprawling campus. He also helped create the Shepherd Center Foundation in 2004, serving as its first chair and helping recruit the foundation board's initial members. He served on the foundation board from 2004 to 2010 and continues to serve on the hospital board as an Emeritus member.

Duncan plans to continue to have an impact on Shepherd Center beyond his lifetime. As a part of his estate planning, he purchased a life insurance policy years ago and designated Shepherd Center as the beneficiary, making him a legacy donor.

"This way, I know that the money is guaranteed to go to Shepherd Center," he says. "It's important to me that I continue to support this hospital. I have always tried to make the world a better place, and this is my part." \*

accepted, Jessica and Jorge – along with their daughters – flew to Atlanta to begin treatment at Shepherd Center.

"For the first time, I felt like we were being heard," Jessica says.

Gradually, they began to see signs of progress. Jorge's mood swings and nightmares were dissipating. Through multiple forms of therapy, his speech returned, his memory improved and he was walking without a shuffle.

Jessica, on the other hand, was feeling isolated. She spent her days at Shepherd Center with her girls and the nights as a family in the hotel room that was their home for three months. Jorge's behavior at night after long days of therapy was unpredictable. She reached out for help, and Shepherd Center provided her with counseling.

"It was invaluable to me," she says. "The counselor gave me handouts that explained the symptoms Jorge was experiencing and ways to deal with them and support him. As a spouse, it gave me a new understanding and a new outlook, as well as the tools to handle things with Jorge."

Today, Jorge is a new man. While he still struggles with TBI symptoms, he has re-entered society. Along the way, he took up beekeeping and now makes honey in his backyard in Connecticut. He recently became a Master Beekeeper, allowing him to teach others the craft. He and Jessica are in the process of establishing a nonprofit called "Bees with Purpose" to raise money to support other veterans while teaching them beekeeping.

He also joined Shepherd's Men, a volunteer group of civilians, active duty and retired military members who advocate for veterans and support SHARE, and has participated in several of their runs.

"Shepherd Center not only gave me back my husband, and the girls their father, but it also gave us a family through SHARE," Jessica says. "It has been amazing."

Jorge simply adds, "I wouldn't be here without Shepherd Center."

Visit [shepherd.org/SHARE](http://shepherd.org/SHARE) for more information about the program. \*

# Another Record-Breaking **ShepherdCares Campaign** Raises Money for Patient Assistance Fund



## BY SARA BAXTER

To say that the 2021 ShepherdCares — the annual employee giving campaign that raises funds for Shepherd Center — exceeded its goal is a vast understatement. Shepherd Center employees raised an amazing \$246,269 in five weeks, blasting past the \$175,000 goal. That's 41 percent — or more than \$71,000 — over what the hospital hoped to raise. The campaign also met its target of 85% employee participation, another impressive milestone since giving is voluntary and any amount pledged is welcomed.

"Every dollar adds up, and support comes from every corner of this hospital," says Alex Seblatnigg, CAVS, CPXP, director of volunteer services and internal engagement for Shepherd Center and chair of the ShepherdCares campaign. "Every single department was represented. It shows how much employees care about this hospital."

The employees also care deeply for the patients, so they eagerly supported the Patient Assistance Fund. The fund helps cover basic needs that insurance does not pay for and/or that the patient cannot afford, especially at the time of discharge. These needs can include medication, home healthcare, childcare, transportation, home modifications and additional therapy — anything that could be a barrier to both care at the hospital and a smooth transition back home.

"It's a safety net for patients," Seblatnigg says. "Nobody should have to choose between medicine and food. Our employees see how hard the patients work while they're here and how far they come. And by donating to this fund, they can help positively impact their journey to continue their success. Giving to the campaign is so rewarding, and every employee has the opportunity to be a part of it." \*  
2

Every year, staff members make ShepherdCares fun with a theme. The 2021 campaign theme was Shepherd Avengers, complete with costumes.



## EVENT CELEBRATES

# The Legendary Party Patrons



The Patron Party for supporters of Shepherd Center Foundation's The Legendary Party took place September 30, 2021, at the home of Martin and Jennifer Flanagan. Dedicated patrons attended the annual party, which helps build excitement for The Legendary Party and is a way to honor those who have already made a generous commitment toward the event. Shepherd Center Foundation Advisory Board member Tony Conway, who is CEO and owner of Legendary Events, catered the Patron Party.

