



**On a  
Mission**



Shepherd Center

# Annual Report - Fiscal Year 2025

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025





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# *On a Mission*

## **Annual Report - Fiscal Year 2025**

April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025

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***Dear Friends,***

This year, Shepherd Center celebrates a major milestone. It's been 50 years since our founding, and since day one, we've been on a mission.

Over the last five decades, we've grown from a six-bed hospital specializing in spinal cord injury care into the premier neurorehabilitation facility of the Southeast, offering state-of-the-art care for patients experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, stroke, and multiple sclerosis. This care, in addition to the support we offer patient families and our staff, is what defines our mission. I am excited to share our annual report for fiscal year 2025 (April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2025): *On a Mission*.

In this report, you'll see how our incredible inpatient rehabilitation programs, community-based outpatient services, and research and innovation teams support patients and their families, allowing them to return to what they love with independence and dignity. Just like our employees, our patients are on a mission — to return to their families, communities, and careers at rates higher than the national average.

You'll also learn about the remarkable progress made through Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center during FY25. The year saw milestones for the campaign, including the completion of two new buildings on campus, as well as continued fundraising to meet our goals of increasing patient access, investing in innovation, educating the next generation of neurorehabilitation experts, and improving the patient and family experience.

Many things have changed over the last 50 years, but many remain the same. In the final sections of the report, you'll get a glimpse of Shepherd's unique culture, which has served as the organization's foundation since its inception. Our staff, volunteers, and community members uplift us and our patients, and for that, we are truly grateful.

We appreciate you taking the time to read this report and supporting us as we continue on our mission.



Sincerely,

***Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE***

President and Chief Executive Officer, Shepherd Center

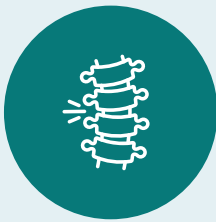




# Shepherd Snapshot

With five decades of experience, Shepherd Center provides world-class clinical care, research, and family support for people experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord and brain injuries, stroke, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, multiple sclerosis, and pain. An elite center ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the nation's top hospitals for rehabilitation, Shepherd Center is also recognized as both Spinal Cord Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems. Shepherd Center treats thousands of patients annually with unmatched expertise and unwavering compassion to help them begin again.

## Inpatients Served in FY25 (Discharges)



Spinal Cord injury (SCI):  
**262**



Acquired Brain Injury (ABI):  
**336**



Stroke:  
**177**



Dual Diagnosis  
(SCI and ABI):  
**88**



Neurological:  
**21**



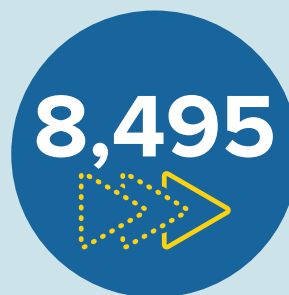
Skin, Wound:  
**24**



Other:  
**36**



**944** Total Inpatients  
Discharged from  
Shepherd Center



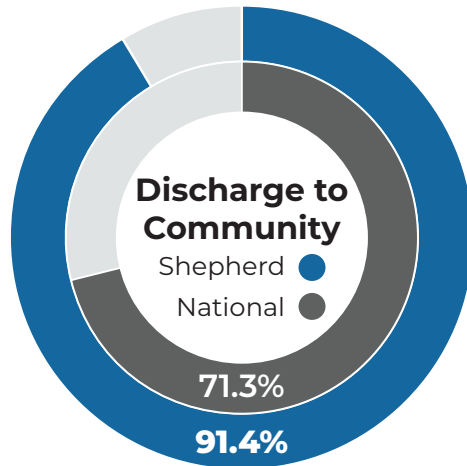
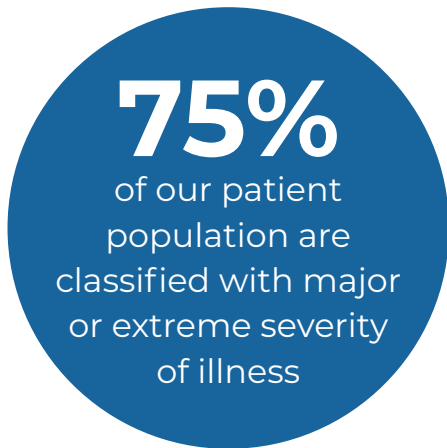
**8,495** Unique Outpatients  
Served at  
Shepherd Center

Data Source: Uniform Data System for Medical Rehabilitation (UDS) and Epic

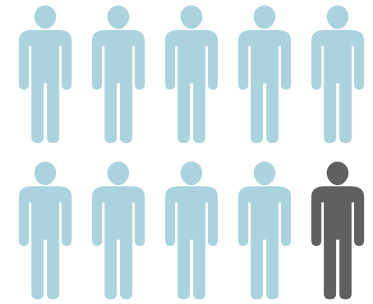


# Phenomenal Care for the Most Complex Conditions

Shepherd Center is on a mission to help those with the most severe injuries and illnesses return to their homes, communities, and the things they love the most. By providing patient and family education on returning home, returning to school, and/or returning to work, hospital staff helps minimize the risk of complications or extra hospital visits after discharge, while preventing the emotional and financial burdens of having a loved one in a long-term care facility.

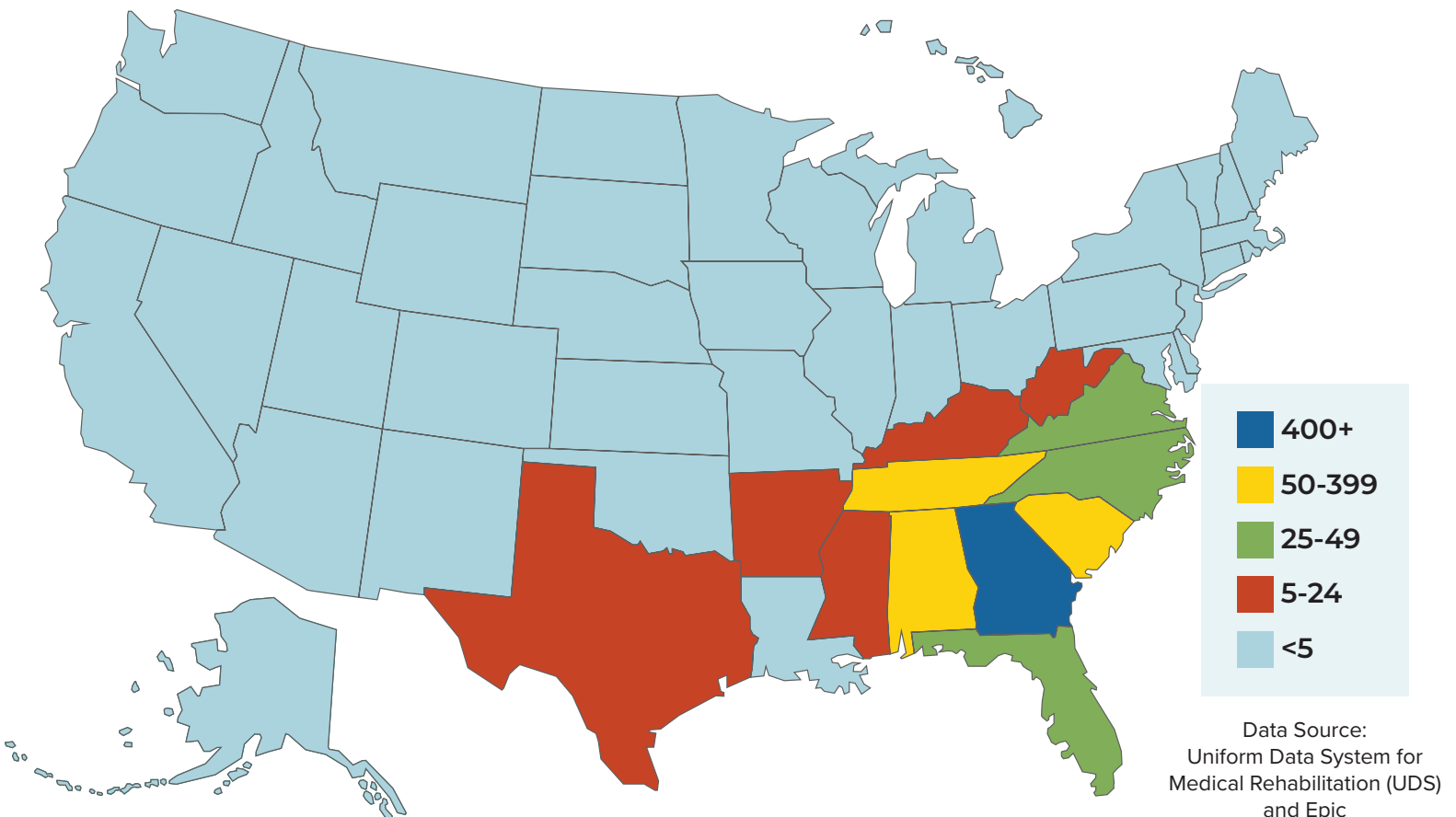


Percentage of rehabilitation patients who were able to return to the community after rehabilitation instead of going to an additional care facility.



**Fewer than 1 in 10 patients** needed rehospitalization for any reason within 30 days of discharge from Shepherd Center. This very low rate results from Shepherd's focus on patient and family training and transition support.

## Inpatient Discharges by State









# Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program

## A Mission to Support

Every year, hundreds of patients and families from near and far travel to Shepherd Center to receive its unique brand of rehabilitation and care. For many patients, their journey begins in Shepherd's on-site 10-bed intensive care unit. It then progresses to inpatient rehabilitation, which includes rehabilitation in multiple disciplines and family support and training. Once patients no longer need 24-hour medical care, they may move on to the day program. From there, various outpatient services, including Beyond Therapy®, health and wellness activities, and vocational support, help patients and families continue to have breakthroughs after spinal cord injury.

## Returning Patients to What They Love

Like Shepherd's staff, its patients are on a mission: to return to their homes, communities, and careers, and to get back to the things they love most. Helping patients rebuild a healthy, active, and independent life isn't an afterthought at Shepherd — it drives rehabilitative care.

