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Medical Treatment • Research • Rehabilitation

Center Spinal Column®

Learning Never Stops

At Shepherd Center, lifelong learning and personal growth are baked into the culture — for staff, patients, and clinical allies worldwide.

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Shepherd Center

2020 Peachtree Road NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30309
404-352-2020
magazine@shepherd.org
news.shepherd.org

Editor

Ruth Underwood

Design

Soloflight Design

Contributing Writers

Sara Baxter, Phillip Jordan, Kerry Ludlam,
Jon Roxland, Alex Seblatnigg, Erica Spurling,
Shanna Thorpe, Ruth Underwood

Contributing Photographers

Erica Aitken, Linda Bainter, Laura Barnard, Drew
Oswald, Erica Spurling, William Twitty, Joann Vitelli

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About the Cover

Jessica Pan Conklin, Ph.D., studied how culture impacts the rehabilitation and recovery of Asian people and Asian Americans following traumatic injury and illness.
Photo by Joann Vitelli

LETTER FROM SARAH MORRISON



Dear Readers,

As I reflect on my career at Shepherd and plan for my retirement in September 2024, I am so proud and grateful for what we have accomplished together to help thousands of patients and families rebuild their lives after injury or illness.

I am excited that Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, Shepherd Center's current president and chief operating officer, will become president and CEO. He is an immensely talented leader who knows our business, community, and culture inside and out.

In this issue of *Spinal Column*, we look at how a readiness to seek and share knowledge is part of that culture. Shepherd's efforts to facilitate lifelong learning for patients start upon admission and continue well beyond discharge. As patients prepare for the next phase of their recovery, they learn how to become as independent as possible. Family members, sometimes with the support of family housing, learn how to help care for their loved ones — and for themselves. Our extraordinary staff strives to foster extraordinary patient outcomes through continuing education, research, professional development, and day-to-day inspiration. We never stop learning here.

We increase the power of our knowledge exponentially when we share it. Patients can access information and support after discharge through our call center, online resources, apps, peer support, and health and wellness clinics. Clinicians worldwide look to the NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute for professional education. And, community members benefit from Shepherd's injury prevention education and resources to help them make safe choices in everyday life.

On page 5, you will find out what led Diane Johnston, MSPT, Shepherd's director of professional education, to champion "on-demand" education.

Then, beginning on page 6, you can read about people who have embraced opportunities for learning and discovery, including Bobby Rosenbleeth, who, after a stroke, worked with Shepherd's vocational rehabilitation team to develop skills and return to work.

Healthcare is everchanging. There are always new findings, new technology, and new research that can improve patient care — and that's exciting. Continuous learning and discovery keep our mission moving forward. And I can't wait to see how Shepherd's culture of curiosity continues to improve patient care in the future.

Warmest wishes for a happy holiday season and a new year filled with discovery.

Enjoy,

Sarah Morrison

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

WINTER 2023 • SHEPHERD CENTER

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Photo by Joann Vitelli

Bobby Rosenbleeth took advantage of vocational services while at Shepherd Center and later landed a job as a senior data analyst at Genuine Parts Company in Atlanta.



See 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 scan the QR code.



Shepherd Center's Injury Prevention Program Awarded Grant to Increase Safety on Rural Roads

Shepherd Center's Injury Prevention Program was awarded a \$237,300 Safe System Approach to Rural Roads grant by the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety. The funds are being used to develop a one-year pilot program, which began on October 1, to encourage seat belt use and reduce the disproportionate number of fatal and serious car crashes on rural roads in Georgia.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), while only 19% of our nation's population lives in rural areas, nearly half of all fatal crashes happen on rural roads. Additionally, vehicle crashes are one of the leading causes of both spinal cord and brain injuries.

Emma Harrington, director of injury prevention and education at Shepherd Center, applied for the grant after seeing the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Roadway Safety Strategy. The strategy uses a "safe system" approach to roadway safety, acknowledging our shared responsibility and the inevitable possibility of human error, emphasizing the importance of safe design for vehicles and roads, safe speeds, and post-crash care.

Harrington hopes that the program can begin the process of changing traffic safety culture by increasing the rate of seat belt use on rural roads. The plan is to focus on one or two counties in Georgia, identify local stakeholders, and build a coalition to develop a campaign centered around social norms, meaning sharing positive messages about safe, healthy behaviors — in this case, buckling up.

"It's based on the premise that behavior change is difficult, and you only really change your behavior if a trusted source recommends the change. We hope to grow the good through those trusted sources," she explains.

Harrington will work with researchers at Montana State University's Center for Health and Safety Culture, which has implemented similar safety campaigns in Utah and Washington. The team will help develop surveys to assess the safety culture, develop and implement a communication plan with local stakeholders, and evaluate the program's efficacy.

Harrington says she's excited about the project and grateful for the support of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety. "They are a wonderful partner. They trust us to do innovative things to save lives on Georgia roads," she says.

Shepherd Center added three to its team of highly specialized physicians this fall

► Dr. Woody Morgan Leads Shepherd Center's Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU)



Woody Morgan, M.D., was once a patient at Shepherd Center after sustaining a spinal cord injury diving into a cresting wave. Now, 15 years later, he has returned, but this time as the attending physician in Shepherd Center's Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU), where he provides care for patients experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord and brain injuries, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, stroke, and other neurological conditions.

Dr. Morgan attended medical school at Tulane University School of Medicine, after which he completed his residency training in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) at Harvard Medical School, followed by a fellowship in spinal cord injury medicine at Craig Hospital/University of Colorado. Most recently, Dr. Morgan served as assistant professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation and medical director of the spinal cord injury program at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.



► Dr. Dallin Lindahl Leads the Hospital's Wound Care Program

Shepherd Center has expanded wound care services with the addition of **Dallin Lindahl, M.D.** Dr. Lindahl serves as medical director for the hospital's wound care program, focusing on preventing and treating wounds.

People who have paralysis, limited mobility, or minimal consciousness are often at more risk for developing pressure injuries. While Shepherd Center has long cared for patients with severe pressure injuries

through surgical interventions, expanding the hospital's wound care services will provide care for people who can benefit from earlier and more aggressive non-surgical interventions.

Dr. Lindahl attended medical school at St. George University on the Island of Grenada, after which he completed his residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) and fellowship in undersea and hyperbaric medicine at SUNY Upstate in Syracuse, New York. During training, Dr. Lindahl obtained extensive training in both wound care and spinal cord injury.

Dr. Lindahl closely collaborates with Thomas Hagopian, M.D., plastic and reconstructive surgeon, to care for patients who need surgery. Dr. Lindahl is the primary inpatient physician during the post-operative period to optimize the post-surgical recovery to provide the best possible outcomes.

► Dr. Michael Smith joins the Dean Stroud Spine and Pain Institute at Shepherd Center

Michael Smith, D.O., joined the Shepherd Center medical staff in September.

As a staff physiatrist, Dr. Smith provides care for patients in the Dean Stroud Spine and Pain Institute at Shepherd Center, which offers long-term pain management and therapy for individuals experiencing chronic pain.



Dr. Smith attended medical school at Nova Southeastern University Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine, after which he completed his residency in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and an interventional spine fellowship at Emory University School of Medicine.

Dr. Smith joins Erik Shaw, D.O., medical director of the Pain Institute, who has been caring for patients there since 2006.

Georgia Tech Partners with Shepherd Center to Advance Rehabilitative Patient Care and Research

In September, Shepherd Center and Georgia Tech announced a partnership that will unite researchers from both institutions and clinicians to improve care and create more success stories for people with spinal cord and brain injuries, pain, multiple sclerosis, and related neurological conditions.

Areas of collaboration will include the development of new technologies, strategies, and approaches to improve neurorehabilitation.

"Shepherd and Georgia Tech will build upon Shepherd's expertise to conduct and integrate research and technology throughout the entire continuum of care and Georgia Tech's research and technology development to create new solutions for the people Shepherd serves and beyond," says Deborah Backus, PT, Ph.D., FACRM, vice president of research and innovation at Shepherd Center.

Leaders from Georgia Tech and Shepherd Center met to celebrate the partnership.

"Shepherd Center leads the world in treating brain and spinal cord injuries with an innovative research program that implements technology throughout inpatient and outpatient programs to get patients back to leading active, independent lives," says Julia Kubanek, Ph.D., vice president of interdisciplinary research at Georgia Tech.