"This is a way for us to say thank you to those donors who have made an early commitment to supporting The Legendary Party," says Dean Melcher, director of development operations at the Shepherd Center Foundation. "We are also grateful to the Flanagans for hosting the event and putting on a lovely party in their home."

With the theme of "The Legend of the Looking Glass," The 2021 Legendary Party was held on November 6 at Tony Conway's elegant event venue, Flourish. Melinda Dabbieri served as chairman of the event which honored Shepherd Center Medical

Director Emeritus David Apple, M.D. Complete coverage and photos from the gala will be featured in the next issue of Spinal Column.

The Legendary Party is the Shepherd Center Foundation's largest fundraising event. Held annually on the first Saturday in November, The Legendary Party has raised more than \$41 million for Shepherd Center's patient care programs over the past 30 years. Proceeds from the 2021 gala benefitted family housing at Shepherd Center.

The 2022 Legendary Party will be held November 5 and will be chaired by Elaine Carlos and her daughters, Kari and Angela.

1. (L to R) Alana Shepherd, Dr. David Apple and Melinda Dabbieri. 2. (L to R) Courtney, David and Melinda Dabbieri. 3. The 2021 Legendary Party Chair-elect Elaine Carlos and her husband John 4. (L to R) Marty Flanagan, Jennifer Flanagan, Melinda Dabbieri and David Dabbieri.

# Going for the Green

## Golf tournament benefits Shepherd Center's family housing program.

BY SARA BAXTER

It rained most of the weekend prior to the Shepherd Center Cup Golf Tournament, and prospects for a dry day on Monday, September 20, 2021, did not look promising. In fact, when players teed off that morning in the rain, they thought they might have to stop after nine holes. But then suddenly, the rain stopped, the players dried off and the tournament continued with great success.

Hosted at the Cherokee Country Club in Atlanta, Georgia, golfers came together to play the course. They raised more than \$217,000 to benefit Shepherd Center's Delores Ann and Goodloe Yancey Family Housing Program. See related story on page 20.

The golfers heard inspirational words from former Shepherd Center patient David Staley, who shared his story and progress since leaving Shepherd Center. Also out on the course was Tommy Vance, father to Shepherd Cup Committee Chair Andy Vance. Tommy was a Shepherd Center patient twice, once after a plane crash in 2010, and more recently in 2021 after sustaining a brain injury in a bicycle accident. Thanks to the therapy he received during his inpatient stay, Tommy was able to return home on May 6, 2021, and participate in the Shepherd Cup.

An evening of food, drinks and fellowship followed the tournament.

For information on this year's Shepherd Center Cup, including sponsorship opportunities, please contact Shanna Thorpe at **404-603-5064** or [shanna.thorpe@shepherd.org](mailto:shanna.thorpe@shepherd.org).



1. Cherokee Country Club staff prepare carts for the start of the 37th annual Shepherd Center Cup Golf Tournament. 2. David Staley shares his experience with Shepherd Center during the awards ceremony and dinner. 3. One of the 40+ teams pause to take a photo. 4. A golfer tees off in the rain. 5 and 6. After nine holes of golf in the rain, players enjoyed the back nine in dry conditions.



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V & V Foods/Zaxby's Buckhead

# Annual RPM 9/11 Race Raises \$160,000 for Shepherd Center

BY SARA BAXTER

On September 11, 2021, the 10th annual RPM 9/11 5K took place at Atlanta's Chastain Park. The event raised \$160,000 for Shepherd Center's patient programs.