In FY25, Shepherd Center continued to help rebuild the lives of those living with the most complex injuries. 82.5% of patients with spinal cord injuries at Shepherd Center had traumatic injuries, compared to 22.1% nationwide. In FY25, 73.6% of our patients were meeting discharge expectations for self care, 7.5% higher than the national average. Additionally, the hospital served 235 patients in the Spinal Cord Injury Day Program, and 366 patients in the Spinal Cord Injury Post-Acute Program.

With the unmatched expertise and unwavering compassion of Shepherd Center's staff, patients with traumatic spinal cord injuries were able to return to their communities at a rate 20.6% higher than the national average.



“Meeting other wheelchair users who didn't get to go to Shepherd, I got to see the quality of life that I have because of the therapy and education I got there. I feel like I graduated from the Ivy League of rehabilitation.”



— **Brandon Winfield, SCI Patient**

Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to read more about Brandon's story.



# Mission-Driven Care for Extraordinary Outcomes

## Spinal Cord Injury (FY25 April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025)

**262**

Inpatients discharged from Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program at Shepherd Center

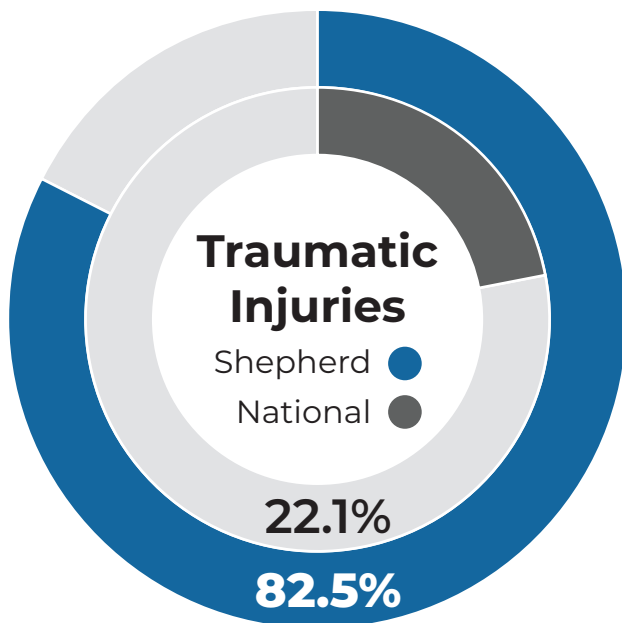
**41**

Average age of patients at Shepherd Center with spinal cord injury

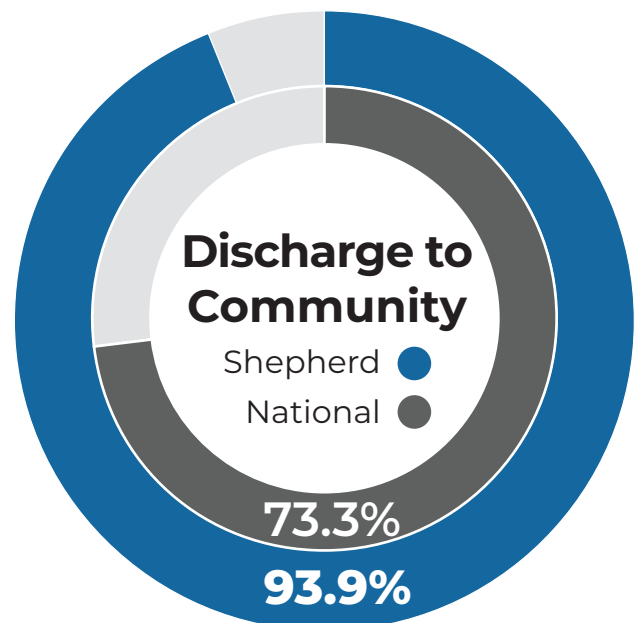
**82%**

Patients with spinal cord injuries liberated from ventilators\*

\*5-year average



The percentage of patients at Shepherd Center whose spinal cord injuries were traumatic.



Percentage of patients with traumatic spinal cord injuries who were able to return to the community after rehabilitation at Shepherd Center instead of going to an additional care facility.

Data Source: Uniform Data System for Medical Rehabilitation (UDS) and Epic

**Why this matters:** Shepherd Center's patients are recovering from complex injuries and illnesses, with the average age of an inpatient ranging from 37-52 across programs. By preparing patients to safely and independently return to their communities, Shepherd staff minimizes the risk of complications or extra hospital visits after discharge, while preventing the emotional and financial burdens of having a loved one in a long-term care facility.





## *Innovative Care for Complex Conditions*

» **Helping Wheelchair Users Prepare for Follow-Up Care and Preventive Care:** Individuals with spinal cord injuries (SCI) are at a high risk of developing secondary health conditions, especially after leaving the inpatient hospital setting. Due to accessibility and mobility restrictions, many individuals with SCI are hesitant to attend medical appointments, so therapists in the SCI Program (Marie Alexander, MSOT, OTR/L, Lindsay Mayr, PT, DPT, Avery Blankenburg, MS, CTRS, and Erin Prentice, MHS, OTR/L, CLT) created video resources of different transfer techniques to help these patients feel more comfortable. The team went to three different medical offices with different types of exam chairs and tables: a vision clinic, a dentist office, and an OBGYN office. They filmed real SCI

patients performing various independent and assisted transfers to these different surfaces. Additionally, the videos include tips on positioning and protecting skin during longer exams. A supplemental resource includes tips for assessing the accessibility of an exam room, ways patients can prepare for appointments, and items to bring with them. The goal is for individuals living with SCI to feel confident in advocating for themselves and to receive the care they need.

» **Custom Occupational Therapy Sessions Get Patients Back to What They Love:** Shepherd prioritizes getting patients back to what they love most, and incorporating these passions into therapy sessions early on can yield impressive outcomes. That's why Atom Young, OTR/L, an occupational therapist in the SCI Day Program, has been examining how fabrication techniques like woodworking, thermoplastics, metalworking, and car and equipment maintenance can enhance skills and ultimately boost patient engagement, build confidence, and improve mental health.

Young has worked with patients to show them ways to transport materials, modify tools, and safely work on projects, while the patients temporarily take on a teaching role in their area of expertise. Whether hobby-based or return-to-work based, the projects give patients a sense of purpose while allowing them to create tokens of appreciation for loved ones, like a dollhouse or metal sculptures. Other projects have been focused on problem-solving techniques, such as how to perform maintenance or modify tools and processes post-injury. By integrating these techniques into regular therapy sessions, Young has helped patients increase motivation and re-energize their approach to additional therapy goals.







# Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program

## A Mission to Support

In FY25, hundreds of patients and families rebuilding their lives after brain injuries, illnesses, and strokes sought care at Shepherd Center's Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program. Patients in low-level states of consciousness caused by a brain injury or stroke sometimes begin their stay at Shepherd Center in its unique Disorders of Consciousness (DoC) program, which can better meet their specific needs. Some patients enter Shepherd Center through its intensive care unit before progressing to inpatient rehabilitation. Shepherd Pathways, Shepherd Center's outpatient rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury, extends rehabilitation in an outpatient setting for 50% of the inpatients with brain injury. Patients in the Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program also have access to the Vision Clinic, specialty outpatient services, vocational therapy and counseling, transition support, Beyond Therapy®, and health and wellness clinics.

## Returning Patients to What They Love

In FY25, 77.7% of patients with brain injuries at Shepherd Center had traumatic injuries, compared to 31.9% at other facilities, meaning Shepherd's staff treats patients with the most complex injuries. With such high volumes, the team at Shepherd Center has more experience dealing with all levels of brain injuries, including those that result in the need for a ventilator. In FY25, 92.2% of patients with brain injury and 88.1% of stroke patients were discharged to the community, well above the national average. Additionally, in FY25, Shepherd Pathways treated 221 Day Program patients, 22 residential patients, and 939 outpatients.



"It stood out to me how everyone seemed like they were a specialist in this field. No matter if they were a doctor, a surgeon, or a nurse, or a tech, everyone could educate me on this, and they knew what I needed for my new form of life."



— **Phyllicia Thomas, Brain Injury Patient**

Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to learn more about Phyllicia's story.



# Mission-Driven Care for Extraordinary Outcomes

## Acquired and Traumatic Brain Injury

(FY25 April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025)

**336**

Inpatients with traumatic and acquired brain injuries discharged from the Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program

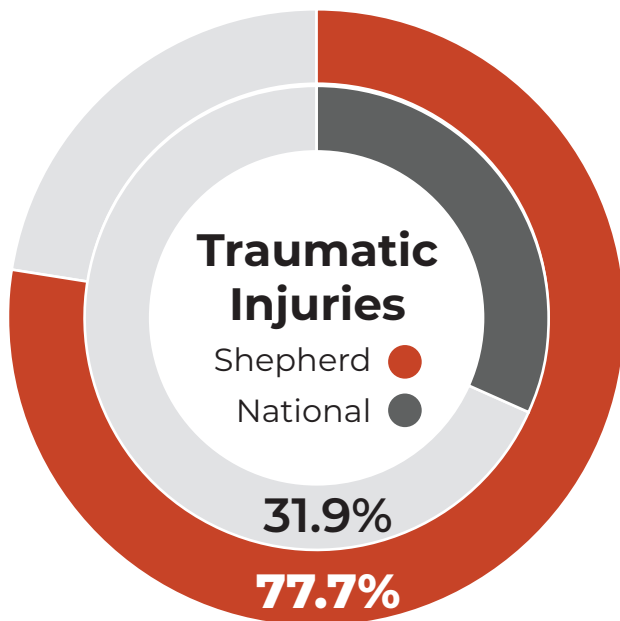
**37**

Average age of patients at Shepherd Center with an acquired brain injury

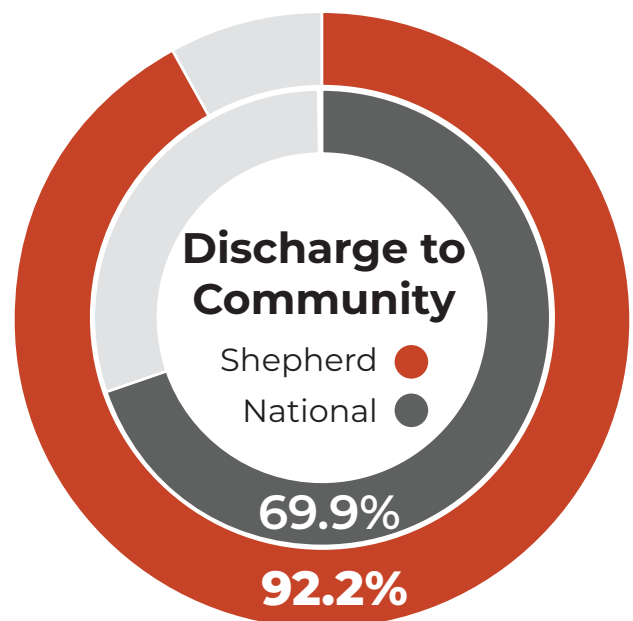
**89%**

Patients with acquired brain injury liberated from ventilators\*

\*5-year average



The percentage of patients at Shepherd Center whose brain injuries were traumatic.