Dr. Kubanek was joined by Andrés García, Ph.D., executive director of the Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience at



(L to R) Dr. Stephen Sprigle, professor, Georgia Tech, Sarah L. Batts, senior vice president, advancement and executive director, Shepherd Center Foundation, Dr. Deborah Backus, vice president of research and innovation, Shepherd Center, Jamie Shepherd, COO, Shepherd Center, Alana Shepherd, co-founder, Shepherd Center, Sarah Morrison, CEO, Shepherd Center, Julia Kubanek, vice president of interdisciplinary research, Georgia Tech, and Dr. Andrés García, executive director of the Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience at Georgia Tech, gathered for a tour of Shepherd Center.

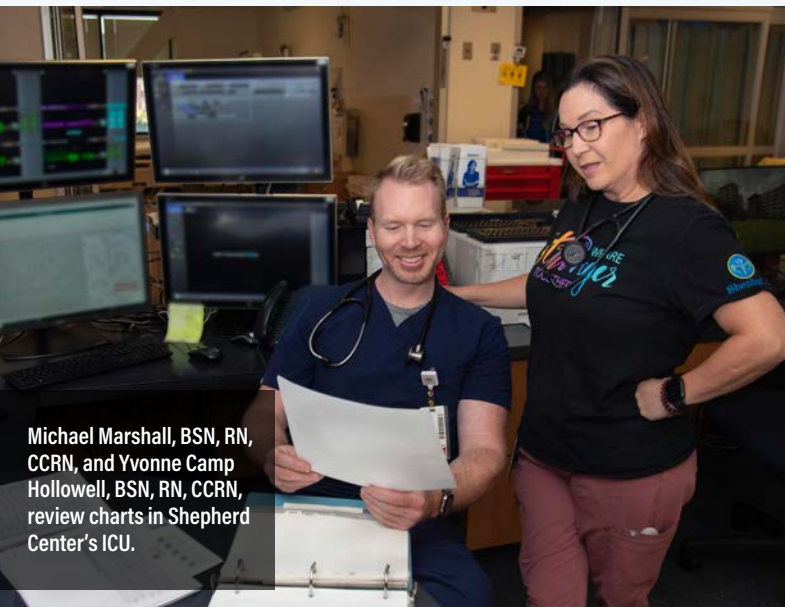
Georgia Tech, and Stephen Sprigle, Ph.D., PT, professor and researcher who directs the Rehabilitation Engineering and Applied Research Lab (REARLab), which focuses on applied disability research and development.

"Georgia Tech's mission of using technology to improve the human condition is a perfect fit for our collaboration with Shepherd. I'm grateful for Dr. Stephen Sprigle and the Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience for their goals of increasing the breadth and depth of our partnership," Dr. García says.

Driven by a shared vision for transforming healthcare, the two institutions will utilize their complementary capabilities to provide technical solutions for clinical needs. The teams are identifying challenges to tackle and will establish a series of workshops to bring researchers and clinicians together.

Continuity of Care

The intensive care unit (ICU) at Shepherd Center allows patients to start rehabilitation earlier and improves continuity of care.



Michael Marshall, BSN, RN, CCRN, and Yvonne Camp Hollowell, BSN, RN, CCRN, review charts in Shepherd Center's ICU.

Shepherd Center's comprehensive continuum of care includes a 10-bed intensive care unit (ICU). It is the only freestanding rehabilitation hospital nationwide with an ICU on site that specializes in patients with brain and spinal cord injuries. That means rehabilitation can start more quickly after injury, usually within the first 24 hours of admission to Shepherd Center, which can help advance recovery.

"People think that patients in the ICU are not therapy-ready, but our philosophy is that rehab should start on day one," explains Shepherd's Chief Nursing Officer, Tiffany LeCroy, MSN, RN, CRRN, FNP-C, ACNS-BC, FARN. "Patients can be evaluated by each of the disciplines of therapy to determine the plan of care. It helps get to the next steps more quickly."

Michael Marshall, BSN, RN, CCRN, has been a charge nurse in Shepherd Center's ICU for more than a decade, and he says having an ICU on-site improves patient care.

"Even in the ICU, our focus is on rehabilitation — getting patients out of bed, getting them acclimated to a wheelchair, and addressing some of the problems they might be facing, like contractures and skin sores," Marshall explains.

When patients transfer to Shepherd from the ICU at an acute care hospital, many are admitted to Shepherd's ICU.

"It's a big shift for the caregivers and the patients from the intense nursing care of the ICU to rehabilitation floor status. When they arrive at Shepherd, we want them to have an assurance that we're going to give them a safe place with the same level of care. So, if they are discharged from an ICU, they typically come to our ICU first," LeCroy explains.

At Shepherd, with ICU-level support available, patients who use a ventilator to aid with breathing can move out

of the ICU to one of the rehabilitation floors safely, building the bridge from critical care to their return to their communities. That's a significant advantage for people who may use a ventilator long-term.

Patients ready to breathe independently, without the assistance of a ventilator, return to the ICU for their first 24 hours off the ventilator to allow for closer monitoring. And if a patient experiences a medical setback, Marshall says the value of an on-site ICU becomes even more apparent.

"Shepherd has patients with very complex needs. If you were in a rehabilitation facility without an ICU, developed pneumonia, and needed a breathing tube or a ventilator, you would have to be discharged from that rehab hospital and admitted to a local acute care facility," Marshall says. "They'd have to address your medical complications, and then you would be readmitted to rehab. And this bouncing back and forth can happen multiple times in a patient stay."

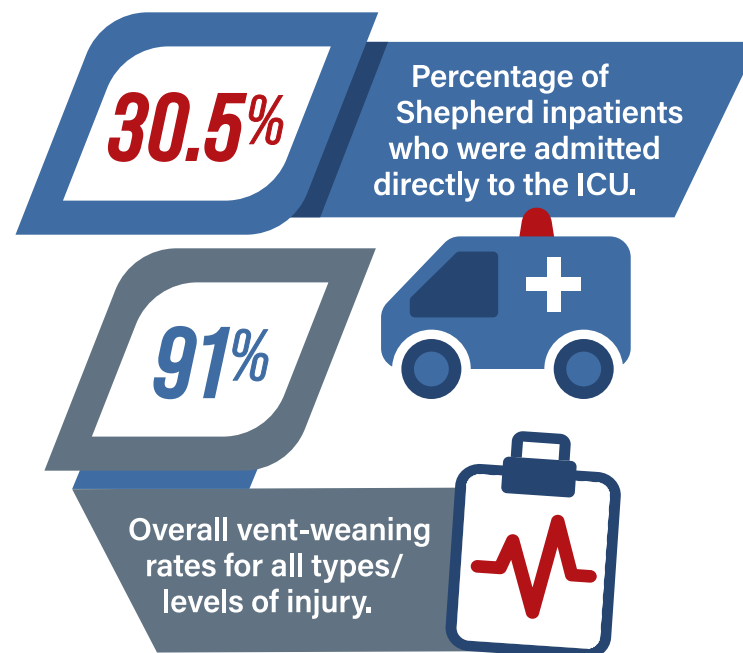
At Shepherd, families don't have to deal with the additional stress of transferring to another hospital for this level of care.

"It gives ease of mind to the caregivers and to the patient, knowing that we can handle vent weaning or a change in medical status within Shepherd," LeCroy says.

She says the ICU is an essential part of the continuum of care at Shepherd.

"We treat patients with complicated conditions that many organizations would shy away from, and the ICU is a big factor in our ability to do that. There is a comfort level knowing that if that person needs to go to the ICU, then we can do it." *