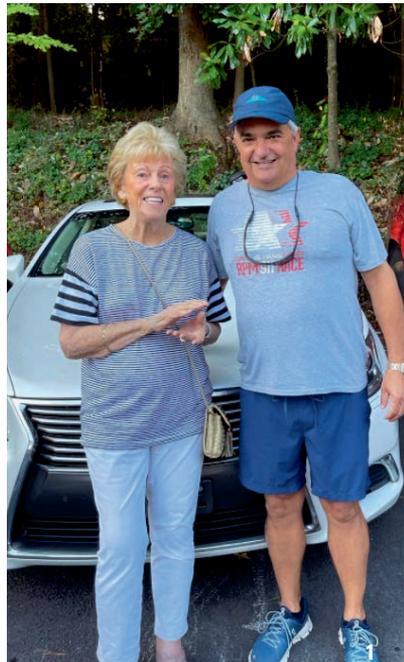
The race is held each year in honor and memory of Ryan P. Means, a member of the U.S. Army's Special Forces Unit who passed away in 2009 following a deployment in Iraq. Ryan's family hosts the 5K race, and for the last several years, all the proceeds have gone to Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative.

The mission of the 2021 race, held on the 20th anniversary of 9/11, was to provide a day of patriotic remembrance for those most affected by the events of September 11, 2001, and to support patients and veterans at Shepherd Center.

The crowd held a moment of silence for each of the four planes that crashed that day and marked the 20 years since 9/11. Several past graduates from the SHARE Military Initiative – created to help post-9/11 military service members – attended the race. Shepherd Center co-founder Alana Shepherd was also in attendance.

"The financial support we get from this race is very much needed and appreciated," says Jon Roxland, senior director of philanthropy and partnerships at the Shepherd Center Foundation.

"We also appreciate even more the amount of people who have been introduced to Shepherd Center through this special event. It's a great partnership."



1. Alfie Means posed with Alana Shepherd during the RPM 9/11 5K. 2. Participants received a custom medal.



2

# Shepherd's Men Hosts Two Events to Raise Funds and Awareness for SHARE Military Initiative



On September 16, 2021, 10-year-old Gabby Rodriguez stood up at the Shepherd's Men Dinner and Auction and spoke poignantly about how Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative saved her father, Jorge's, life.

While serving in Iraq, Navy Corpsman Jorge Rodriguez sustained a traumatic brain injury (TBI), complicated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from combat which resulted in debilitating symptoms. After completing SHARE, where he received therapy and rehabilitation, Jorge returned to his home in Connecticut and began beekeeping. While Gabby was speaking, her younger sister, Ava, walked around displaying the six jars of honey Jorge donated to the live auction. They sold for an impressive



1. The Shepherd's Men logo guided participants to the dinner and auction at Indian Hills Country Club. 2. The Cedar Hill Bluegrass Band performed at the event. 3. Shepherd's Men co-founder, Travis Ellis, spoke to participants at the clay shoot tournament. 4. Mitch Rhoden, Shepherd's Men supporter, presented the winners of the clay shoot tournament. 5. Members of South State Bank won first place in the clay shoot tournament.



\$15,000. Learn more about Jorge's story on page 22.

This was just one of the highlights of the Shepherd's Men Dinner and Auction, held outdoors at the Indian Hills Country Club in Marietta, Georgia. This group advocates for veterans and raises money for SHARE, a comprehensive rehabilitation program that treats post-9/11 veterans who have sustained mild to moderate TBIs during their service.

Other highlights of the evening included a fish fry, golf chipping contest, bourbon tasting, live music and auction. Along with Gabby's story, attendees also heard personal stories from former SHARE clients, some of whom, like Jorge, donated items for the silent and live auctions.

Travis Ellis, co-founder of Shepherd's Men, served as the auctioneer for the

# Save the Date

## DERBY DAY

May 7, 2022  
Chastain Horse Park

## SHEPHERD CENTER CUP

September 12, 2022  
Cherokee Town & Country Club

## SHEPHERD'S MEN AUCTION AND DINNER

October 6, 2022  
Indian Hills Country Club

## SHEPHERD'S MEN CLAY SHOOT INVITATIONAL

October 14, 2022  
Barnsley Gardens

## ANNIE OAKLEY TOURNAMENT

October 28, 2022  
Burge Club

## THE LEGENDARY PARTY AND LEGENDARY LATE NIGHT

November 5, 2022  
Flourish Atlanta

### FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FOUNDATION SPECIAL EVENTS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Erica Spurling, Special Event Associate  
404-350-7715  
Erica.Spurling@shepherd.org

Shanna Thorpe  
Donor and Community Relations Associate  
404-603-5064  
Shanna.Thorpe@shepherd.org

Event dates and locations may change in accordance with public health guidelines.