The percentage of patients with traumatic brain injuries who were able to return to the community after rehabilitation at Shepherd Center, instead of going to an additional care facility.

Data Source: Uniform Data System for Medical Rehabilitation (UDS) and Epic

**Why this matters:** Shepherd Center's patients are recovering from complex injuries and illnesses, with the average age of an inpatient ranging from 37-52 across programs. By preparing patients to safely and independently return to their communities, Shepherd staff minimizes the risk of complications or extra hospital visits after discharge, while preventing the emotional and financial burdens of having a loved one in a long-term care facility.





## Stroke (FY25 April 1, 2024 - March 31, 2025)

**177**

Inpatients with stroke who discharged from the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program

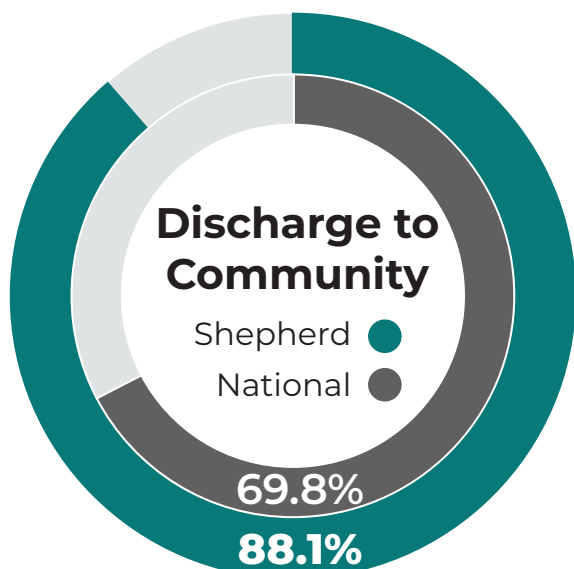
**52**

Average age of patients at Shepherd Center who are rehabilitating after a stroke

**72%**

Percentage of patients with strokes liberated from ventilators\*

\*5-year average



88.1% of patients with strokes were able to return to the community after rehabilitation at Shepherd Center instead of going to an additional care facility.

## Innovative Care for Complex Conditions

- » **Optimizing Posture Assessments with AI:** It can be challenging to assess and treat posture issues for acquired brain injury (ABI) patients, especially when patients have difficulties perceiving where their body is in midline, meaning the center line of the body. In FY25, vision specialists within the Acquired Brain Injury Program partnered with Kentai to develop an AI-powered postural assessment for people with brain injuries. The assessment aims to increase efficiency and treatment effectiveness, especially when combined with prism glasses. The first trial included 10 participants and reduced the time it took to assess posture from 30 minutes to 5 minutes.
- » **Referral Enhancements to Improve Self-care and Mobility Outcomes:** The ABI team utilizes self-care and mobility quality measures to indicate progress as well as to analyze which patients will benefit from ABT, Activity-Based Therapy. Starting in FY25, the program's therapy managers designed a system in Epic, Shepherd Center's electronic health record, to signal priority patients for ABI, transforming the referral process to ensure the right patient gets ABT at the right time. The updated referral process has led to better outcomes and improved self-care and mobility measures.
- » **Extracting SRS Outcomes for Day Program and Outpatient Clients:** The Supervision Rating Scale (SRS) is an indicator of how much supervision a patient needs to ensure safety. Shepherd's brain injury programs use the SRS as a key outcome across residential and outpatient stroke and brain injury services, however, outpatient clinics faced extra challenges in extracting SRS data for clients. With help from the Information Services team, the program streamlined the process for retrieving SRS data. The program's performance target for SRS is at least 50% of patients discharged with a score of 5 or lower, indicating they will be able to remain home alone long enough for their caregiver to maintain full-time employment. In FY25, the team successfully met the target.
- » **Advancing Speech Programming with NOMS:** Shepherd used the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association's National Outcomes Measurement System (NOMS) as its outcome to measure the functional changes patients make in swallowing, cognition, and communication. NOMS data analysis is driving the assessment of program performance for inpatient and Pathways, and both are meeting their targets. The team is developing weekly functional assessments and a standard measure for patient progress, which will help determine length of stay and treatment dosing.





# Specialized Inpatient Care

## Intensive Care Unit

Shepherd Center's comprehensive continuum of care includes a 10-bed intensive care unit (ICU). It is the only freestanding rehabilitation hospital focusing on brain and spinal cord injuries nationwide with an ICU on site. When patients transfer to Shepherd from the ICU at an acute care hospital, they are admitted to Shepherd's ICU, providing a solid foundation for rehabilitation to begin more quickly after injury, usually within the first 24 hours of admission to Shepherd Center. This allows staff to admit patients sooner, monitor patient condition, and prevent complications like pressure injuries.

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 overnight ventilator weaning to allow for closer monitoring.

And, if a patient experiences a medical setback, the value of an on-site ICU becomes even more apparent. For example, if a patient is in a rehabilitation facility without an ICU and develops complications, they would need to be discharged from that rehab hospital, admitted to a local acute care facility, and then readmitted to rehab once stabilized. Additionally, the ICU gives peace of mind to caregivers and patients, knowing that vent weaning and changes in medical status can be expertly managed within Shepherd Center.



“Everyone at Shepherd Center was so positive and encouraging, the perfect environment for healing. It was very motivating. I felt safe there. I was part of a community, and everyone wanted me to succeed.”

— **Clarissa Cartwright, Acquired Brain Injury Patient**  
**Admitted to the ICU**



Scan the QR code or visit  
Shepherd Center's website to  
read more about Clarissa's story.





“I love how tight-knit (the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit staff) are and how diverse the patient diagnoses are. It started out as a med-surg floor but has evolved. Now we serve those with brain injuries, strokes, amputations, spinal cord injuries, post skin-flap surgery, and all kinds of neurological disorders.”

— *Jena Kelly, OTR/L, an occupational therapist on the CRU team*



Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to read more about Jena's work.



## ***Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU)***

Research shows that patients with catastrophic injuries and illnesses who seek treatment at hospitals specializing in complex rehabilitation are more likely to have fewer medical complications and achieve more independence. Shepherd Center's Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU) offers highly specialized care to people rebuilding their lives after the most complex medical issues, including spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, stroke, multiple traumas, traumatic amputations, dual diagnoses of spinal cord and brain injuries, pulmonary complications, multiple orthopedic injuries, pressure injuries, and new or complicated diagnoses of neurological diseases.

The expert team in the CRU is cross-trained and has a breadth of experience in caring for patients' advanced medical needs while also helping them begin the rehabilitation process as early as possible. All patients and families in the CRU are assigned a consistent medical team that includes a physician and advanced practice providers, nursing and physical, occupational, speech, respiratory, and recreation therapists, a case manager, a dietician, and a psychologist, among others.











# SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center

Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative is on a mission to help veterans, service members, and first responders who are ready to accept help and healing for their daily struggle with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. SHARE served 130 clients in FY25 by providing comprehensive rehabilitation with flexible programming options, collaborative care, community reintegration, and donor-funded housing. Thanks to the support of generous donors and Shepherd's Men, a group of service members and volunteers, care through SHARE is available at no cost to clients so that they can embark on a truly individualized and impactful path to renewed relationships, purpose, and life.



"I came to Shepherd with the hope that I would get better. The SHARE program was my last lifeline. They helped me, they helped my family, and we are all smiling again."



— **Carlos Ordóñez, SHARE Client**

Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to read more about Carlos' story.







## ***An Updated Space for SHARE and the Complex Concussion Clinic***

### ***Renovations Give Programs Room to Grow***

Just down the street from Shepherd Center, two of its renowned outpatient programs are making a big difference in the lives of patients and clients. SHARE Military Initiative provides evidence-based rehabilitation for military veterans, service members, and first responders with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. The hospital's Complex Concussion Clinic (CCC) offers fully integrated, multi-disciplinary treatment for those experiencing long-term complications from concussions.

Now, thanks to the completion of renovations at 80 Peachtree Park, where SHARE and the CCC are located, the programs will be able to serve even more people.

Planning for the renovations began in 2023, with the main goal to create room for a third care team for the SHARE program. The leadership and staff identified ways to increase the number of clinician offices, optimize treatment space, and tailor the new space to clients with adjusted lighting and soundproofing measures to reduce overstimulation.



Despite the SHARE and CCC teams completing four office moves during the renovations, they never paused treatments. For patients and clients in both programs, a construction zone can present a variety of triggers, including loud noises, heavy foot traffic, and other unexpected disruptions. To minimize the potential for these triggers, Choate Construction, which completed the renovations,



met for “town halls” with Shepherd staff and SHARE clients, explaining upcoming phases of the project and setting expectations for foot traffic and noise levels.

“I’m really proud of our team,” says Jackie Breitenstein, the program manager for SHARE and the Complex Concussion Clinic (CCC). “[Choate was] great, and the staff were wonderful and flexible, and the clients — we made it a point that they knew we were doing this in order to serve more people — so they were all really flexible with it.”

The renovations were completed in FY25, resulting in seven new offices and a restructuring of therapy spaces — moving “louder” therapies like recreation, physical, and occupational therapy to the ground floor, and moving speech therapy and psychology services to the third floor. Additionally, a new multipurpose room can be used for everything from yoga sessions to client graduations, reducing distractions for clinicians and clients working in the main therapy gym.

The most exciting part of the renovations, Breitenstein says, is the ability to grow SHARE. Once the new care team is onboarded, the team will be able to provide potentially life-saving care to approximately 60 additional veterans, service members, and first responders each year.