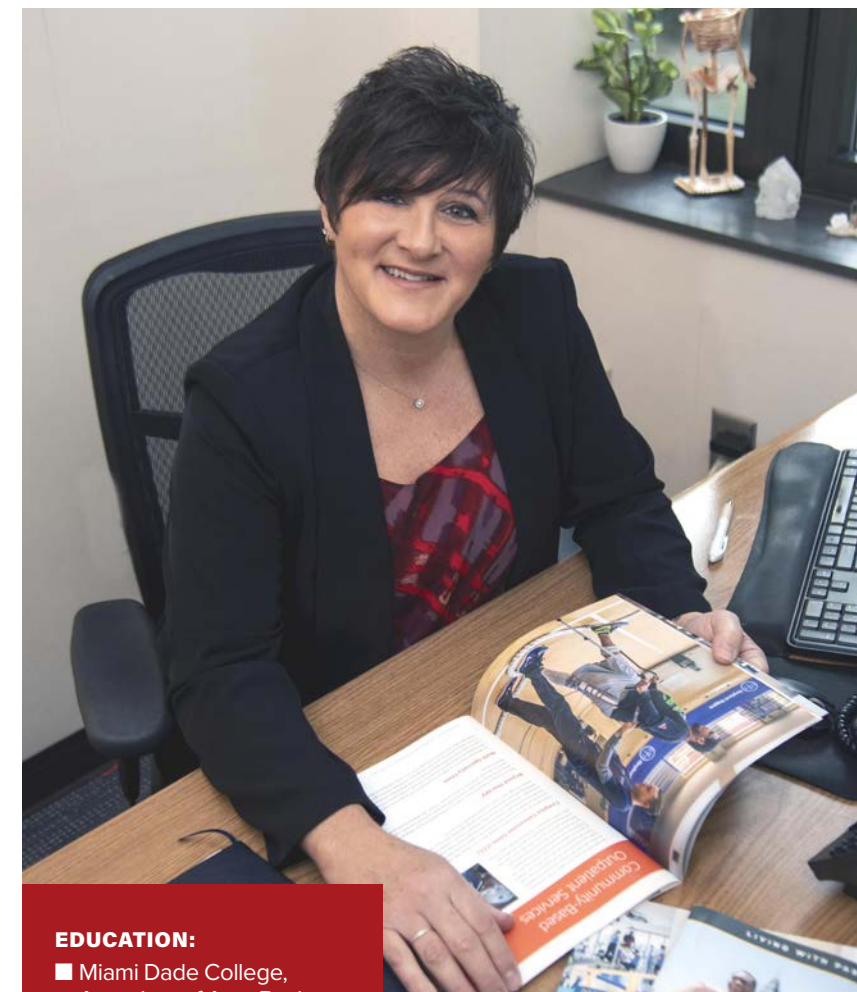
Photo by Joann Vitelli



1. Based on patients discharged during FY 2023, April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023

Advancing Learning to Improve Care

Diane Johnston, MSPT, director of professional education at Shepherd Center, helps Shepherd bridge gaps in professional education and improve care for patients worldwide.



EDUCATION:

- Miami Dade College, Associate of Arts, Business Administration
- Georgia State University, Bachelor of Science, Exercise Science
- North Georgia College and State University, Master of Science, Physical Therapy

FUN FACTS:

- Diane's son is a high school senior and "the light of her life."
- Her family has four dogs, three cats, and a bearded dragon.
- Diane loves gardening and building things.

Interview by Ruth Underwood

How long have you worked at Shepherd Center, and what is your role?

I just celebrated my 23rd anniversary at Shepherd Center. I've been in my role as director of professional education since 2016. Through the NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute, we offer medical education with the goal of being the primary source of professional education and competency for the medical community serving patients with complex neurological diagnoses.

We strive to improve the quality of life for these individuals, even if they aren't at Shepherd.

Why did you think Shepherd Center needed to provide on-demand education?

When I was a treating physical therapist, I'd get calls from patients and family members when they went home, saying, "I know more than the home health provider or my hometown provider. Can you please educate them on what they need to do?" Being close to the families and knowing how hard they work to take their loved ones home only to get home and feel like the bottom's let out was hard. Their sense of concern moved me. And it's not that medical providers aren't educated on these complex neurological diagnoses. Still, in addressing the intricacies of the needs of each individual, when you don't do that day in, day out, there's a gap in practice and a gap in confidence.

I also found that the medical community was asking for the same foundational education over and over again. So, both things drove me to the same place — we need on-demand education where we can share our expertise. Practitioners need to be able to go online and get the education they need right now because they have a patient who needs it. I was very appreciative and still humbled that our administration supports this outreach. We are affecting patients by affecting the quality of care across facilities worldwide, whether we end up seeing these patients at Shepherd or not.

What's the most fulfilling part of your job?

Although I'm not treating patients directly, I can influence the quality of the care. Knowing that Shepherd Center is creating resources for the medical providers that allow them to continue to grow, to possibly affect or change what they're doing, to improve the quality of care, that's the motivator for me — reducing suffering, reducing pain, improving quality of life, and helping people go back out and enjoy the things that they love to do. *

Photo by Joann Vitelli

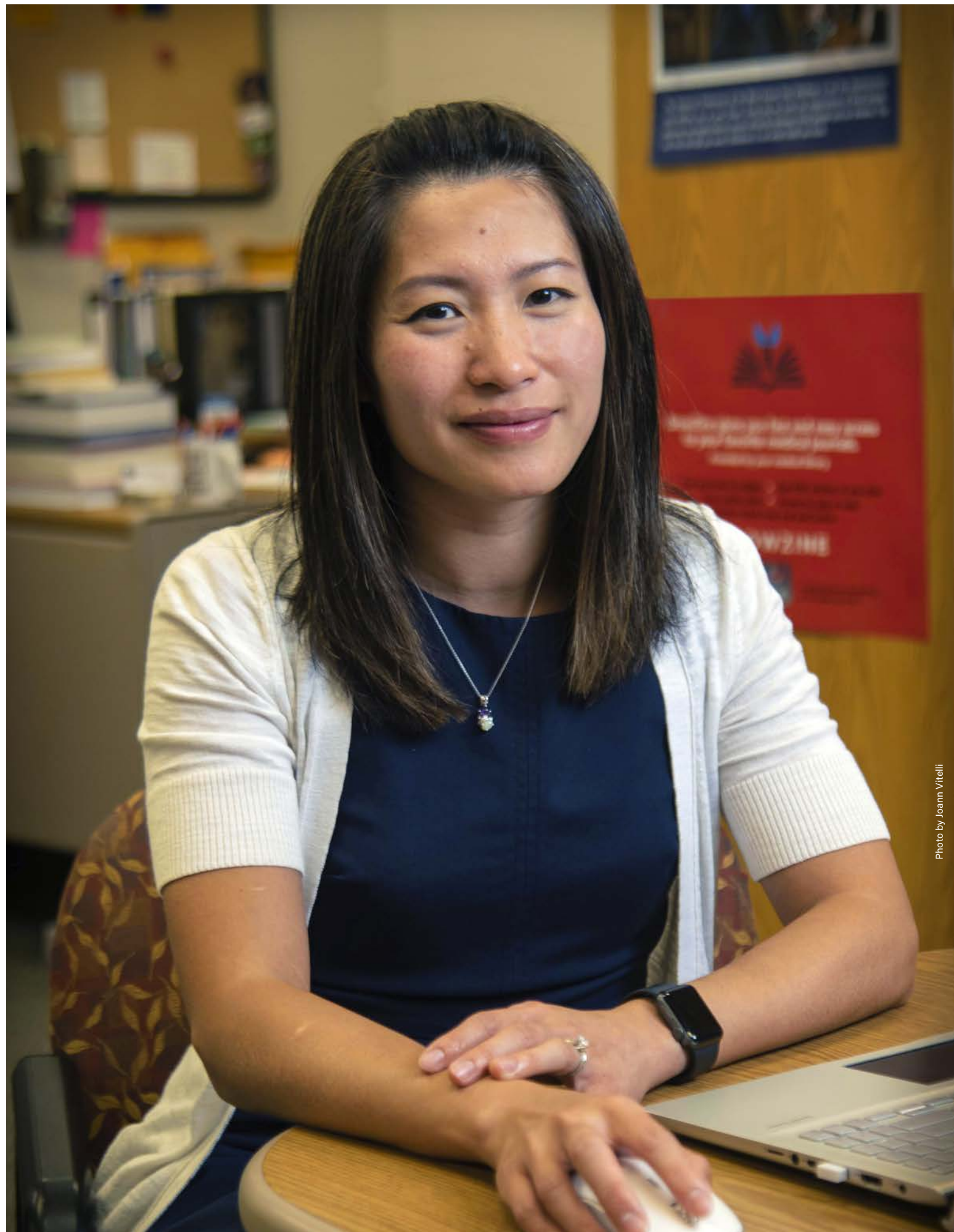


Photo by Ioann Vitelli

Learning Never Stops

At Shepherd Center, lifelong learning and personal growth are baked into the culture — for staff, patients, and clinical allies worldwide.

By Phillip Jordan

Long before Jessica Pan Conklin, Ph.D., became a research neuropsychology fellow at Shepherd Center, she was a child trying to help her immigrant parents navigate the U.S. healthcare system.

Dr. Conklin was five years old when she, her brother, and her parents left their home in Guangzhou, China, to move to the United States. The family settled in Boston's tight-knit Chinatown community, where most neighbors, shopkeepers, and family doctors could speak the Pan family's Cantonese. While her parents never became proficient in English, Dr. Conklin did. As she grew older, she became her parents'

liaison to Western medicine when they were referred to specialists beyond Chinatown's borders.

"What I noticed, even at that age, was that my parents were uncomfortable and hesitant about going to Western-style doctors," Dr. Conklin recalls. "I think what it came down to was they just had very different understandings of what health is, what illness means — what symptoms can represent and how they can best be treated."