6. Gabby Rodriguez, Ava Rodriguez and Travis Ellis begin the live auction. 7. Gabby Rodriguez shares an emotional story about the impact SHARE had on her father, Jorge Rodriguez.



evening. Auction items included a sniper experience hosted by SHARE graduate Glenn Wells, a piece of I-Beam from the World Trade Center, a trip to New York to see the Army-Navy football game and fishing flies made by SHARE graduate and Shepherd's Men member Gary Herber.

"It was a great event," says Mitch Rhoden, a Marine Corps veteran and member of Shepherd's Men, who leads the committee that organizes the dinner and shoot. "We had lots of laughs, but some tears, too, in remembering those we have lost and celebrating the successes of the veterans who made it through."

A few weeks later, attendees flocked to Barnsley Gardens Resort in Adairsville, Georgia, for the Shepherd's Men Annual Invitational Clay Shoot. Prizes were given out for the top teams and guests enjoyed a barbecue lunch catered by Local Three Kitchen and Bar.

Combined, both events brought in more than \$350,000 that will go directly to the SHARE Military Initiative to treat veterans.

"We are grateful to everyone who has and continues to support this important work," says Mitch, who also helped organize the clay shoot. "This is a marathon, not a sprint. We have to keep at it and get to as many veterans as we can. They have done so much for us, and I believe we have a collective obligation to help them in any way we can. Doing our little part to help improve things for our veterans is well worth the time, energy and effort."

To learn more about the SHARE Military Initiative, visit [shepherd.org/share](http://shepherd.org/share). \*

### EVENT PLANNING COMMITTEE

**Mitch Rhoden**  
(Chairman)

**Stan Kryder**  
**Sherry Lang**

**Laura-Anne Ullian**  
**Krissy Williams**

**Travis Ellis**  
**Jason Joice**

**Lindsay Miller**  
**Steve Soteres**

**Ralph Williams**  
**Russ Wood**

Deceased friends of Shepherd Center are listed first in bold print followed by the names of those making gifts in their memory. This list reflects gifts made to Shepherd Center between July 1, 2021 and September 30, 2021.



Shepherd Center's brain injury therapy team took patients on an outing to the nail salon, providing an opportunity to work on targeted therapy skills.

**Dunbar Josh Abston**  
Mr. and Mrs. B. Lee Mallory  
Mr. Hunter Seabrook  
Mr. Roy West

**Bill Alexander**  
Ms. Carol J. Olsen

**Laura and Karl Anschutz**  
Ms. Esther L. Abisamra  
Ms. Hope Abisamra

**Joe Ashley**  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Parker

**Tom Byrd Atkinson III**  
Mr. and Mrs. G. E. Pope

**John S. Banks**  
Mr. William S. Murphy, Jr.

**Merrill Beckwith**  
Mr. Cromwell Baun  
Dana Gordon  
Ms. Carol Wells

**Ronald Berger**  
The Matthews Family

**Cheryl Binkley**  
Mr. and Mrs. Randall Eubanks

**Kevin Black**  
Mr. Tim Fuson  
Ms. Carol St. Clair

**Ellen Boyne**  
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Shepherd III

**Barron Bray**  
Ms. Vicky T. Sawall

**Alan Breitman**  
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel B. Hyde

**Brian "BB" Brown**  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Dan Blitch

**Nan Brown**  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Dan Blitch

**Mickey Burk**  
Ms. Mary Ellen Eversman  
Mr. Machel M. Forney  
Mr. and Mrs. Mazur

**Mary Busko**  
Ms. Meredith Hydrick

**Asa Candler V**  
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd

**James Carpenter**  
Ms. Sarah Gray

**Bill Carrasco**  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Parker

**Steven Collins**  
Ms. Judy Bauer  
Karen and Barbara Collins  
Mr. and Mrs. Phil Debes  
Ms. Linda Mugford  
Ms. Marguerite Pannasch  
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Thompson

**Robert Means Davis, Jr.**  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Molitor, Jr.

**Taryn Dixon**  
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**Donna Dolive**  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles A. Sergan

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Mr. and Mrs. John Dennis  
Toni Holman  
Mr. and Mrs. Roger Larson  
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Parrinello  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Reynolds