“We are reminded by our [clients], they tell us — and frequently with tears in their eyes, with their family members around them, and out of a heart of pure gratitude — about how we have saved their lives,” Breitenstein says. “It’s nice to have that reminder knowing we have folks wanting to come in for care, and we’re going to be able to bring them in sooner.”

## Community-Based Programs

Recovery from complex injuries and conditions requires lifelong care and unwavering support. Shepherd Center offers a range of specialized outpatient clinics and comprehensive services designed to help patients and their families build their community of care. Community-based services are staffed by a compassionate and highly skilled team dedicated to tailoring personalized care plans. In addition to outpatient clinics, we also offer various outpatient services to support the rehabilitation journey. These services include state-of-the-art imaging facilities for accurate diagnoses, telehealth options for virtual follow-ups, vocational rehabilitation programs to assist with returning to work, and much more. In FY25, community-based programs served 8,495 unique patients in 68,996 visits.

### Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic

The Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic, formerly known as the Multi-Specialty Clinic, caters to individuals at different stages of their neurological rehabilitation journey, encompassing a range of conditions such as spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, cerebrovascular accidents, transverse myelitis, Guillain-Barré syndrome, and other complex medical conditions. The clinic's comprehensive team includes physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses, medical assistants, and case managers to coordinate care throughout life. In FY25, the Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic served 2,232 patients in 5,100 visits.

### Beyond Therapy®

Beyond Therapy is Shepherd Center's rigorous, activity-based program designed to help people with various neurological disorders improve lifelong health, minimize secondary complications, and get the most from any new neural links to their muscles. In FY25, 99 clients benefited from 6,362 visits to Beyond Therapy.







“I liked how they measured my progress. Some weeks, it was hard for me to feel a difference. Being able to see measured progress helped me stay positive throughout my concussion. It was also nice to be in a clinic where they were focused on one thing — getting me better.”

— **Elizabeth Newton, Patient, Complex Concussion Clinic**



Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to read more of Elizabeth's story.



## **Complex Concussion Clinic**

Concussions can occur as a result of playing sports, car crashes, falls, and other accidents. In most people, concussion symptoms resolve within three to four weeks, but for others — about 20% — their symptoms last well beyond that, with complications that fall beyond the scope of primary care physicians and general neurologists. Fortunately, for these cases, Shepherd Center's Complex Concussion Clinic specializes in identifying and treating symptoms to help people get better and return to their lives. The CCC treated 461 patients through 5,965 visits in FY25.

## **Upper Extremity Rehabilitation Clinic**

The Upper Extremity Clinic at Shepherd Center offers therapy and treatment to improve arm, wrist, and hand function for individuals recovering from neurological, orthopedic, or peripheral nerve injuries. In FY25, the Upper Extremity Clinic served 135 patients in 322 visits.

## **Urology Clinic**

Shepherd Center offers specialized outpatient care focused on the long-term management of complex urinary complications, such as neurogenic bladder, resulting from spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, or other neurological conditions like stroke or multiple sclerosis. In FY25, the Urology Clinic served 528 patients in 1,431 visits.

## **Dean Stroud Spine and Pain Institute**

The Spine and Pain Institute at Shepherd Center is a specialized pain clinic that focuses on restoring function, improving quality of life, and reducing dependence on medications while enhancing psychological well-being and independence. In November 2024, Alaina Hammond, Psy.D., ABPP-RP, joined the Pain Clinic Team as a psychologist, bringing a wealth of experience in rehabilitation psychology. In FY25, 1,412 patients received care in 8,498 visits.

## *Imaging Services*

To help care flow as seamlessly as possible, Shepherd Center has onsite imaging and radiology services for outpatients, inpatients, and community members. Shepherd Center offers X-ray, CT, ultrasound, and 3.0 Tesla MRI, adding precision and convenience to patient care. The department served 3,086 patients in 5,236 outpatient procedures in FY25.

## *Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute*

As the most comprehensive program for people with multiple sclerosis (MS) in the Southeast, the MS Institute at Shepherd Center has treated thousands of people with MS, including 2,946 patients through 13,719 visits in FY25, using a wide range of neurological and rehabilitative services. This comprehensive program offers treatment through FDA-approved medications, research opportunities, and neuropsychological services for individuals living with MS.

## *Eula C. and Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation and Wellness Program*

An integrated partner to our MS Institute, the MS Rehabilitation and Wellness Program supports a healthy lifestyle with group classes for exercise, education, and social activities while offering individual sessions with an exercise physiologist to create a personalized exercise program. In FY25, 586 patients received care in 10,392 visits.



“I was just in complete shock that there was a place out there for people with MS, and there’s another way of living besides being on medication and in the hospital all the time. I get a little chill thinking about that now, because I thought my life was over and it wasn’t.”

— *Sonya Ingram, MS Rehabilitation and Wellness Program Participant*



Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center’s website to read more of Sonya’s story.







## ***Driving Evaluation & Rehabilitation Program***

Shepherd Center's Driving Evaluation and Rehabilitation Program helps clients evaluate, understand, and use available transportation options after experiencing a loss in mobility. Specialty trained occupational therapists address safety and accessibility issues and the unique transportation concerns of people living with disabilities after a spinal cord injury, brain injury, or as a result of another condition. Mobility evaluations include on-the-road examinations, lessons, and fittings for vehicle modifications. In FY25, 524 patients visited the Driving Evaluation and Rehabilitation Program in 738 visits.

## ***Wheelchair Seating and Mobility Clinic***

The Wheelchair Seating & Mobility Clinic offers various seating and mobility services for people with disabilities. Therapists help clients make personalized decisions about seating and mobility devices to address their needs and meet their lifestyle goals. The Wheelchair Seating & Mobility Clinic served 1,669 patients in 2,696 visits in FY25.

## ***Transition Support Program***

The Transition Support Program prevents rehospitalization, improves health and safety outcomes, and promotes patient and family autonomy once the patient is discharged from Shepherd Center, providing an average of eight weeks of follow-up support. Referred clients enroll in the Transition Support Program free of charge. In FY25, Transition Support served 200 individuals.



“Our biggest goal is to remove barriers in the way of people living the life they want. Being able to give people that ability, especially when they feel like they no longer can do something, is the most rewarding part of my job.”



— **Jared Grier, Assistive Technology Rehabilitation Engineer**

Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center’s website to read more about assistive technology at Shepherd Center.



## ***Access Technology Lab***

In the Access Technology Lab, patients can be set up with assistive devices and technology to make it easier to complete daily tasks and improve the quality of their lives. Shepherd Center offers consultations by assistive device specialists to recommend tools or technology to support greater independence for people with temporary or permanent disabilities. In FY25, in addition to serving 322 inpatients over 2102 visits, the team in the Assistive Technology Lab served over 100 patients on an outpatient basis.

## ***Neuropsychology Outpatient Therapy Clinic***

In Shepherd Center’s Neuropsychology Outpatient Clinic, neuropsychologists perform comprehensive neuropsych evaluations for individuals with concerns about their cognitive abilities. Patient questions often relate to specific conditions associated with changes in cognition, such as Alzheimer’s disease, brain tumors, Parkinson’s disease, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, stroke, traumatic brain injury, and others. In FY25, providers saw more than 1,127 patients in over 7,619 visits.

## ***Wound Clinic***

Shepherd Center’s Wound Clinic provides specialized outpatient care dedicated to preventing, managing, and treating chronic wounds. Individuals with complex neurological injuries or conditions are particularly susceptible to developing chronic wounds, whether linked to the initial injury or the onset of the underlying condition. Shepherd Center’s Wound Clinic team understands the diverse challenges associated with chronic wounds and is committed to delivering comprehensive care tailored to each patient’s unique needs. In FY25, 190 patients received care in 635 visits to the Wound Clinic.



## *Innovative Care for Complex Conditions*

Shepherd Center developed its community-based outpatient programs based on community and patient needs and feedback. Leaders in Shepherd's outpatient clinics are constantly looking for ways to enhance the patient experience and help them build a strong foundation of health.



### **In FY25, staff did this by:**

- » **Improving Appointment Scheduling:** Scheduling an appointment with one of Shepherd's community-based programs is now easier than ever, thanks to the completion of a scheduling improvement project allowing patients to effortlessly schedule, reschedule, and cancel appointments using MyChart, a secure online portal that gives patients access to their medical information. The improved scheduling system has reduced errors and improved turnaround times, as well as created a more efficient scheduling procedure for MS infusions. Additionally, patients are now alerted if a sooner appointment becomes available, creating opportunities for earlier access to care.
- » **Strengthening the Continuum of Care:** Many of Shepherd Center's community-based program clients were once in the hospital's inpatient programs. Now, the Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic is collaborating with the Transition Support Program to introduce outpatient offerings to current inpatients. Ifeya Johnson, MSN, RN, CRRN, charge nurse in the Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic, has been visiting patients in the inpatient programs to introduce outpatient offerings and how the clinic's post-acute programs can support inpatients after discharge.
- » **Enhancing Image Release Processes:** In FY25, Shepherd's Imaging Services (MRI, CT, X-ray, and Ultrasound) began a project with the Quality and Outcomes Management team to improve the process of releasing medical images and scans to patients discharging from inpatient programs. In the existing process, patients received a physical disk with their imaging when they were discharged from Shepherd. The team identified how the process could be improved by using the Powershare platform, allowing patients to request images as needed and share them directly with other healthcare facilities. The team is preparing to roll out changes in FY26.







# Research and Innovation

Shepherd Center's robust research program is a cornerstone of its mission to advance neurorehabilitation. With access to diverse patient populations, decades of clinical data, clinical experts, and strong industry and academic collaborations, the Virginia C. Crawford Research Institute is nationally recognized for its innovation and patient-centered initiatives. More than earning accolades, this research improves care for patients past, present, and future.

Shepherd Center's rigorous and integrated research program is powered by competitive funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the U.S. Department of Defense, the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR), Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), as well as private foundations, corporate partners, and philanthropic donors — fueling discoveries that transform care for people with complex neurological conditions.

With the completion of construction on the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, staff members across research and innovation teams are exploring new ways to develop, refine, and evaluate new treatments, medications, diagnostic tools, and therapeutic interventions. In collaboration with academic and industry partners, researchers work to engineer new products and tools and advise industry partners on making the world more accessible for people with disabilities.

