



Shepherd Center

***Shepherd Center  
Community  
Benefit Report:***

**Safety Driven,  
Community Focused**

*FY 2023 (April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023)*



## A Look Back at Some of Shepherd Center's Historical Moments

1973



The Shepherd family's search for specialized care for their son, James, inspired them to start a rehabilitation program in Atlanta. Their goals were to provide a patient- and family-centered approach to rehabilitation and encourage patients to look beyond their injuries and embrace the future.

1975



David Apple, M.D., became Shepherd Center's first medical director and now serves as medical director emeritus.

1975



Shepherd Spinal Center opened its doors as a six-bed facility, staffed by two doctors, three therapists and nursing support from the leasing hospital. Almost immediately, there was a waiting list.

2014

Shepherd Center embarked on a \$12.5 million renovation and building project to add 13,000 square feet for an expanded and updated lab, pharmacy and MRI suite.

2014

Shepherd's Men's embarked on their inaugural fundraising run for the Share Military Initiative. Running from Shepherd Center to the Marine Corps memorial in Arlington National Cemetery, the volunteer group has since raised more than \$11M to fund SHARE.

2013



Shepherd Center began testing Indego®, a new powered exoskeleton device designed to assist walking for people with spinal cord injury and other mobility-limiting conditions. It was developed by Vanderbilt University engineers in consultation with Shepherd Center researchers and then licensed and manufactured by Parker Hannifin Corporation.

2016



Shepherd Center launched the Complex Concussion Clinic to address complications of mild brain injuries in patients.

2008



Shepherd Center launched the SHARE Military Initiative thanks to a generous donation from Atlanta philanthropist Bernie Marcus. As an extension of the ABI Program, SHARE provides treatment for military personnel who have sustained brain injuries, along with diagnoses of post-traumatic stress and other mental health conditions.

2017

Thanks to a gift from The Marcus Foundation, Shepherd Center opened a new facility at 80 Peachtree Park Drive to house the SHARE Military Initiative. The facility also houses the Complex Concussion Clinic and Eula C. and Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation and Wellness Program.



2017

Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, became president and CEO of Shepherd Center, having served in various leadership roles at the hospital since 1984. Before assuming the top role, Morrison served as vice president of clinical services and also as director of the Shepherd Center Spinal Cord Injury Program. Before that, she worked at Shepherd Center as a director of the medical/surgical and ICU programs, manager of the Spinal Cord Injury Day Program, a physical therapy supervisor, and a physical therapist.



2017

Michael Yochelson, M.D., MBA, was named chief medical officer of Shepherd Center and became medical director emeritus and special adviser to the Shepherd Center Foundation. Dr. Yochelson began his medical career in the United States Navy, where he served from 1995 to 2006. He earned a bachelor's degree in science from Duke University and his medical degree from George Washington University. He completed his residency training at the National Capital Consortium.



2022

Received generous grants from The Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation and the Marcus Foundation to expand access to care for patients and their families.



2022

The art therapy program led the development of a new mural in Livingston Gym painted by patients, staff and families.

2022



Shepherd Center continued to lead and advocate for disability inclusion in the workplace with employee Zac Bradley being the keynote speaker at a meeting sponsored by the New York Stock Exchange.

2022

Shepherd Center recognized as No. 8 Best Hospital for Rehabilitation and No. 1 in the southeast by U.S. News & World Report.



2021

Shepherd Center partners with Georgia State University to pilot an innovative study using 3D printers to help patients and students.

2023



Broke ground on the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation on the north corner of the main campus. This state-of-the-art facility will allow Shepherd to increase patient access and improve the patient and family experience. On the top floor, the new 30,000 square foot Innovation Institute will expand research and assistive technology programs that will enhance care across Shepherd's entire rehabilitation continuum.





1982

The hospital moved to its current location on Peachtree Road in Atlanta's Buckhead area. The new 93,000-square-foot facility housed 40 beds and allowed room for growth in specialized programs, such as peer support and advocacy, that have become Shepherd Center hallmarks.

1985

The Clinical Research Program began at Shepherd Center. The program would eventually be renamed the Virginia C. Crawford Research Institute in 1995.

With the initiation of a research program, Shepherd Center established its role at the forefront of clinical research and innovation primarily focused on spinal cord injury, brain injury, multiple sclerosis and neuromuscular disorders.



1991

The Multiple Sclerosis Institute opened to provide treatment to people with multiple sclerosis (MS), suspected MS or related disorders. It is later renamed the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute at Shepherd Center.



1992

The Center doubled in size with the opening of the Billi Marcus Building, a 153,000-square-foot expansion named for the resolute fundraiser and wife of The Home Depot's former chairman, Bernie Marcus. This development allowed Shepherd to expand outpatient services and provide space for its newly created Multiple Sclerosis Institute.