"They thought the tenets of traditional Chinese medicine matched their values and beliefs. Western medicine did not. So, when they needed specialized care, there was always this fundamental mismatch that put a barrier between them and the doctors — and the care they needed. And often, Western practitioners didn't understand or appreciate my parents' perspectives or the family dynamics at play."



Those experiences stayed with Dr. Conklin as she grew older. They led to questions that guided her academic journey and professional career as a scientist-practitioner in neuropsychology. Those questions eventually led Dr. Conklin to create a research proposal at Shepherd Center exploring how culture impacts the rehabilitation and recovery of Asian people and Asian Americans following traumatic injury and illness. In the fall of 2022, she received a prestigious Switzer Research Fellowship for her work, one of just eight awarded nationwide.

Dr. Conklin's research is both vital and timely. Asian Americans have some of the lowest service-seeking care rates in the U.S. and, simultaneously, are the fastest-growing ethnic group in the U.S. — yet one of the least studied.

Photos provided by Jessica Pan Conklin

"We're hoping to identify and understand the common elements of these family stories so that we can sharpen our skills as providers and offer more customized treatments for these families."

- Dr. Conklin



Jessica Pan Conklin, Ph.D., and her family moved to the United States from China when she was five years old. They lived in Boston's Chinatown community. As a research neuropsychology fellow at Shepherd Center, she has studied how culture impacts the rehabilitation and recovery of Asian people and Asian Americans following traumatic injury and illness.



"At its heart," Dr. Conklin says, "this work was intended to make space for, and capture the stories of, patients and families at Shepherd Center who fit this identity and want to share what their experiences have been like navigating medical systems after their injury or illness."

Dr. Conklin went into the research wondering if she would get more stories similar to her parents'. What she discovered was a much broader, more complex range of lived experiences, especially among younger generations of immigrants. Similar to Dr. Conklin's parents, some families found comfort in receiving care from Asian or Asian American providers; others, more acclimated to American culture, had more nuanced concerns. Many



families wanted to learn how to take care of their loved ones as quickly as possible — sometimes to help preserve their family member's dignity and privacy when it came to more intimate care.

One of the most impactful findings was about the importance of Asian American family structures, where each family member often has a specific role — and the disruption and guilt that can affect those family dynamics when a traumatic injury requires extended rehabilitation.

Many patients Dr. Conklin interviewed worried they were weighing their families down instead of helping carry them forward.

"Now, we're hoping to identify and understand the common elements of these family stories so that we can sharpen our skills as providers and offer more customized treatments for these families," Dr. Conklin shares. "The goal is higher levels of care engagement and treatment adherence — sticking with the care they need."

She cites the culture of learning and humility at Shepherd Center as a driver for constantly improving approaches to care.

"The nature of our work requires us to be curious," Dr. Conklin says. "The best clinicians are the ones who have research questions, who want to better understand why we do what we do — and the way we do it. How we interact with patients, develop treatment plans, and prepare patients to return home.

"Asking questions is what allows Shepherd Center clinicians to be exceptional at what they do. You're always thinking, 'How do we do this better? How do we keep improving?'"

Sharing the Knowledge

It's not just Shepherd Center's doctors and clinicians who benefit from in-house research like Dr. Conklin's. Shepherd Center research findings are shared publicly — for free — via the NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute (NRLI). The site launched in 2018 and has become a dynamic online hub for high-quality, best-practices education that clinicians worldwide utilize.

"We have patients who don't have the resources to get training elsewhere. So, we're having to do that more often here. That's something that just wasn't in our knowledge base before, so going through Shepherd Center's course was hugely beneficial."

— Dr. Hairie



creates the best possible outcomes."

As of 2023, more than 9,000 healthcare professionals worldwide, including from 35 countries, have participated in proctored webinars, live virtual events, and online education courses hosted on the Institute's site.

Christopher Hairie, PT, DPT, MBA, is the lead therapist of inpatient rehabilitation services at Atrium Health Navicent in Macon, Georgia. He's one of the many clinicians who regularly use Shepherd Center's resources for continuing

education support.

Each quarter, Dr. Hairie picks a new webinar topic from the NRLI, reserves a room at his hospital, and invites staff therapists to come together and discuss what they learn.

"We've been doing this over three years now, and it's such a helpful resource," Dr. Hairie says. "We typically have 10-20 therapists attend each time, both established and new graduate

therapists. They get some continuing education hours and gain new knowledge they can apply in their work."

Most recently, he presented his staff with a bladder training course from Shepherd Center's NRLI catalog.

"In an acute care setting like ours, we typically haven't done bladder training," Dr. Hairie says. "But we have patients staying longer in our hospital, and we have patients who don't have the resources to get that training elsewhere. So, we're having to do that more often here. That's something that just wasn't in our knowledge base before, so going through Shepherd Center's course was hugely beneficial."

The NRLI can benefit Shepherd Center patients, too, when they return to their hometowns after discharge.

"The NRLI allows us to influence the quality of care and provide guidance to other medical professionals who treat similar patient populations," Johnston says. "Sometimes, that can include our former patients who need ongoing, locally based care back home. We're building relationships with clinicians across the country, so when they have questions, they know they can come to us."

(Above) Jessica Pan Conklin, Ph.D., and her mom pose with Dr. Conklin's daughter on Halloween. ▶ Dr. Conklin is pictured with her husband and family on her wedding day. ▶ (Right) Christopher Hairie, PT, DPT, MBA, lead therapist for Inpatient Rehabilitation Services in Acute Care at The Medical Center, Atrium Health Navicent in Macon, Georgia, poses with some of his co-workers in an event celebrating Atrium Health teammates.

Lifelong Learning:

A patient's perspective

Robert “Bobby” Rosenbleeth’s passion for knowledge and personal growth is tough to match.

After getting his bachelor’s degree from the University of Georgia, the Atlanta native earned his MBA from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Bobby began his career as a financial analyst before pivoting to data science. Over the past decade, he’s worked in leading financial institutions, private equity firms, and higher education.

And twice, he’s had to overcome traumatic brain injuries to keep his love of learning alive.

The first came from a ski accident on Valentine’s Day 2015. The second injury occurred after brain surgery to remove a benign tumor in 2020, resulting in significant ataxia — a loss of muscle control that especially affected Bobby’s physical mobility and speech.



After earning a Data Science and Analytics Certificate from the Georgia Institute of Technology, Bobby Rosenbleeth became a senior data analyst at Genuine Parts Company in Atlanta. ► Bobby works from home, and his dog, Stevie, is never far from his side.



In each instance, Bobby came to Shepherd Pathways, a comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury. In addition to physical therapy, Bobby fully committed himself to Pathways’ full range of vocational services and occupational and speech therapy — to get back to learning and work.

“I’ve always been a data-oriented person,” Bobby says. “What I enjoy most is that it allows you to find hidden truths that aren’t always self-evident about what creates value in a situation.”

If you’re wondering — yes — that curiosity and desire to dig deep for creative solutions came in handy during Bobby’s rehabilitation at Shepherd Center.

“Although Bobby’s motor speech was affected, he maintained his

extraordinary cognitive abilities,” says Zac Bradley, a vocational therapist at Shepherd Center. “I’ve been so impressed with his resilience and pursuit of the life he wants to lead despite the challenges.”

Like most Shepherd Center patients, Bobby learned how to adapt to new ways of doing things and to advocate for himself effectively.

Case in point: In 2021, Bobby failed in his first attempt to earn a data analyst certificate from the Georgia Institute of Technology, primarily due to his speech issues and the difficulty of keeping pace with the accelerated program. Bobby successfully argued for fair accommodations and reapplied for the 24-week program. In 2023, he earned his Data Science and Analytics Certificate from Georgia Tech.

That certificate has already helped Bobby get a new job as a senior data

analyst at Genuine Parts Company in Atlanta.

Bobby wasted no time before further enlightening his new colleagues about his experience at Shepherd Center. And recently, Genuine Parts Company took its longtime support of Shepherd Center to the next level.

On August 30, 2023, Shepherd Center formally launched the Genuine Parts Company Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The partnership will enhance Shepherd Center’s vocational services that help patients identify their challenges in returning to work, practice problem-solving, and find available career resources in their communities. In addition to its philanthropic support, Genuine Parts Company also hosts tours for Shepherd Center patients to give them in-person experiences navigating office, retail, and warehouse environments.

“I’m very grateful for the support both Genuine Parts Company and Shepherd Center have provided me to return to work,” Bobby says. “I couldn’t do my job without accommodations, and I’m appreciative of what GPC is willing to provide and how Shepherd Center has educated me on what’s reasonable.