In FY25, more than 8,034 people participated in 95 active studies, and Shepherd Center researchers and clinicians had 64 publications, 2 book chapters, and gave 141 presentations.



“You know, a lot of people go to work and do their job and do the bare minimum, but you don't get that [at Shepherd], and you definitely don't get that with research. They're happy to be here, but they're also ready to find something to help somebody — to find a new breakthrough.”



— **Hannah Johnston, SCI Research Participant**

Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to read more about Hannah's story.



## Shepherd Center drives five areas of research:



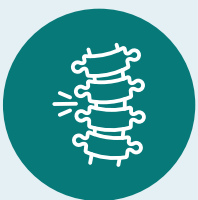
### Brain Injury Research

The Shepherd Center ABI research program had another very successful year in FY25. It's team has been successfully awarded and continues to complete multiple research studies involving multiple partners (e.g., George Vocational Rehabilitation Agency) that are funded by multiple agencies, including NIDILRR, the Department of Defense, John Templeton Foundation, Templeton Religious Trust, Moody Neurorehabilitation, Avalon Action Alliance, and Wounded Warrior Project. Shepherd ABI research staff published 12 peer-reviewed publications in prestigious journals (e.g., Archives of PM&R, Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology, Brain Injury, etc.) and offered 10 presentations at international and national conferences —based on projects that developed innovative vocational interventions with state agencies, provided treatment to veterans with brain injury and co-occurring substance misuse disorders, and promoted successful long-term community reintegration through unique Shepherd programs (e.g., recreational therapy, chaplaincy, etc.).



### Multiple Sclerosis Research

MS research at Shepherd Center includes clinical and translational rehabilitation and wellness intervention trials aimed at helping people with multiple sclerosis live healthier, more independent lives. With funding from NIDILRR, PCORI, the National MS Society, the International Progressive MS Alliance, and support from the Carlos family, the MS team studies the effects of physical and behavioral rehabilitation and exercise interventions, focusing on people with MS who face mobility challenges or barriers to accessing care. Over the past year, the team has expanded its efforts to make rehabilitation more personalized and accessible by leveraging digital health technologies and artificial intelligence. These innovations have allowed researchers to better understand each individual's needs and overcome barriers to accessing care. In FY25, researchers conducted over a dozen research studies involving more than 200 participants and continued to share findings with healthcare providers worldwide, ensuring that people with MS everywhere benefit from the latest advances in rehabilitation and wellness care.



### Spinal Cord Injury Research

To advance knowledge on the best care for people with spinal cord injuries, investigators in the Hulse Spinal Cord Injury Lab at Shepherd Center conduct translational and clinical research focused on neurorehabilitation and neuromodulation approaches. These studies employ clinically accessible forms of brain stimulation, spinal stimulation, and nerve stimulation to optimize the outcomes of rehabilitation interventions. In FY25, Shepherd Center researchers led studies funded by NIH and NIDILRR, as well as a Shepherd Center Foundation-funded study focusing on restoring function and improving the lives of people with spinal cord injuries. In addition to the studies performed within the Hulse Lab, the Shepherd SCI Research Team also collaborates on research projects with their SCI research colleagues across the U.S. and internationally.





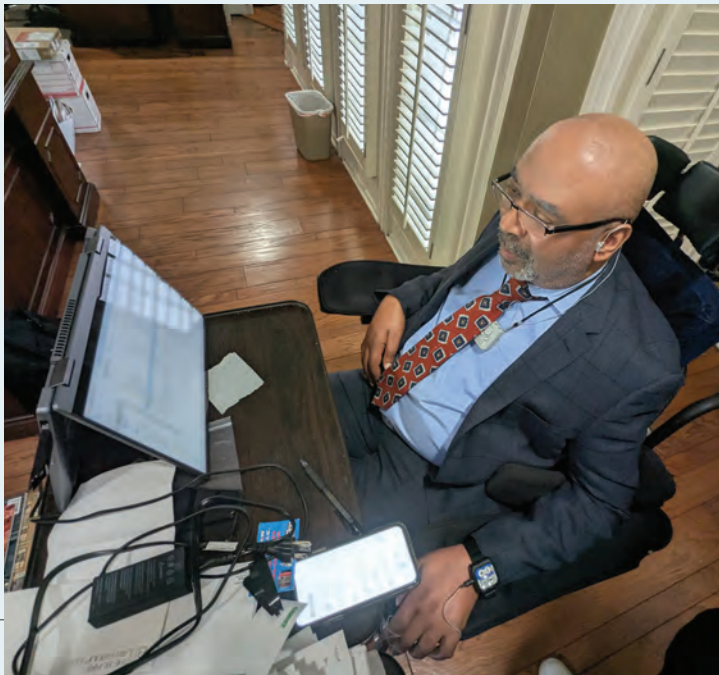
## Accessibility and User Research

Through the Accessibility User Research Collective (AURC), researchers at Shepherd Center help make technology, health, and consumer products and services more accessible and usable for people with all types of disabilities. Companies such as Microsoft, LinkedIn, Samsung, Intel, Netflix, McDonald's, Meta and Nike engage the AURC to understand the needs of Shepherd Center's patient population and the broader community of people with all types of disabilities. Shepherd Center's clinical and research expertise helps connect the disability community with product teams at Fortune 1000 companies and smaller startups and non-profits to understand user experiences, inform product development, and create a more inclusive and equitable world. The AURC network includes over 1,500 people with disabilities across the United States, hundreds of whom participate every year in usability and user experience studies designed and managed by Shepherd Center researchers and collaborators.



## Clinical Trials

Shepherd Center participates in United States Food & Drug Administration (FDA) regulated clinical trials sponsored by pharmaceutical companies, medical institutions, and federal agencies. These trials test the effectiveness and safety of new drugs, cell therapies, and medical devices while expanding scientific and medical knowledge to provide enhanced treatment options for the future for people with spinal cord injuries, brain injuries, MS, and other neurological conditions. Studies featured in FY25 included a study testing the use of spinal stimulation to improve bladder function in people with neurogenic bladder. Two studies introduced experimental add-on drug therapies to standard of care medications with the purpose of enhancing neurological preservation in multiple sclerosis (MS). Other studies addressed the unmet need for the protection of nerves damaged immediately after spinal cord injury (SCI). The team also introduced nerve freezing technology for the management of upper extremity spasticity for people living with stroke and other neurological conditions. In addition to interventional studies, the clinical trials team implemented two safety protocols that monitored outcomes for minority populations and cancer risk in women. In total, Shepherd Center engaged in 23 active clinical trials with over 400 participants.



"[The Kinemo device] allows me to be able to practice law — I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of the user testing."

— **Atlanta attorney Earle Burke, Former SCI Patient and AURC Research Participant**



Scan the QR code or visit Shepherd Center's website to read more about Earle's story.



# *A New Era for Research at Shepherd*

## *Creating the James M. Cox Innovation Institute*

Long before construction on the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation was completed in March 2025, Shepherd Center’s research and innovation staff were planning how they would use their new home base — 30,000 square feet of space, complete with Atlanta skyline views.

The James M. Cox Innovation Institute at Shepherd Center offers a glimpse into the future of neurorehabilitation. Deborah Backus, PT, Ph.D., FACRM, Shepherd’s vice president of research and innovation, helped plan the new space to ensure it will benefit patients and families well into the future.

“We took a strategic approach — first identifying our goals, the information we wanted to generate, and the gaps we saw in both our clinical programs and research,” she explains. “That became our foundation. From there, we visited sites with various types of equipment and engaged with a range of industry partners to inform our decisions.”



Nick Evans, Ph.D., and Brad Willingham, Ph.D., helped spearhead those efforts.

“I’m excited to see the idea of the Human Performance Lab come to fruition in a way that will meaningfully impact patients served and improve quality of care,” Dr. Evans says. “At a personal level, having access to this advanced technology is amazing. It is not common for a researcher to have the chance to build out a space like this, so it is an amazing opportunity.”

Dr. Evans will head up the Human Performance Lab, which is equipped with a ZeroG 3D to provide body-weight support for balance and walking, an instrumented treadmill outfitted with a virtual reality projector screen, and two types of motion-tracking cameras. Dr. Backus says this technology



will allow researchers and clinicians to collect data that could help inform treatment plans, research, and decisions from insurance payors.

“We will be able to provide payors with meaningful, objective data that supports our clinical recommendations,” Dr. Backus says. “For example, if an insurer proposes discharging a patient what we feel is prematurely, we can present evidence-based metrics showing that, given the patient’s current status, early discharge would significantly increase their risk of falls, or pressure injuries, or other complications, based on comparison to our large body of data. This data-driven approach strengthens our advocacy power for the safest and most effective, and potentially the most cost-effective, care plan.”

In addition to the Human Performance Lab, the Innovation Institute also houses the Best Health Suite and Travis Roy Ability Bar. The Ability Bar will provide mainstream as well as innovative devices created through co-innovation by patients, clinicians, and academic and industry partners, for patients to try before they buy, to help them learn what is possible, and help them return to a fully integrated, productive life. In the Best Health Suite, exercise physiologists will host adaptive exercise classes weekly, with offerings to include adaptive strength, cardio, and yoga classes. Additionally, the room features sound and video equipment that will allow staff to record sessions for use as future on-demand programming through burnalong®. The programming is free for Shepherd patients, so no matter where they travel, they have access to guided sessions from Shepherd clinicians.

“I’m looking forward to having a dedicated class space for our adaptive exercise classes, which support patients across the center and those who tune in to on-demand programming from home,” says Marina Moldavskiy, ACRP-CP, Shepherd’s Tele-Wellness Program Manager.

Perhaps the most exciting change is that the Innovation Institute brings together all of the research and innovation programs onto one floor to facilitate cross collaboration and co-innovation, promising more breakthroughs in the years to come.



# NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute

Best practices for providing extraordinary care to patients with complex neurological injuries or illnesses are continually evolving. Clinicians worldwide face challenges in staying current on these specialized topics.

Fortunately, Shepherd Center hosts the NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute (NRLI), an online resource for high-quality, evidence-based education programs. The web-based learning management system hosts interdisciplinary professional education programs providing continuing education credits to healthcare professionals. Providers who access the courses learn from Shepherd's expert physicians, neuropsychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech therapists, recreational therapists, dietitians, nurses, and nurse practitioners.