**David Ellis**  
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd

**Daniel Martin Espinoza**  
Mr. and Mrs. Cesar D. Espinoza

**Bob Esslinger**  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter L. Shaw

**David H. Flint**  
Mr. and Mrs. Melvin A. Silverman

**Larry Flynt**  
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Parker

**In honor of Steven Funk's 70th  
Birthday for the memory of  
David Funk**

Mrs. Elyse Davis  
Dr. and Mrs. Sidney A. Funk  
Sharon and Josh Hanna  
Mr. and Mrs. Stanley W. Kasten  
Mr. and Mrs. Herb Migdon  
Ms. Debbie Miller  
Ms. Rachel Miller  
Pescha and Elliott Penso  
Ann and Mo Podber  
Mr. and Mrs. David Rechtman  
Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Ritchie  
Mr. and Mrs. Randy Rubenstein  
Sue, Robin, and Bob Weinbauer  
Mr. and Mrs. Barry Zipperman

**Jéré Garde**  
Ms. Jennifer Koller

**Mary Budd George**  
Dr. and Mrs. J. Stuart McDaniel  
Mr. and Mrs. George R. Walker

**John Gillespie**  
Dr. Wiley P. Ballard III  
Mr. and Mrs. David R. Faison

**Amelia "Mimi" Gordon**  
Mrs. James M. Caswell, Jr.

**James John "Jim" Greco**  
Ms. Frances Deal



Shepherd Center staff volunteered at Meals On Wheels Atlanta as part of the Shepherd Serves employee volunteer program.

**Barbara D. Hill**

Mrs. James M. Caswell, Jr.  
Mr. M. Lamar Oglesby  
Mr. and Mrs. William W. Teegarden

**Richard Lewis Hoffman, Jr.**

Mr. and Mrs. John C. Bacon

**Dr. Robin Hoffman**

Mr. and Mrs. David A. Cannon  
Mr. and Mrs. James D. Geltz  
Mr. and Mrs. Fred L. Smith

**Sara J. Hoyt**

Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Nabors  
Mr. and Mrs. James C. Potts  
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd

**James Hyde**

Mrs. Mildred Hyde  
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Iddings  
Ms. Jennifer Iddings  
Mr. Timmy Pittman  
Sig Cox Inc.  
Joe, Dan and Kim White

**Gayle Oliver Ide**

Mr. and Mrs. Steven J. Labovitz

**John F. Kiser**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Rick Leone**

Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth M. Sarkis

**Gabrielle Liddon**

Dr. and Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.

**Anne Lippincott**

Ms. Donna Greeley

**Curtis Lovejoy**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Carles Luckett**

Dr. and Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.

**Forest Donald Malloy**

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Iddings

**Michael Marchand**

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Ms. Barbara Richardson  
Ms. Karen A. Turpin

**Tom McGinty**

Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Lorenson

**Greg McGinnis**

Mr. M. Lamar Oglesby  
Dr. and Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.

**Ryan Means**

UBS Private Wealth Management

**Russell Miller**

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Parker

**Lesa Neenan**

Ms. Mary Harriet and Mr. Kevin Patton

**Mrs. Jane Oglesby**

Mrs. James M. Caswell, Jr.  
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd

**Joyce Podojil**

Mr. James L. Podojil

**Dr. Harold Ramos**

Mrs. Carol Abreu

**Aunt Bettye — A very special person**

Mr. and Mrs. Mike Healey

**Michael Reed**

Mr. and Mrs. Delmer Dunn  
Ms. Beth Kraps  
Mr. and Mrs. Michael A. Morris

**Carol Schuman**

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Randall

**Emory A. Schwall**

The Arnold Foundation, Inc.  
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Mr. James D. Satterfield and  
Mrs. Sandra E. Garber  
Dr. and Mrs. William M. Scaljon  
Ms. Charla Strawser  
Mrs. Rebecca D. Warner  
The late Mrs. Mary Frances H. Woodside

**Dana Shepherd**

Mr. William C. Wesley

**Harold Shepherd**

Mr. and Mrs. Erwin C. Reid

**James Shepherd**

Mr. William C. Wesley

**Altha Smith**

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Parker

**Lori Sneed**

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Sneed

**Dr. Jacob Spanier**

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert A. Blondheim

**George Stewart**

Mr. and Mrs. Terry Eads

**Hansel Stripling**

Anonymous  
Ms. Barbara Corey  
Mr. Dean Melcher

Ms. Helen Poyer  
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Roberts  
Ms. Meg Sullivan  
Ms. Evelyn Walker

**JT Townsend**

JT Townsend Foundation, Inc.