“My advice to others is to keep working hard and keep learning new things,” Bobby says. “Don’t let injuries stop you from obtaining your goals or pursuing what interests you.” *

Access Shepherd Center’s NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute at education.shepherd.org, and learn more about Shepherd Center’s research efforts at shepherd.org/research.

MyShepherdConnection.org provides educational resources for patients and community members to learn more about brain injury, stroke, and spinal cord injury. Shepherd Center’s on-site library, the Noble Learning Resource Center, is open to all patients, their family members, visitors, and community members with questions related to Shepherd Center’s areas of expertise.

Photos by Joann Vitelli

Leaning On and Learning from Others

After Taylor Eastridge sustained a traumatic brain injury, she and her husband, Tyler, found support at Shepherd Center.

By Ruth Underwood

Taylor Eastridge lives with her husband, Tyler, and their two young daughters in a small town just west of Gainesville, Florida. Taylor loves math and teaches economics at Santa Fe College in Gainesville. She also bakes a mean oatmeal-raisin cookie.

On a rainy day in June of last year, Taylor's car hydroplaned and hit a light post. Taylor sustained multiple injuries, including a traumatic brain injury (TBI). She was admitted to UF Health Shands Hospital in Gainesville, where she spent close to three weeks before transferring to the Disorders of Consciousness Program, which is part of Shepherd Center's Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program.

Taylor does not remember much about the weeks she spent inpatient at Shepherd but says she does remember re-learning how to walk — and feeling that the staff really cared.

"I was so confused about why I was there, but I remember everyone was really sweet, and they provided me with more things than I even asked for," Taylor recalls.

Tyler appreciated the continuity of care for Taylor.

"The nurses were amazing," he says. "Having the same nurses was big for me because they knew Taylor, and they knew me, and we were able to build a relationship. They were invested — all the nurses in inpatient, all

the therapists, you could tell they were passionate about it, and they cared."

While Taylor worked on swallowing, talking, and walking, Tyler turned to peer support and family education programs to learn more about how to support Taylor and handle the uncertain path of her recovery.

One program in which he participated, called "Getting There," was part of a brain injury patient caregiver research study. To assess the value of peer-led intervention, Shepherd's staff adapted a curriculum created at the Self-Management Resource Center in Stanford, California, to fit Shepherd's acute rehabilitation setting. For "Getting There," Tyler was assigned a peer mentor, Mariellen Jacobs, whose son had previously sustained a brain injury.

"I looked forward to talking to Mariellen every week. That was the best therapy I could have asked for because I didn't know what was going

getting back into the routine and getting the encouragement," Tyler recalls.

The couple focused on Taylor's recovery, and their parents pitched in, staying nearby and helping take care of the girls. After six weeks inpatient, Taylor graduated and transitioned to Shepherd Pathways, Shepherd Center's comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury. She and Tyler took advantage of Shepherd family housing for a month to ease the transition.

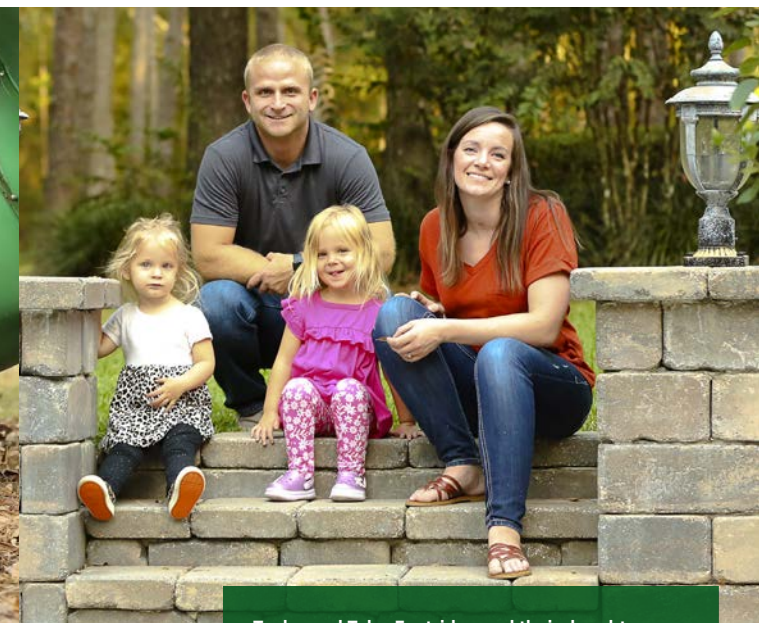
At Pathways, Taylor shared a goal with her therapist.

"I told her that I wanted to get to a point where I could play with my girls

I felt like I was building a new one. It wasn't until February of this year that the memories of the relationship that I had with them started to come back."

Taylor is spending time with her girls, embracing her baking hobby, and running. She has returned to teaching, and she's continuing therapy close to home. She and Tyler are working with a team to start a non-profit to provide support, including funding for transportation and housing, to families of people who sustain multiple traumatic injuries in the Gainesville area. One of their goals is to raise awareness and funds by hosting a 5K run. They hope to hold the

"I was so confused about why I was there, but I remember everyone was really sweet, and they provided me with more things than I even asked for." – Taylor Eastridge



to happen," Tyler recalls. "Typically, when you go through an injury, say, a broken arm, there's a standard recovery time. The brain is completely different, so hearing Mariellen's experience and knowing that some of the things I was experiencing weren't uncommon and that there was hope encouraged me.

Taylor and Tyler also relied on their faith and were glad to be able to attend services at Shepherd, led by Shepherd Center's chaplains.

"Having a church service in-house, once Taylor was able to go, it was good

and carry them," Taylor explains.

So, Taylor's youngest joined a therapy session.

"We played outside, and I practiced carrying her because I was so weak at the time — she was really heavy," Taylor laughs.

As parts of Taylor's memory return, she's rebuilding and rediscovering her relationship with her daughters.

"Before the accident, anything that they would do, I would do with them — we had an intense relationship. But for a few months after the accident, I did not remember our relationship, so

Taylor and Tyler Eastridge and their daughters are back home in Florida after their whole family spent time in Atlanta while Taylor participated in rehabilitation at Shepherd Center. Now, Taylor and Tyler are working with others to start a nonprofit to support people who face challenges similar to their own.

first 5K in spring 2024.

"We want to use what we learned in the worst times of our lives to help other people while they're going through the worst times in their lives," Tyler explains. "I'm still learning — learning how to adapt and how to overcome. It's an ongoing process." *

Shepherd Alums:

From “I Can’t” to “I Can”

By Sara Baxter and Ruth Underwood

Scott N.

Raeford, North Carolina

Scott N. has been in the United States Army since 2006, serving as a Green Beret with the 5th Special Forces Group — an elite special forces unit. Currently stationed in Fort Liberty, North Carolina, Scott had seven deployments to the Middle East, where he was involved in combat missions.

On his last deployment, Scott’s team fired an estimated 4,000 120mm mortars. He believes exposure to frequent blasts over a long period led to sustaining traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress.

As a result, when he returned to the U.S. in 2017, he had trouble completing his daily runs. He began experiencing dizziness, vision and speech problems, and short-term memory issues. His balance was off, and he fell often. Army medical staff treated him with medication, but he says it was ineffective.

“I kept trying to get better on my own,” he says. “I thought if I just powered through it, it would all go away. But instead, it got worse.”

With no relief, Scott says he came to the conclusion that he was just going to have to live with his symptoms. It was his new normal.

That is until Scott learned about Shepherd Center’s SHARE Military Initiative, which provides rehabilitation for military veterans, service members, and first responders with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. He joined the program in February 2022.

“It’s the best program I’ve ever been through,” he says.

For four months, he worked through his issues. Vestibular therapy improved his mobility, vision, and balance. Brain games helped with his short-term memory. Gaze therapy reduced dizziness.

“They didn’t throw medication at me — they gave me exercises that I still do today,” Scott says. “The difference has been amazing. It gave me a lot of hope.”

Today, Scott is back working at Fort Liberty in the Human Development Directorate, a unit that helps enlisted soldiers and officers prepare for the Special Forces Qualification Course. He has seen dramatic improvements and is especially happy to have the energy and stamina to keep up with his five children, four boys and a girl, ranging in age from eight months to 15 years.

“Now I can do more than I ever could,” he says. “SHARE changed my outlook. It’s made me a more positive person. I am now inspired to be the best version of myself for my wife and kids. Shepherd did that for me.”

Mo Maxwell

Macon, Georgia

Though Mo Maxwell, 19, has wanted to be a nurse since the fifth grade, her dream seemed out of reach in late 2021 when she started experiencing numbness in her arm. A few months later, it progressed to her back, and she developed a limp.