## During FY25, over 11,000 active learners:

- » Enrolled in nearly 9,500 educational courses
- » Achieved a completion rate of nearly 60%
- » Tuned in from 39 nations, all 50 states, and 3 U.S. territories

## In FY25, the NRLI:

- » Added 69 new educational events, including 28 in-services at trauma centers
- » Offered 185 hours of educational content
- » Awarded over 4,600 hours of continuing education for medical licensure

## In FY25, NRLI achieved:

- » Over 20% growth in active learners
- » 25% growth in international learners
- » 110% growth in educational offerings
- » More than 15% growth in enrollments

## In FY25, popular courses included:

- » Behavior Management with Inpatient ABI Populations
- » Ethical Considerations in Rehabilitation
- » Facilitating Wellness after Mild Traumatic Brain Injury
- » Medical Management of Brain Injury in the Trauma Setting
- » Addressing Sexuality and Intimacy in Brain Injury Rehabilitation





# *Injury Prevention Program*

Since its inception, Shepherd Center's Injury Prevention Program has spearheaded research, programming, and interventions to address injuries related to motor vehicle injuries, falls, diving, and other risky behaviors. A leader within the injury prevention community, Shepherd Center partners with community and government organizations to develop interventions, programs, and policies that encourage safe behaviors and reduce the number of brain and spinal cord injuries.

## **In FY25, Shepherd Center's injury prevention efforts included:**

- » **Making Rural Roads Safer:** According to The Governor's Highway Safety Association, 45% of all fatal crashes happen on rural roads, and the risk of dying is 62% higher on a rural road than on urban roads for the same length of trip. Shepherd Center was awarded its second grant from the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), with a goal to increase seat belt compliance and decrease serious injuries and fatalities on the roads using a social norming campaign targeting rural Georgians in Laurens County. The highway safety grant, totaling \$208,440.99 began on Oct. 1, 2024.
- » **Sharing the Word to Buckle Up:** In December 2024, Director of Injury Prevention Emma Harrington was featured in a televised segment for the Buckle Up Georgia campaign, describing her work on rural road safety and seat belts. Georgia Public Broadcasting and the Governor's Office of Highway Safety produced the segment in collaboration with Shepherd Center.
- » **Preventing Falls:** Shepherd Center once again participated in Falls Free Fridays in September, hosted by the Georgia Falls Prevention Coalition. The weekly events, including music therapy, our own Complex Concussion Clinic, Tai Chi, and educational sessions, aimed to raise awareness on how to prevent falls, which are one of the leading causes of spinal cord and brain injuries.

# Quality and Outcomes Management

At Shepherd Center, clinical and non-clinical staff alike are on a mission to achieve extraordinary outcomes for our patients, returning them to what they love most. The Quality and Outcomes Management team aims to lead in defining, measuring, and delivering the highest quality care. They lead departments across the hospital in improving processes and the care experience to provide safe and effective treatment.

The quality team develops action plans that seek to enhance hospital procedures and prioritize patient safety and well-being. Part of this process is identifying areas for improvement.

## Quality Metrics

### Harms

When patients must spend time in the hospital, they do not expect to be harmed. But like at any hospital, there are patients at Shepherd Center who experience infections, falls, or other potential adverse events during their rehabilitation journey.

Shepherd Center's robust Quality and Outcomes Management program measures, evaluates, and reduces incidence of harm through evidence-based process improvement. Some of the hospital's clinical workgroups, in partnership with the Quality and Outcomes Management team, developed interventions to better support the care Shepherd provides patients leading to improved outcomes. Two of the hospital's strategic goals are included below:

- » **Fall Prevention & Management:** Falls are a serious concern in hospitals and long-term care, especially for older adults and those with spinal cord or brain injuries. These patients are at higher risk due to impaired mobility, balance issues, and cognitive challenges, making even routine movements potentially hazardous. In FY25, Shepherd Center's Fall Prevention Workgroup reported 125 inpatient falls involving 108 patients. There were 22 injuries, with most injuries classified as "pain". This resulted in a 0.45 falls with injury rate per 1,000 patient days, far exceeding Shepherd's internal goal of 0.57. National studies report a falls with injury rate of 0.93 per 1,000 patient days. The Fall Prevention Workgroup focused on interventions such as bed alarm checks, patient selection criteria for seat belts and alarms, and the development of fall prevention champions.



» **Healthcare Associated Pressure Injuries (HAPI):** Many Shepherd Center patients are at risk for developing pressure injuries due to motor and sensory impairments, immobility, and changes in the skin. The Wound Prevention Workgroup aims to work safe skincare practices into Shepherd's culture to prevent and reduce the occurrence of pressure injuries. Since strengthening pressure injury prevention methods in FY2020, the Wound Prevention Workgroup has achieved a remarkable 134% improvement in performance, reducing the HAPI rate from 3.35 to 0.66 per 1,000 patient days in the most recent year. For FY25, the team set a goal to remain below 1.83 HAPI per 1,000 patient days, a benchmark that was significantly surpassed. This achievement highlights the teams' commitment to delivering safe, high-quality, and reliable care to every patient Shepherd serves.

## Rehospitalization

Rehospitalization is another outcome that indicates the quality of care at a hospital. Through family training, transition support, and life skills programming, Shepherd staff work to keep patients from returning to the hospital once they leave Shepherd Center. The Quality and Outcomes Management team captures patient rehospitalizations within 30 days of discharge through patient phone survey response data. This self-reporting method for collecting the data allows the team to capture all patients discharged to a community setting, not just the typical readmission metric, which pertains exclusively to the Medicare and Medicaid population. This allows Quality and Outcomes Management to identify the cause of each rehospitalization and better prepare patients to return home without requiring additional inpatient care. In FY25, only 7.3% of patients needed rehospitalization for any unplanned reason within 30 days of discharge from Shepherd Center, down from FY24's 10% rate. This very low rate results from Shepherd's focus on patient and family training and transition support.

For more information on outcomes, please visit [shepherd.org/outcomes](https://shepherd.org/outcomes).



# ***Celebrating Nearly Four Years CLABSI Free***

## ***Staff Across Hospital Programs Partner to Reduce Central Line Associated Bloodstream Infections***

Central lines, or central venous catheters, are similar to an intravenous (IV) line and can be an invaluable tool for giving patients fluids, medications, and nutrition. But unlike an IV, they are much longer and travel up the vein to or near the heart, which can increase risk for infection.

Central line-associated bloodstream infections (CLABSI) can occur when microbes like bacteria or fungi enter a patient's bloodstream through their central line. They can be extremely dangerous, as well as difficult and costly to treat. Thankfully, in FY25 Shepherd Center celebrated nearly four years of being CLABSI free.

This streak isn't luck, but instead the result of dedicated efforts from departments across Shepherd. One key player is Infection Preventionist Ginnie Campbell. Before coming to Shepherd, Campbell worked in acute care hospital settings across Atlanta, where she led infection prevention efforts. She says that while acute care hospitals often have more central lines to manage than Shepherd Center, Shepherd's patients are still at a high risk of infection.

"We have some higher risk because our patients are here so long," she says. "For example, with TPN [total parenteral nutrition, a mixture of nutrients delivered via a central line], there's a huge risk of fungemia [fungi in the blood]. All lines can be very tough to manage, but we've got some good processes helping to keep [infections] under control."

CLABSI prevention efforts have included changing central line dressings on admission, using disinfecting caps on central lines, and maintaining sterile techniques during line insertion and dressing changes. Additionally, Shepherd Center has partnered with PICC Access, a team of vascular access specialists who place peripherally inserted central catheters (PICCs), midline catheters, and perform other vascular access services.

Another key part of infection prevention is removing central lines that are no longer in use. The hospital's nursing staff, led by Chief Nursing Officer Tiffany LeCroy, MSN, RN, CRRN, FNP-C, ACNS-BC, FARN, has been crucial in implementing these efforts.



“Nursing has really just done a great job,” LeCroy says. “When they notice a line is unused, they will approach a physician or a provider and remind them of the dormant line that potentially could be an avenue for infection. They really are the driver to ensure that lines are being used, and if they’re not, they remind the providers.”

Shepherd’s pharmacy team has also helped with CLABSI prevention by identifying when central lines can be removed, or by finding alternate methods to deliver medications, like using peripheral IVs or administering medication orally. Lauren Wilcox, PharmD, clinical pharmacist and Antimicrobial Stewardship Committee lead, says the pharmacy team rounds with physicians each week, documents medication needs, and helps identify when central lines and other IVs can be removed. She says patients also can play a key role in that process.

“There are patients who will advocate for themselves as well,” she says. “[They’ll ask] ‘When can I get [my central line] out? I don’t like this.’ I’ve been in the room when that’s happened, and I think, ‘Good idea! That’s on my list.’”

Ali Anderson, Senior Improvement Consultant in Quality and Outcomes Management, also monitors CLABSI prevention efforts, helping with cause analysis and documenting successes along the way. In FY25, she worked with Sarah Culberson, BSN, RN, CIC, Shepherd Center’s former infection prevention specialist, to celebrate the CLABSI-free streak. Using the theme “We’re On a Roll,” they worked with Food and Nutrition Services to bake and deliver over 800 cinnamon rolls for staff as a token of appreciation for their hard work.

“We gave out the cinnamon rolls for a week straight — including night shifts and on the weekends — because the staff here at those times are helping with this effort,” Anderson says. “They change central line dressings on Sunday, so we wanted to be there to celebrate them, not only the daytime weekday staff who are here when we’re working.”



# Shepherd Center Foundation

## ***Dear Friends,***

For years, Shepherd Center staff and supporters alike looked ahead to 2025, a year that marks 50 years of world-class rehabilitative care and unmatched support for patients and families. This year also marks a major milestone for Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center, as a year when many campaign goals have come to fruition.

In the past fiscal year, we opened the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, adding 165 accessible units to Shepherd's donor-funded housing options. We wrapped construction on the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, promising a new era for patient care, research, and innovation at Shepherd. And we launched our 50th anniversary celebrations, beginning a year of festivities to mark five decades of exceptional care.

In between ribbon cuttings and anniversary celebrations, we've also continued the everyday programming that makes Shepherd special. Unique donor-funded programs, such as recreation therapy, animal-assisted therapy, and peer support, give thousands of patients and their families the tools they need to rebuild their lives after injury or illness. Annual events, like Adventure Skills Workshop, Project Rollway, and Soque Slam, build upon connections formed in inpatient and outpatient programs, ensuring patients continue to thrive even after their rehabilitation at Shepherd.