**Mary Caswell Umstead**

Mrs. James M. Caswell, Jr.

**Sandra "Sandy" Unruh**

Ms. Norma J. Ellis

**David M. Wheeler**

Ms. Sally Wheeler

**Mary Belle Wilkins**

Mr. and Mrs. John M. Darden III  
Mrs. Mynel Yates DuBose  
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd  
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Shepherd III  
Mr. and Mrs. P. Daniel Yates III  
Mr. and Mrs. S. Zachry Young

**Kendall Williams**

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Pledgeling Foundation  
Ms. Sheryl Sellaway  
Mr. King Shaw  
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd  
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Shepherd III  
Mr. and Mrs. Dell B. Sikes  
Mr. and Mrs. Scott H. Sikes  
Mr. and Mrs. Bobby M. Thomas  
Ms. Barbara Bird Turner  
The Voyles Family  
Mr. Charles Wilkes  
Mr. and Mrs. William D. Wilkes  
Woodward Academy  
Dr. Michael Yochelson and  
Mr. Kevin Clift

**Jay Woodruff**

Mrs. Elizabeth W. Owens

**Mary Frances Woodside**

Howell Mill Plantation Condo  
Association  
Mr. and Mrs. Billy G. Turner

**Doug Worful**

Anonymous

**Sean Young**

Mr. and Mrs. Ben Arogeti

**Marc Zimmerman**

The Poker Gang



Prior to sustaining a brain injury, Ronald Jones was a barber. He practiced his craft by giving his physical therapist a haircut while his occupational therapist supported and encouraged him.

Honorees are listed first in bold print followed by the names of those making gifts in their honor. This list reflects gifts made to Shepherd Center between July 1, 2021 and September 30, 2021.



Shepherd Center unveiled an employee veteran wall on the first floor of the hospital recognizing all the veterans on the staff who serve patients and families.

**Cookie Afergut's Birthday**

Mr. and Mrs. Allan Nathanson  
Renee Segan  
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald T. Urken

**Fred Alias**

Mr. and Mrs. Stephen M. Berman

**Elizabeth Allen**

Mr. and Mrs. Mike D. Armstrong

**Ali Anderson**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Virginia Apple — Happy 50th Birthday!**

Dr. and Mrs. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Cyndae Arrendale**

Mr. and Mrs. Steve A. Williams

**Deborah Backus — Congratulations!!!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Jacqueline Baron Lee**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Sarah L. Batts — Congratulations on your promotion!**

Mr. and Mrs. Scott H. Sikes

**Marla Jones Bennett — Happy Birthday**

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Bennett

**Max Berger**

The Matthews Family

**Dr. Gerald Bilsky — Happy Retirement**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.  
Mr. and Mrs. Larry M. Cowman

**Jackie Breitenstein — Congratulations on the VA Advisory Appointment**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Cole Burton**

Mr. Ricky Bryant

**Barbara Butkus — Happy Retirement!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Barbara Cochran — Happy Birthday**

Mr. and Mrs. Steven J. Labovitz

**Austin "AC" Cook**

Mr. Rudolph T. Quillian

**Mary Crouse**

Ms. Autumn Aalyson

**Dr. David DeRyter — Enjoy Retirement**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Steven Dickerhofs**

Mr. Thomas E. Dickerhofs

**John Duff II**

Mr. Royle R. Duff

**Kari Carlos and John Dunn — Congratulations on your marriage**

Ms. Elizabeth Davis

**Dr. Said Elshihabi — Thanks for all you do to make our lives better**

Mr. and Mrs. Warren N. Steinberg

**Katherine Faircloth — Happy Birthday**

Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Binkley

**Dr. Edee Field-Fote — Congratulations on the model grant!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Mitch Fillhaber — Happy Retirement!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Ian Flannery — Congratulations on promotion!!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Kacey Floyd**