In June 2022, as her condition continued undiagnosed, Mo collapsed on her bathroom floor, became disoriented, and experienced paralysis. She was taken to Atrium Health Navicent in Macon, where she was diagnosed with acute disseminated encephalomyelitis, a neurological disease that causes swelling in the brain and spinal cord.

The team there placed Mo in a medically induced coma for nine days, and she spent the next two weeks in intensive care. As her condition improved with medication and a plasma exchange process called plasmapheresis, Mo transferred to Atrium’s cardiac unit, where she stayed until she transferred to Shepherd Center.

On July 11, 2022, Mo arrived at Shepherd Center via ambulance. She could not walk, had trouble speaking and swallowing, and had issues with her memory and word recall.

“I couldn’t hold my head up,” she remembers. “It felt like a bowling ball.”

She was in Shepherd’s Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU) and was also part of the Adolescent Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program while she was an inpatient. She spent a month and a half in therapy, gaining muscle strength and re-learning how to walk, talk, and feed herself. By the end of August, she had made great progress. Her paralysis was nearly gone, she was walking on her own, and her speech had improved. She could even dance. In fact, as she continued her rehabilitation at Shepherd Pathways, Shepherd Center’s comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury, she choreographed a dance and got her therapy team to join in.

In January 2023, Mo achieved a major milestone when she started college at Georgia State University. Today, she is in her second semester of college, lives independently, and can drive. She credits Shepherd Center for where she is now.

“It’s such an amazing place,” she says. “The people there are so caring, and they became like a family. I am so grateful to all the therapists for how far I’ve come with their help.”



Chris Port

Austin, Texas

The summer before his senior year in high school, Chris Port worked full-time at a warehouse. In the evenings, he played summer league basketball or worked out in preparation for another season of sports. He was, he says, “burning the candle at both ends.”

One morning in late July, he dozed off while driving and hit a telephone pole, sustaining a C-2 to C-4 level spinal cord injury (SCI). Chris was taken to DeKalb Medical Center (now Emory Decatur Hospital) in Decatur, Georgia, and after a brief stay, he transferred to Shepherd Center. He had spinal fusion surgery at Piedmont Hospital and began rehabilitation at Shepherd.

He says when he arrived at Shepherd, he felt invincible and, therefore, somewhat resistant to therapy.

“As a 17-year-old high school athlete, I thought, ‘I’ll be fine. All these things you want to teach me, we’ll push that off because I’m going to be okay,’” Chris explains. “And the therapists had an incredible way of accepting that attitude, but then pushing at the right time and getting 110% out of me and whatever was possible to get out of my body.”

So, Chris and his care team got to work.

“Shepherd gets you into doing things so fast from a therapeutic perspective, from a mental perspective, and ultimately trying to normalize whatever normal is going to be,” he remembers.

When he left Shepherd, Chris finished his senior year in high school and then studied at Georgia Tech. After graduating, he worked in management consulting, living in Japan for a year. He went on to get his MBA from Duke University. Chris eventually regained full movement on the right side of his body and limited movement on the left side. He walks with a cane and sometimes uses a wheelchair to play basketball or rugby. He’s continued to push himself and credits Shepherd with his willingness to face challenges.

Now 51, Chris is married with two children and a successful career. He just started a new company and is looking forward to new adventures in life. As he reflects upon the past, he says that the lessons he learned at Shepherd Center helped him live the life he always imagined.

“Shepherd provided me with an even stronger foundation for pushing through challenging things and challenging myself. So much of how I approach every day was born back in that summer of 1989.”



Caroline McClure

Woodstock, Georgia

In 2018, Caroline McClure climbed over a seven-foot wall during a Junior ROTC summer camp and landed poorly, injuring her back and hip. Doctors found what’s called a spinous process fracture in her L-5 vertebra.

“Things were never the same after that,” she says of her accident.

For more than a year, Caroline, who was 17 at the time, endured worsening burning pain, hypersensitivity, and fatigue in her right leg, hip, and back.

“I didn’t really have a diagnosis, and the doctors didn’t know how to help me,” she says. “Nobody understood what I was going through.”

In December 2019, Caroline’s doctor referred her to the Dean Stroud Spine and Pain Institute at Shepherd Center. In her first visit with the Pain Institute’s Medical Director, Erik Shaw, D.O., Dr. Shaw determined she had complex regional pain syndrome. He told her there were things he could do to help relieve her symptoms.

She started with pain blockers and immediately experienced some relief. Dr. Shaw also prescribed medication to make her flare-ups less frequent and intense. The hypersensitivity improved, and through physical therapy, she gained mobility using crutches.

In Fall 2022, doctors implanted a spinal cord stimulator that further mitigated the pain. The device has enabled her to reduce her medication and has lessened her dependence on mobility aids such as crutches and a cane.

“The changes were gradual but steady,” Caroline says of her improvements over the past four years. “Any relief I felt gave me great joy. I could wear leggings and shoes. I felt like putting on makeup. The person I had been was slowly coming back. My experience at Shepherd has been absolutely incredible,” she continues, “from the doctors to the therapists to the nurses — everyone has been incredibly supportive and kind. It’s obvious that they care and put everything they can into getting you better.”

Caroline is now in her fourth year at Kennesaw State University, studying chemistry. After she earns her degree, she hopes to become a scientist specializing in neuroscience research and chronic pain conditions. It’s a future she had trouble seeing after her injury.

“At first, everything was so daunting and depressing,” Caroline says, “but now I realize that even with this condition, I can do so much more. Shepherd Center gave me hope.”



By Ruth Underwood

Adventures with Andee's Army

Andee's Army's near decade-long support of adolescent patients, programs, and research at Shepherd Center is worth celebrating.

Project Rollway, Fun Fridays, Prom, Homecoming Week, and the Haunted House – events like these are created with Shepherd Center's youngest patients in mind.

They're designed to allow adolescent patients to participate in milestone events they may miss while in rehabilitation, build self-esteem, and boost confidence in navigating the world beyond Shepherd's walls. And Andee's Army's support of Shepherd Center, a partnership that will celebrate 10 years in February, helps make events like these possible.

"Andee's Army's support of the adolescent program has been transformative. Their

partnership has allowed more opportunities for our adolescent patients, who have gone through the unimaginable, to see their future after injury," says Paula Ackerman, MS, OTR/L, Shepherd's spinal cord injury post-acute program manager.

Andee's Army began after Andee Poulos, then 14 years old, had an arteriovenous malformation (AVM) — a tangle of blood vessels — rupture in her brain. Andee came to Shepherd Center for rehabilitation and made an incredible recovery. A committed group of supporters who helped her founded Andee's Army to ensure that other adolescents who sustain brain or spinal cord injuries and their families

have the support they need. Andee's Army partners with Shepherd Center, offering personalized grants

to patients, funding research, and backing programs to improve mental health and quality of life to help adolescents with brain and spinal cord injuries achieve the highest level of independence possible.

"We step in when insurance steps out," explains Nina Cheney, executive director of Andee's Army. "We support everything from durable goods or home modifications to driving education and Beyond Therapy.® As we've grown, we've realized that there are other ways we can support patients in getting back to living as fully as possible — that is what Shepherd is so great at, and that's why we sponsor things like prom and the Halloween Haunted House."

Andee's Army has also supported several research projects, including, most recently, Keeping Adolescents and Young Adults Connected (KAYAC). KAYAC aims to connect newly injured inpatient young adults and adolescents with spinal cord or brain injury to a peer mentor who is a year or more beyond their injury.

"It has been game-changing to have Andee's Army's support — it makes a world of difference," says Katie Harris Rains, Psy.D., rehabilitation neuropsychologist and co-principal investigator for KAYAC.

Cheney says supporting adolescents' mental health is central to Andee's Army's mission.