As we celebrate our golden anniversary and milestones in our campaign, we're reminded of the unwavering supporters who have championed our mission since day one. Thank you for your continued trust and support — with your help, we will continue to provide our trademark care for years to come.



Please enjoy our tribute to FY25 in the pages ahead. And to see day-to-day stories of how donor-funded services impact our patients and their families, I encourage you to visit our website or follow along on Shepherd's social media pages.

With appreciation,

***Sarah L. Batts, MBA***

Senior Vice President, Advancement

Executive Director, Shepherd Center Foundation



## ***Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center***

In FY25, Shepherd Center continued the most ambitious campaign in its 50-year history, celebrating occasions such as the topping off of the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation on June 7, 2024, and the ribbon cutting for the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences on Aug. 27, 2024.

The celebratory events signified milestones for the campaign that has raised over \$400 million for Shepherd Center patients and families. The money will continue to fund capital and programmatic projects to benefit patients and families experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord and brain injuries, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and pain. Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center is slated to continue through March 2026.

Anchored by generous grants from The Marcus Foundation and the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation, Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center focuses on two main initiatives: ***increasing patient access and improving the patient and family experience.***

## ***Making Room for More: Increasing Patient Access***

To satisfy unmet patient demand, Shepherd Center will:

- » Expand inpatient capacity and convert all patient rooms to private ones with smart home technology.
- » Increase capacity for day programs and outpatient services.
- » Centralize and expand the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute.

## ***Pushing for the Best Outcomes***

To remain the world's premier rehabilitation destination and ensure that every patient and family experience delivers the best possible outcome, Shepherd will:

- » Increase the family housing capacity to accommodate the entire length of stay by building the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, opened in late 2024.
- » Expand the innovation program by launching the new, dedicated Innovation Institute within the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, opened in spring 2025.
- » Grow the current fellowship program into the Institute of Higher Learning to educate the next generation of experts.
- » Sustain and expand donor-funded programs, many of which are not reimbursed by insurance, such as recreation therapy, SHARE Military Initiative, research and innovation, housing, and vocational rehabilitation, among others.

***To learn more, visit [ExpandingShepherd.org](https://ExpandingShepherd.org)***



## Events

### *The Legendary Party*

Chaired by Sherry and David Abney, the 2024 Legendary Party, themed “Journey to Morocco,” raised \$2.5 million, benefiting the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, Shepherd Center’s new family housing building. The 16-story tower allows Shepherd Center to provide donor-funded housing to families for the entire length of their loved one’s inpatient treatment if both the patient and family live over 50 miles from the hospital. More than 700 sponsors and guests celebrated Atlanta’s premier fundraising gala. Arthur Blank was this year’s honoree, recognizing the Blank Family Foundation’s generous support of the new housing facility.



### *Shepherd Center Cup*

In FY25, the Shepherd Center Cup celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But before it was time to tee off, participants paused for a moment to remember one of the tournament’s biggest supporters over its four decades, Duncan Beard. Duncan passed away in August 2024 and is remembered as an ardent supporter of Shepherd Center and the annual golf tournament. This year’s event, chaired by Miller Peer, raised over \$315,000 for Shepherd Center’s Recreation Therapy Program.



## Cornhole for a Cause

On Saturday, Oct. 26, 2024, Shepherd Center's Junior Committee held its fundraising Cornhole Tournament at Steady Hand Beer Co. With more than 30 teams and 50 spectators, the afternoon was filled with cornhole, music, food, drinks, and of course, football! Cornhole ATL assisted with the event, helping with check-in and running the tournament, which included a mix of beginner and advanced players. Proceeds from the tournament benefit Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program.



## Derby Day

One of Shepherd Center's most beloved annual events, Derby Day, celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2024. Attendees gathered at Chastain Horse Park to socialize, sip mint juleps, and catch the photo finish from the year's Kentucky Derby. Rachel Simononis and Julie Shepherd co-chaired the event with support from the event's host committee. 2024's Derby Day grossed \$262,000 to support Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program.



## Soque Slam

In 2024, anglers traveled to the Soque River for the 2nd annual Soque Slam, an invitational fishing rodeo benefiting Shepherd Center. Ten teams of anglers, each with seven members, including one patient from Shepherd, enjoyed a day of fly fishing. Teams competed for prizes, and bragging rights for the teams with the largest number of fish "clearly on the hook" and the largest brown trout. Afterwards, sponsors, fishers, and guests enjoyed a barbecue supper sponsored by Andee's Army, and a concert by Futurebirds. The event, held on Oct. 26, 2024, in Clarkesville, Georgia, raised over \$350,000 for Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program.



# ***Additional Initiatives***

## ***Volunteer Services***

Each year, hundreds of individuals, families, and companies lend their support by volunteering their time to Shepherd Center. For FY25, 204 weekly in-hospital volunteers completed 8,678 service hours, amounting to a dollar value of \$271,100.73.

## ***Women Shaping Shepherd***

Since its inception 11 years ago, Women Shaping Shepherd, Shepherd's women's philanthropy circle, has raised money for various annual needs. In FY25, Women Shaping Shepherd members raised \$306,000 — the funds supported a new Armeo Spring (a device used for upper limb rehabilitation), vocational rehabilitation, and artwork for the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences.

## ***ShepherdCares***

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, "You've Got a Friend In Me," launched the Sarah Morrison Staff Support Fund. Named for Shepherd's recently retired chief executive officer, Sarah Morrison, the fund will provide emergency financial support for employees navigating unexpected crises, like flooding or house fires. Shepherd Center employees pledged an incredible \$230,580 in four weeks, well over the \$175,000 goal.

## ***Pecans on Peachtree®***

Pecans on Peachtree started in the most unassuming of ways – out of the trunk of a car. But it has grown into a powerhouse, raising more than \$180,000 in FY25 through the holiday sale of pecans, which can be purchased raw, salted, candied, or even covered in chocolate.

## ***RPM 9/11 5K***

On Sept. 7, 2024, the 13th annual RPM 9/11 5K took place at Atlanta's Chastain Park, with over 300 people participating. The event raised over \$205,000 for Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative. 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.





## Shepherd's Men

Comprised of active and retired service members and civilian volunteers, Shepherd's Men, cofounded by Travis Ellis and Troy Campbell, has raised awareness and funds for Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative since 2014. In FY25, Shepherd's Men continued to be stalwart supporters of SHARE, raising \$1.1M for the program through special events and fundraising activities. On April 13, 2024, the group hosted Murphy Music & Brews in Murphy, North Carolina. The day-long event included an impressive lineup of musical performances, dozens of craft beers from Buck Bald and other local breweries, and food trucks serving everything from barbecue to kettle corn. Also in April, Shepherd's Men and The Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project held a joint fundraising event featuring country music star Travis Tritt. The special evening was held at the home of long-time Shepherd supporters Kelly and Toby Regal.

In May 2024, the group held a Memorial Day March at Reformation Brewery in Canton, GA with a mid-way pit stop at Alma Coffee. The event ended at the Reformation Brewery in Woodstock, GA. Long time supporter, Kevn Kinney from the band Drivin N Cryin performed. As a tribute to the brave souls who have served and sacrificed, Shepherd's Men carried a barrel of Clarity Lager throughout the walk; symbolizing the heavy burden borne by those who lost their lives defending our freedoms.

On Nov. 1, 2024, at the Burge Club in Mansfield, Georgia, supporters gathered for Shepherd's Men Invitational Clay Shoot, which included a day on the range followed by fellowship, a silent auction, and a barbecue lunch. The sold-out event raised more than \$130,000 to benefit Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative. For information about Shepherd's Men and their events, please visit [shepherdsmen.com](https://shepherdsmen.com).







# Culture

When employees join Shepherd Center, they embark on a journey of growth — building their careers, expanding their knowledge, and forming their community of colleagues. They often find their people, their families, and the place they truly belong. While some staff members have been here for decades, others are just starting their careers. Shepherd's team is committed to growing together while helping patients and their families begin again after injury or illness, and team members aim to make every employee feel seen and valued.

## In FY25, Shepherd Center did this by:

- » **Celebrating Employee Tenure:** Shepherd's team of 1,900 is a testament to loyalty and longevity. Remarkably, 7% of team members — 134 individuals — have chosen to return after leaving, underscoring the lasting impact of Shepherd's culture and community. The average length of service is 8.4 years, and the hospital is honored to celebrate milestones that reflect true dedication: one team member recently marked 50 years of service, while 10 others have served for over 40 years, and 58 have reached 30+ years of service. Shepherd is more than a workplace — it's a place where careers flourish.
- » **Strengthening Efforts Around Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA):** Shepherd Center believes a diverse team is a competitive advantage. With different backgrounds come different perspectives, experiences, and the ability to empathetically relate to and serve a diverse patient population. Shepherd's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is reflected in its team composition: 79% of the workforce are women, and 56% are people of color. Shepherd is proud to foster an environment where everyone belongs and thrives. Nearly half of the hospital staff — 47% — joined within the last five years, reflecting a dynamic blend of seasoned experience and fresh talent. This mix fosters a unique strength, combining longevity with new perspectives to drive innovation and growth.
- » **Creating an Emergency Support Fund for Staff:** For ShepherdCares 2025, employees raised money to launch the Sarah Morrison Staff Support Fund. Named for Shepherd's recently retired chief executive officer, Sarah Morrison, the fund will provide emergency financial support for employees navigating unexpected crises, like flooding or house fires. The team raised \$230,580, and half of the proceeds from future ShepherdCares campaigns will replenish the fund, ensuring employees in need have what they need to begin again after hardship.