Mr. and Mrs. Travis N. Fulk

**Robin Fowler — Happy Birthday**

Mr. and Mrs. Steven J. Labovitz

**Taylor Fralick Adkins — Thankful for the Shepherd Center**

Ms. Jacqueline Fralick

**Dr. Robert Godsall**

Mr. James A. Curtis

**Dr. Russell Gore — VA Appointment!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Kevin R. Grogg — In honor of the important work done the ATC Program**

Mr. and Mrs. Timothy J. Grogg

**Connie Hart**

Ms. Cynthia Kelley

**Fred Henritz**

Mr. Scott J. Arnold

**Mr. and Mrs. Keith Holland — Happy 36th Anniversary**

Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy Kilpatrick

**Dr. and Mrs. Allen Hord**

Mrs. Helen J. Scherrer Diamond

**Lorie Hutcheson — Happy Retirement!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**George Johnstone — Welcome!**

Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Babu Kakani**  
Mr. Adam Kosan

**Katherine Kay Creek — Welcome to Shepherd!**  
Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Christopher Kelly**  
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene W. Kelly

**Susan Kendall**  
Ms. Victoria Hood

**Mr. and Mrs. Roby Khoury — Thanks for all you do to make our lives better**  
Mr. and Mrs. Warren N. Steinberg

**Julia King**  
Mr. and Mrs. Richard S. White

**Stephanie Kiser — Happy Birthday**  
Dr. and Mrs. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Alan and Elaine — Happiness and health in your 85th year!**  
Mrs. Sam Arogeti

**Christopher Lee**  
Ms. Catherine Lovvorn

**Sharon Leonard**  
Mr. Carl Beck, Sr.

**Dr. Donald Leslie — Great Emcee!!**  
Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Doug Lindauer**  
Mr. Michael Thornton

**Joseph Lopez IV**  
Ms. Eugenia Makris

**Billi and Bernie Marcus**  
Mr. and Mrs. Marvin C. Shrager



Shepherd Center patients and staff were treated to a holiday musical performance starring Gerry Reed, a spinal cord injury patient who had worked with her occupational therapist, Megan Terukina, on hand dexterity to return to playing piano. Gerry was joined by Megan on piano, Dr. Wesley Chay on violin and nurse practitioner John Morawski on guitar and vocals.

**Karen Mathews — Happy Birthday Daughter**  
Dr. and Mrs. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Debbie McClain**  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bauer

**Andrew McDougan**  
Mr. Gerald E. Hartman, Sr.

**Col. J. Harry Mobley, USA Retired**  
The Roderick S., Flossie R. and Helen M. Galloway Foundation

**Caroline Moore**  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Moore

**Ryan Narramore**  
Anonymous

**Ben Patch**  
Ms. Katherine Giles

**Craig Powell**  
Mrs. Janet Powell

**Lois Puckett — Happy Birthday**  
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Neyman

**To those who can't run — From a Peachtree Race Runner**  
Mr. Leonard Ponn

**Cara Roxland — Great job on Alana's birthday!**  
Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Deke Scavone**  
Wes, Charlie, and Ethan Parker

**Sheryl Sellway**  
Mr. Joseph Moore

**Alana Shepherd — Happy 91st Birthday**  
Mrs. Carol Abreu  
Anonymous  
Mr. and Mrs. William L. Bost, Jr.  
Mrs. Nancy S. Brewer  
Mr. James A. Curtis  
Mrs. Mynel Yates DuBose

**Ms. Peggy Hatcher**  
Mr. and Mrs. John J. Huntz, Jr.  
Mrs. Betty Ann Inman  
Mr. and Mrs. Allen P. McDaniel  
Mrs. Langdon Quin  
Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Reeves  
Mr. David P. Stockert and Ms. Cameron P. Ives  
Dr. and Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.  
Rabbi and Mrs. Alvin M. Sugarman

**Alana Shepherd**  
Mr. and Mrs. Erwin C. Reid

**Shepherd Center's 46th Anniversary**  
Mr. and Mrs. Scott H. Sikes

**Mickey Shepherd — Happy Birthday**  
Bickers Consulting Group, LLC

**Stephen Shepherd — Happy Birthday**  
Bickers Consulting Group, LLC

**Levi Smith**  
Chism & Chism Construction  
Mr. and Mrs. Tommy Chism  
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Clark  
Ms. Judith I. Shelton