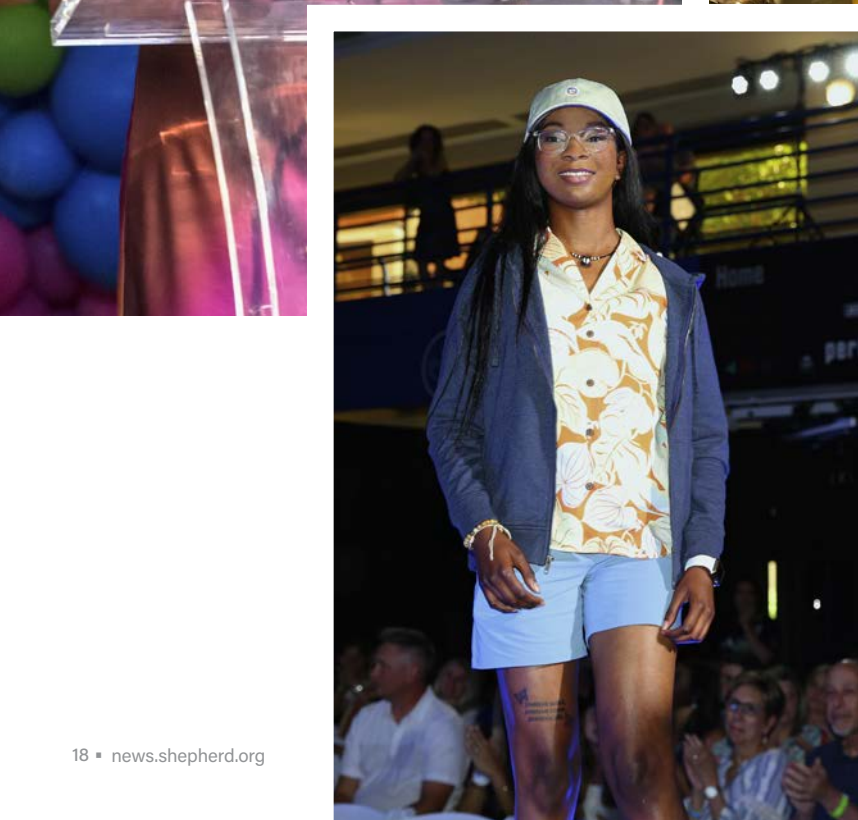
"It is so dramatic when you are around these kids, to see the change in their outlook after they begin therapy. It goes back to that 'I can't to I can.' Yes, your life will be different, but you have a lot to contribute, and at Shepherd, they'll find the best way for you to move forward. We have such a long, lovely relationship with Shepherd, and it's very mission-driven for us. Shepherd is the manifestation of what we do," Cheney says.

As for Andee, she just graduated from college with honors and has started working.

"It is incredible that all of this started with one little girl who is just an amazing person," Cheney reflects. ✨



(Opposite page, far left) Andee Poulos recently graduated college. Here, she's pictured speaking at Andee's Army's annual Evening of Hope gala. ➤ Andee's Army supports Shepherd Center events for adolescent patients like Project Rollway, prom night, and homecoming week.



Photos by Laura Barnard, Drew Oswald, and William Twitty





Celebrating “Topping Out”

A Construction Milestone for the New Arthur M. Blank Family Residences

By Jon Roxland

On the afternoon of October 11, Shepherd Center board members, campaign donors, staff, and leadership gathered at the new Arthur M. Blank Family Residences site to celebrate the construction “topping out” of the 16-story tower set to open next fall. Upon completion, when combined with Shepherd Center’s existing family housing, this facility will allow all patient families coming to Shepherd from outside metro Atlanta to stay onsite for the entire length of their loved ones’ inpatient stay.

“Our family foundation is honored to support Shepherd Center in helping more families heal together,” says Arthur M. Blank, chairman of the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. “Having a safe, accessible place families can call home away from home is imperative during a patient’s healing, and I’m grateful for Shepherd Center’s continued efforts in putting a patient’s needs, with family included in that, first.”

A short program began with a welcome from Shepherd Center CEO Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, who emphasized the importance of family housing to the hospital’s industry-leading outcomes and highlighted the four-decade partnership that Shepherd has enjoyed with Arthur Blank, Atlanta philanthropist, Home Depot co-founder, and honorary co-chair of Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center. His \$50 million grant made this new building possible.

During his remarks, Blank shared his continued admiration and appreciation for Shepherd Center’s mission and all the families that the hospital has been able to help. He stressed the importance of having family nearby during treatment. Taylor Nester, Brasfield & Gorrie’s project

manager, also spoke. She underscored how special this project has been to their team, especially since her family is one of the thousands who have benefitted from Shepherd’s care when her father was a patient decades ago.

Former Shepherd Center patient Caroline Hazel spoke about her recovery journey and the critical role her family played in it, leading Caroline and her family to name the Hazel Family Garden, a beautiful green space beside the new building. Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, president and chief operating officer (COO) of Shepherd Center, concluded the program by expressing his continued appreciation for all campaign donors on behalf of his family and the entire Shepherd team.

To learn more about this transformational expansion project and Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center, visit ExpandingShepherd.org. *

(Clockwise from top) Taylor Nester (R), project manager for Brasfield & Gorrie, poses for a photo with her parents, Carol Godfrey and Thomas Godfrey. Thomas was a Shepherd patient in 1980. ► The 16-story Arthur M. Blank Family Residences tower at 1860 Peachtree Road will include approximately 160 housing units. ► Caroline Hazel, a former Shepherd patient, talks about the importance of her family’s support in her recovery. ► Alana Shepherd, co-founder and chairman of the board of Shepherd Center, shares a hug with Arthur Blank, Home Depot co-founder and longtime supporter of Shepherd.

Photos by William Twitty

Fairways to Hope: Shepherd Center Cup

Shepherd Center hosted a beautiful day on the golf course in support of its Recreation Therapy Program.



The echoes of laughter and the satisfying clinks of golf clubs meeting golf balls have settled after the 39th Shepherd Center Cup, held on September 18, 2023. Blue skies over Cherokee Country Club’s sunlit fairways provided the ideal setting for a memorable day.

The tournament, chaired by Paul Pilcher, raised more than \$180,000 to benefit Shepherd Center’s Recreation Therapy Program, which helps patients with temporary or permanent disabilities lead healthy and active lifestyles as independently as possible through recreational activities by providing education, skill development, and community reintegration opportunities.

The 40th Shepherd Center Cup tees off on September 23, 2024. For more information and sponsorship opportunities, contact Shanna Thorpe at Shanna.Thorpe@Shepherd.org. *

One-hundred eighty-eight golfers enjoyed a beautiful day at Cherokee Country Club for the 39th Shepherd Center Cup benefitting Shepherd’s Recreation Therapy Program. ► (right) Mike Hanley and Linda Hanley shared their Shepherd story at the 39th Shepherd Center Cup. Linda was a patient in 2022 and participated in adaptive golf with Shepherd Center’s Recreation Therapy Program.

Photos by Erica Attkin



By Shanna Thorpe

Tournament Sponsors

Presenting



Course

Billi Marcus

Medalist



Team & Hole

Batchelor & Kimball
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The Conlan Company
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Manhattan Life
McGriff, Siebels & Williams
Morgan Stanley
ShepCo Paving, Inc.
Snapper Industrial Products, Inc.
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Acrisure
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American Structural Concrete
AON
Arkadios
Biogen
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Bill Clineburg, and Buzz White
Dryman/Hanley
Empower
Evan Hayes - Clover Capital
HealthGram
Hight Knox Properties
In Honor of John Kranyecz Jr.

Tony White
Upshot Case Management
Western Skies MGU
Whitehead Electric
Zuriz Roofing

Hole

Flanagan Law, P.C.
Foundation Health Consultants
Stealth Partner Group
Trustmark Health Benefits, Inc.
Worldwide Employee Benefits
Zaxby’s

Special Guests Tour Shepherd Center



During their tour, Kim Carter, COO and chief wellness officer, L1FE Organization; B. Taylor, recording artist and founder, LIFE Organization; and Ndileka Mandela, activist and granddaughter of Nelson Mandela, discuss adaptive technology with Danny Housley, (left), assistive technology case manager at Shepherd Center.

This fall, Shepherd Center staff had the honor of hosting a tour for Ndileka Mandela, activist, former ICU nurse, and eldest granddaughter of Nelson Mandela, Tony Lowe, principal consultant for Veterans of Foreign Wars Foundation, B. Taylor, recording artist, Navy veteran, and founder of L1FE Organization, Kim Carter, COO and chief wellness officer of L1FE Organization, and other members of their team.

The tour provided an excellent opportunity to connect and exchange ideas. Mandela was especially excited to learn from Danny Housley, Shepherd Center's Assistive Technology Center equipment case manager, about Shepherd's high- and low-tech adaptive technology solutions. For B. Taylor, a highlight was learning how Shepherd music specialist Thomas Miller makes music with patients while helping them reach their therapy goals. B. Taylor also remarked that Shepherd Center feels "like a home; it doesn't feel like a hospital." Mandela thanked Alana Shepherd, co-founder of Shepherd Center and chairman of the board, for her "vision, dream, and tenacity" in co-founding the hospital. ✨

Cornhole for a Cause

Shepherd Center Junior Committee hosted an afternoon of cornhole, music, food, and drinks to support Shepherd's Recreation Therapy Program.

By Erica Spurling

On Saturday, September 9, 2023, Shepherd Center's Junior Committee held its inaugural Cornhole Tournament at Monday Night Brewing – West Midtown.