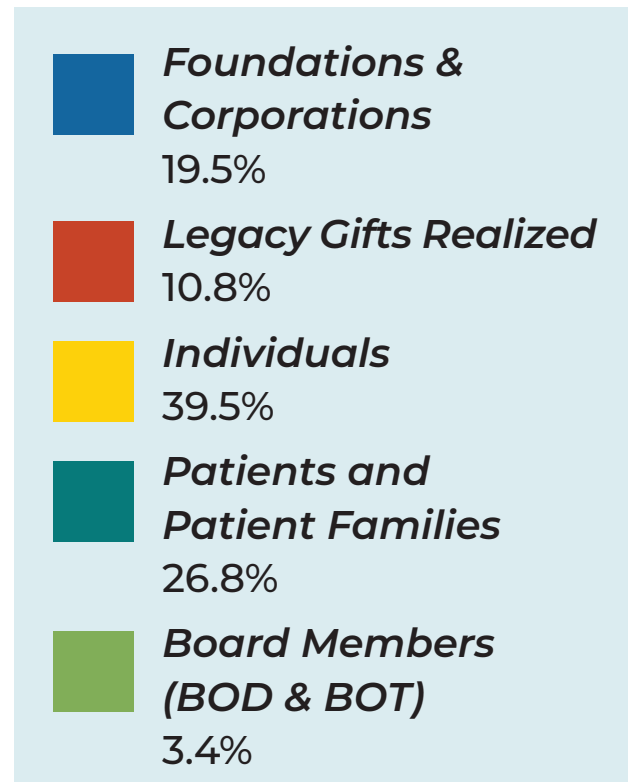
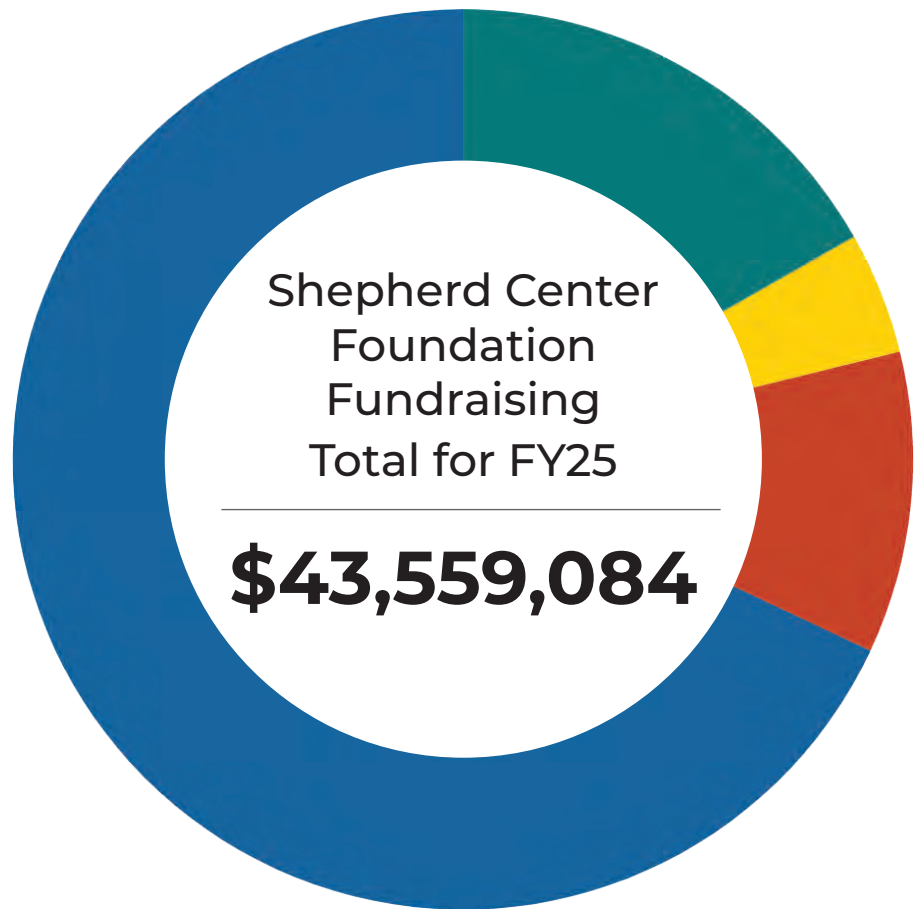
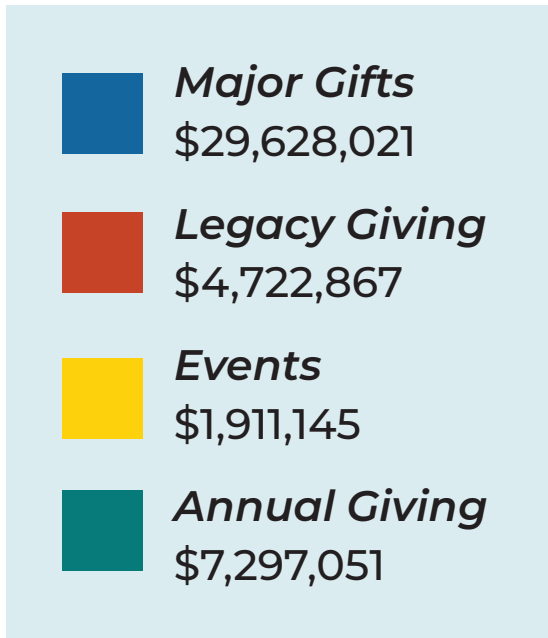


- » **Fostering Internal Mobility:** Shepherd Center believes in professional growth, development, and advancement for its workforce. In FY25, 47 employees were promoted and another 140 transitioned into new roles, allowing them to apply their knowledge, experience, and training in fresh and impactful ways across the center. These career moves not only provide meaningful growth opportunities but also help retain and strengthen institutional knowledge.
- » **Topping the Rankings:** In FY25, Shepherd Center was again recognized among the Best Hospitals for Rehabilitation by *U.S. News & World Report*. Since 2008, Shepherd Center has ranked among the top rehabilitation hospitals in the United States, a testament to the consistent high-quality care staff provides to ensure patients and their families achieve the best outcomes possible.
- » **Cultivating a Mission-Driven Culture:** Shepherd Center values employee engagement, which is why it annually administers the Gallup Employee Engagement Survey. The survey presents a variety of prompts which employees rank from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For the statement, “The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important,” Shepherd Center scored in the 69th percentile. Additionally, employee engagement at Shepherd is double the national average, showing its dedication to employees and their work experiences.





# Shepherd Center Foundation Financials





# Shepherd Center, Inc. Financials

## Statement of Revenues and Expenses

Patient Services Revenue	\$281,359,016
Other Revenue	\$43,106,297
Investment Income	\$7,257,918
<b>Total Operating Revenue</b>	<b>\$331,723,231</b>
Less: Operating Expenses	\$334,319,811
Provision for Improvement, Equipment, and New Services	(\$2,596,580)

## Charitable Services Rendered (At Cost)

Uncompensated Care (Patients without Funding)	\$5,520,580
Undercompensated Care (Underfunded Government Programs)	\$21,740,767

## Donated Property and Equipment

Donations of Property and Equipment	\$88,622
Donations Used to Purchase Property and Equipment	\$41,380,019
<b>Total Donated Property and Equipment</b>	<b>\$41,468,641</b>

# Shepherd Center, Inc.

## **Board of Directors**

through March 31, 2025

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### **Officers:**

***Alana Shepherd (1975), Chair***

Shepherd Center Founding Member

***James D. Thompson (2000), Chair Elect***

Retired President, ING Life of Georgia

***Clark H. Dean, (2010), Chair Elect***

Executive Managing Director & Partner,  
Transwestern

***Sara S. Chapman (1993), Corporate Secretary***

Teacher, The Westminster Schools

***Juli Owens (2017), Recording Secretary***

Realtor, Atlanta Fine Homes Sotheby's  
International Realty

### **Ex-Officio:**

***Jamie Shepherd, FACHE, MBA, MHA (2014)***

President & Chief Executive Officer, Shepherd  
Center

***Michael R. Yochelson, MD, MBA (2017)***

Chief Medical Officer, Shepherd Center

***Beth Boatwright (2024), Treasurer***

Chief Financial Officer, Shepherd Center

### **Senior Executive Team At Shepherd Center (March 31, 2025):**

***Sarah Batts***

Sr. Vice President Development and Volunteer,  
Services Executive Director Shepherd  
Foundation

***Deborah Backus***

Vice President Research and Innovation and  
Director Crawford Research Institute

***Wilma Bunch***

Vice President Patient Experience

***Katherine Creek***

Chief Human Resources Officer

***Brian Barnette***

Chief Information Officer

***Stephen Marsh***

General Counsel/Chief Compliance Officer

***Shari McDowell***

Chief Operating Officer

***Joe Nowicki***

Vice President Facilities Services



## **Membership:**

### **Andrew Alias (2022)**

Civic Volunteer

### **Fred V. Alias (1984, rejoined 2008)**

Chief Executive Officer,  
Sandcastle Resorts, Inc.

### **Shaler Alias (2020)**

President and Co-Founder, REPAY

### **David F. Apple, Jr., M.D. (1975)**

Medical Director Emeritus,  
Shepherd Center Founding Member

### **Cyndae Arrendale (2016)**

Civic Volunteer

### **Bryant G. Coats (2017)**

Chief Executive Officer and Director,  
Resource Housing Group, Inc.

### **Robert Cunningham (2020)**

Retired Owner, Cunningham Associates

### **Charles L. Davidson III (2016)**

Chairman/CEO, The Brookdale Group

### **John S. Dryman (1987)**

President, The Dryman Team

### **General Larry R. Ellis, USA (Ret.) (2017)**

Chief Executive Officer, ESSE, LLC

### **William C. Fowler (1993)**

Private Investor

### **Susan Hawkins (2022)**

Civic Volunteer

### **Justin Jones (2020)**

Vice President, International at Heritage  
Plastics

### **Molly Lanier (2014)**

Civic Volunteer

### **Douglas Lindauer (2010)**

VP Sales and Marketing, Ted Turner  
Expeditions

### **Talbot Nunnally (1997)**

Shareholder, Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White,  
Williams & Aughtry

### **Vincenzo Piscopo (2020)**

President and CEO, United Spinal Association

### **Kelly Regal (2025)**

Chairman, Board of Trustees

### **John Rooker (2014)**

CEO, Rooker Company

### **W. Clyde Shepherd III (2005)**

Vice President, Shepherd Construction Co.

### **K. Boynton Smith (2017)**

Senior Vice President, McGriff, Seibels &  
Williams

### **James E. Stephenson (2008)**

Retired Chairman, Yancey Bros. Co.

### **Jarrad Turner (2020)**

Chief Executive Officer, Veterans Technology  
Solutions - USA







Shepherd Center