**Steve Smith**  
Ms. Loree Brown

**Pierre St. Brice**  
Mr. and Mrs. David R. Carten

**Megan Stephenson — Happy Birthday Daughter**  
Dr. and Mrs. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Brent Taylor**  
Mr. Tyler Kee

**Lauren Thomas — Welcome!**  
Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Lawrence Thompson — Happy Birthday**  
Mitchell and Chelsey Thompson

**Phillip and Julie Thrash**  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Sheffield

**Jace Walter**  
Mr. and Mrs. Shawn Swayda

**Rebecca Washburn**  
Kyle Pease Foundation

**Beryl Waters**  
Ms. Katy Blaess

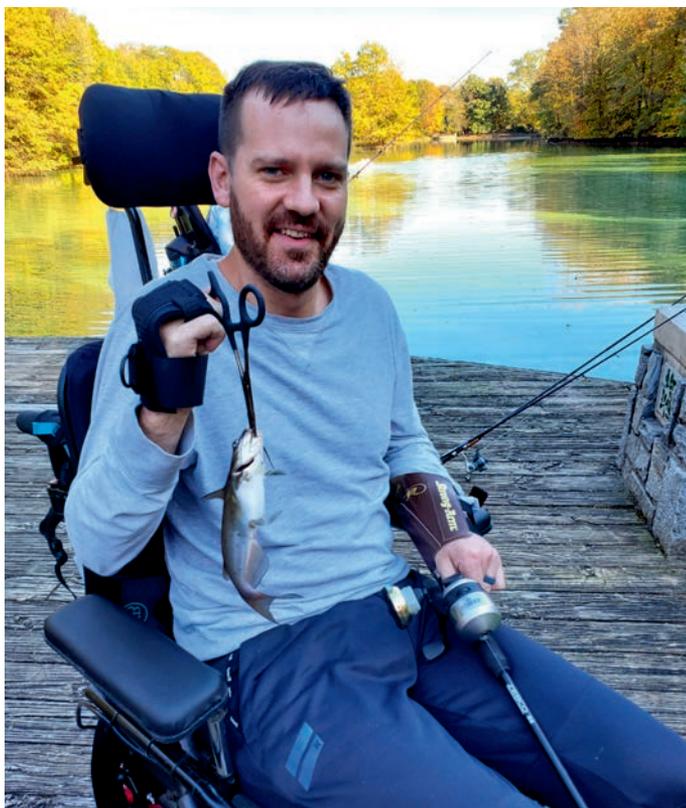
**Vanessa Watorek — Welcome!**  
Dr. David F. Apple, Jr.

**Andrew Worrell**  
The Block Family  
Mr. and Mrs. Justin Davis  
Mr. and Mrs. John K. Martin  
Ms. Malia Martin  
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan G. Roxland

**Mak Yost**  
Ms. Candace English

**Chris and Laura Young's Marriage**  
Mr. Robert Gray  
Rafal Los  
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Nicholas  
Mr. and Mrs. John Young

**Marc Zimmerman**  
Mr. Robert Omohundro



Shepherd Center's Spinal Cord Injury Day Program group enjoyed a fishing outing at Piedmont Park while working on their rehabilitation goals.



# Shepherd Center

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Atlanta, GA 30309-1465  
404-352-2020 [shepherd.org](http://shepherd.org)

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## Grateful Patient Program Coming Soon

At Shepherd Center, our patients come first. From our world-renowned medical care and research to our value-added programs, Shepherd Center's mission is to provide the opportunity for each patient to rebuild their lives with hope, independence and dignity.

Once you enter through our doors, you are part of our family. The relationships formed between patients, their care teams, staff and families create legacies that last far beyond an inpatient stay or outpatient visits.

We are excited to announce the upcoming launch of our Grateful Patient Program, a way for past patients and their families to stay engaged with Shepherd Center and give back in a meaningful way to continue moving our mission forward. To be one of the first to know more about the Grateful Patient Program launch and sign up to receive information about how to get involved, email [gratitude@shepherd.org](mailto:gratitude@shepherd.org).\*