With more than 30 teams and 40 spectators, the afternoon was filled with cornhole, music, food, drinks, and fun! Participants were not deterred when storm clouds rolled in, and the activities moved indoors. The tournament had a competitive division for advanced players and a social division. For the competitive division, first-place winners were Buzz and Sir Big Spur (Dustin Norton and Greg Stoll), and second place was awarded to the Midwest Cornies (Ryan Love and friend). For the social division, first place went to the Corn Dawgs (Bradley Blanton and Dan Steinkuehler) and second place to We're All Ears (Jake Johnston and

Cecilia McManus). The \$14,000 raised at the event will benefit Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program.

This event was made possible by Silver Sponsors Synovus and the Huffner Family Foundation and Toss Sponsors Mallen + Johnson Real Estate Group and Tiffany L. Williams IP Law, LLC. Cornhole ATL assisted with check-in and running the tournament.

Interested in joining Junior Committee or attending their events next year? Scan the QR code to check out their website and stay up to date. ✨



(above) Junior Committee co-chair Tate Davis (L) and membership co-chair Frank Cannon celebrate the inaugural cornhole tournament. ➤ (below) Winners from Junior Committee's inaugural Cornhole Tournament proudly display their prizes.



Shepherd's Men Honors Fallen Veterans and First Responders

From September 10-11, 2023, Shepherd's Men traveled to Connecticut and New York to honor fallen veterans with a 22-mile Fireman's Carry Movement, raising awareness of veteran suicide, honoring the brave responders on September 11, 2001, and highlighting the help that is available to veterans. Comprised of active or retired service members and civilian volunteers, Shepherd's Men raises awareness and funds for Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative (SHARE). This comprehensive rehabilitation program delivers world-class, interdisciplinary care at no cost to veterans, service members, and first responders dealing with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and mental health concerns.

The group divided the movement into three parts, the first two stages were in Connecticut, traveling from Hartford to the Iwo Jima Memorial in New Britain, then from the 9/11 Memorial in Westport to the Purple Heart Monument in Norwalk. The final stage was in New York City, ending at the World Trade Center Memorial.



(Left) The final five miles of the Fireman's Carry Movement occurred in New York City, including several firehouses along the route. ➤ Shepherd's Men members took turns carrying one another in a fireman's carry during the 22-mile route.

Participants took turns carrying one another over their shoulders in a "fireman's carry."

"We must make it a top priority to care for our veterans who return home with visible and invisible wounds," says Travis Ellis, co-founder of Shepherd's Men. "Our veterans deserve to live meaningful, gratifying lives with their families after their courageous service to our country." ✨

A Lead-up to the 2023 Legendary Party

By Erica Spurling

On September 28, Shepherd Center hosted a Patron Party to thank sponsors of the 2023 Legendary Party: Nostalgia of Discovery. The soiree took place at the home of Patty Alias and Shaler Alias, a member of Shepherd Center's Board of Directors. The gathering helped build excitement for The Legendary Party and honored those who have supported the event and Shepherd Center.

Nearly 100 guests enjoyed an evening under the stars, filled with conversation, food, and friends.

"From the décor and food provided by Legendary Events to the beautiful Alias home, it was a wonderful evening with incredible people," says Anne Worrell, this year's Ball Chair, along with her husband, Andrew.

"We can't thank the Aliases enough for opening their home and hosting this event for Shepherd Center," says Erica Spurling, special events associate at Shepherd Center Foundation.



The main event, Legendary Party: Nostalgia of Discovery, took place on November 4 at Flourish Buckhead, honoring Shepherd Center Board of Trustee member Elizabeth Allen and the late Carl Allen, for their dedication and support of the mission for more than four decades and their daughter Jessica Allen Jones, and her husband Justin Jones, who also serves on Shepherd's Board of Directors, for their passion to serve the hospital's patients and their families. Throughout the evening, honored guests and faithful supporters shared Shepherd Center's mission and vision with newcomers.

All funds raised will support Shepherd's Innovation Institute, a new, 30,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art space allowing



Shepherd to make even greater advancements for patients and the neurorehabilitation field. The Innovation Institute will reside in the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation on Shepherd's main campus.

This year's Legendary theme, "The Nostalgia of Discovery," looked at where Shepherd has been and what the future may hold. You'll find more details on this legendary event in the spring issue of Spinal Column. ✨

(clockwise) (L-R) Andrew Worrell and Anne Worrell, this year's Legendary Ball Chairs, take a moment for a picture with Patty Alias and Shepherd Board of Directors member Shaler Alias. ➤ Guests mingle on a beautiful evening for the Patron Party at the home of Patty Alias and Shaler Alias. ➤ Anne Worrell, Sarah Shepherd, and Patty Alias pause for a photo.

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, 2023 and September 30, 2023.**



This fall, a Shepherd Center team participated in the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Bike MS event in LaGrange, Georgia. Shepherd Center represented the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute with pride by supporting Shepherd's bike team and by sponsoring a rest stop, themed the "Shepherd Saloon."

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Ms. Julie H. Shepherd and
Mr. Andrew Louw
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Introducing Poet III, a recent addition to the Shepherd Center facility dog family. He has joined his handler, Detrick Gates, CTRS, working with patients at Shepherd Pathways.

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- USMC Cpl Kevin Cueto**
Ms. Alexandria Carvalho



Shepherd Center's recreation therapy team and participants took a trip to Steamboat Springs, Colorado this fall. One day, the group, including Travis Daniel and his wife, Bree Daniel, enjoyed adaptive cycling at Howelsen Park.



Photo provided by RPM 9/11 Race

On Saturday, September 9, the 12th annual RPM 9/11 Race brought out several hundred registered participants to raise funds and support Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative.

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This summer, Gunner Garrison's therapy team, with support from Shepherd Center Junior Committee, surprised Gunner and his fiancé, Katelyn Harrod, with a shower to celebrate their upcoming wedding.

Sandra "Sandy" Unruh
Ms. Norma J. Ellis

Lannah Waldrip
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Rita Waters
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Honorariums

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, 2023 and September 30, 2023.**



Shepherd Center's recreation therapy team worked with arts specialist, Alex Cosper, MS, to host a virtual art clinic. Clinics like these help patients continue to improve their dexterity and work on a skill, all while staying connected.

Sean Abercrombie
Ms. Cheryl Freimutj

Elizabeth Allen's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. Albert M. Ashkouti

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Ms. Margaret Kilapatrik

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Mr. and Mrs. Norman Ching

Oliver Jones
The Martin Andersen-Gracia
Andersen Foundation, Inc.

Susan Kendall
Ms. Victoria Hood



Hawda Shukralla receives instruction from Shepherd staff member Alex Toliver during Shepherd's October tennis clinic at Wills Park in Alpharetta, Georgia. This year's tennis clinics were sponsored by the ALTA Foundation.

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The Shepherd Center Staff

Mr. and Mrs. Christopher R.
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Clyde Shepherd

Mr. and Mrs. John Jett



Cierra Jones (L) and Ari Spotts (R) look for birds during one of Shepherd Center's birdwatching clinics at the Atlanta Botanical Garden. Wendy Battaglia, Shepherd's horticulture specialist, and Birds Georgia led the clinic.

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Ms. Liza Lanier

Jeffrey Werner's Birthday

Mr. and Mrs. Marc Werner

**Price and Tammy
Woodward**

Mr. and Mrs. Steve Junis

Mak Yost

Ms. Candace English



In August, Shepherd Center and Genuine Parts Company formally launched the Genuine Parts Company Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The program will enhance Shepherd Center's vocational services, where expert vocational specialists help patients identify their challenges in returning to work, practice problem-solving, and find available career resources in their communities.

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Thank you!

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Supporting Innovation through ShepherdCares

By Alex Seblatnigg

Each September, Shepherd Center employees pull together to support a need within the hospital by contributing to ShepherdCares, the hospital's employee giving initiative. This year's campaign, "Shepherd Center: The Final Frontier," supported innovation initiatives at Shepherd Center, including those housed in the new 30,000-square-foot Innovation Institute, which is being constructed as part of Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center. The Innovation Institute will occupy the top floor of the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation on Shepherd Center's main campus. It will accelerate the development of technologies and models of care for recovery and expand access to Shepherd's extraordinary care.

Honorary chairs challenged employees to "boldly go where no campaign has gone before" to raise \$175,000 toward this worthy cause. Seventy staff ambassadors encouraged their co-workers to participate in the campaign and helped host kickoff events for staff around the center.

Shepherd Center employees rose to the challenge, pledging an incredible \$204,412 in four weeks. That figure was 17% over the stated goal and enough to earn an



additional \$30,000 challenge grant from a generous donor, bringing the total raised to \$234,412. Shepherd is grateful for the passionate and philanthropic employees who helped support patients in this meaningful way. *