2008

Shepherd Center completed the Irene and George Woodruff Family Residence Center, a \$16 million residential center adjacent to the hospital that provides temporary housing for families of patients. The 87,000-square-foot facility includes 84 wheelchair accessible suites, each containing a bedroom, living space, kitchenette and bathroom.



2005

Shepherd Center launched Beyond Therapy®, a rigorous, activity-based program designed to help people with a variety of neurological disorders improve lifelong health, minimize secondary complications and get the most from any new neural links to their muscles.



2004

Donald Peck Leslie, M.D., is named medical director of Shepherd Center. Before this, Dr. Leslie served for 10 years as associate medical director of Shepherd Center and medical director for Brain Injury Services.



2000

Shepherd Spine and Pain Institute opened to serve people with pain resulting from neurologic degenerative disease or injuries. It is renamed the Dean Stroud Spine and Pain Institute in 2007.



1995

Gary Ulicny, Ph.D., the Center's first president and CEO, established acquired brain injury (ABI) as Shepherd Center's third area of specialty, adding a 20-bed unit for patients with ABI.

2018

The naming of the J. Harold Shepherd Parkway section of the Peachtree Road honored Shepherd Center co-founder, the late Harold Shepherd. This was a testament to the incredible contributions Harold Shepherd made to Atlanta and beyond.



2018

Shepherd Center acquired 2.6 acres of nearby land to expand our family housing program. Shepherd Center is committed to reducing the financial and emotional burden our families experience during one of the most challenging times of their lives. Construction began in 2022 and the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences will open in August 2024.



2019

Shepherd Center was named one of Atlanta's "Best Places to Work" in the Atlanta Business Chronicle's 16th annual ranking of 103 metro area companies. Shepherd Center was recognized as the Atlanta Business Chronicle's #4 Best Place to Work in the extra-large company (500-plus employees) category. The newspaper also ranked Shepherd Center among the Best Places to Work in its 2017 and 2018 listings.

2020

Shepherd Center celebrated its 45th anniversary. In its first 45 years, Shepherd Center grew from a six-bed rehabilitation unit to a world-renowned, 152-bed hospital.



2019

Shepherd received three new facility dogs from our friends at Canine Companions for Independence. We currently have seven facility dogs made possible through donor support and handled by highly trained Shepherd Center employees. Our facility dogs know up to 40 commands, all skills that help facilitate the independence that Shepherd Center patients and clients work toward.

2021

Shepherd Center was recognized as a top employer for disability inclusion by Disability:IN.

2020

Shepherd Center was recognized as one of the top 10 rehabilitation hospitals in the nation for the 12th consecutive year by *U.S. News & World Report* in the magazine's 2020-21 Best Hospitals rankings.



2020

Alana Shepherd, co-founder of Shepherd Center, was named the Chairman of the Board of Directors.







## Dear Friends,

For more than 48 years, Shepherd Center has provided world-class clinical care, research, and family support for people experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord and brain injuries, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and pain. An elite center recognized as both Spinal Cord Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems, Shepherd Center is ranked by *U.S. News* as one of the nation's top hospitals for rehabilitation, treating thousands of patients annually with unmatched expertise and unwavering compassion.

While we are proud of the accolades we receive, we especially cherish the opportunity to serve the community in various ways including providing benefits such as charity care, research, health professional education, community-building activities, and community-improving activities, among others. Whether caring for patients and families, educating today's and tomorrow's healthcare professionals, or providing essential programming throughout the community, we do it with hope, heart, and humor.

This document outlines the community benefits we offer by the numbers. You can learn more about our mission and the work we do to achieve it at [shepherd.org](https://shepherd.org).

With gratitude,



*Sarah A. Morrison,*

PT, MBA, MHA

*Chief Executive Officer*



*Jamie H. Shepherd III,*

MBA, MHA

*President & Chief Operating Officer*



Founded in 1975, Shepherd Center provides world-class clinical care, research, and family support for people experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord and brain injuries, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and pain. An elite center recognized as both Spinal Cord Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems, Shepherd Center is ranked by *U.S. News* as one of the nation's top hospitals for rehabilitation. In fact, with 152 beds, which includes a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit, we are one of the largest neurorehabilitation hospitals in the United States. Our mission is to help people with a temporary or permanent disability caused by injury or disease rebuild their lives with hope, independence and dignity, advocating for their full inclusion in all aspects of community life while promoting safety and injury prevention.

## Objective

Patients come to Shepherd Center from across the United States and the world seeking the best care and resources unique from other hospitals treating patients with similar injuries. Community benefit funding partially supports various value-added programs and services such as recreation therapy, animal-assisted therapy, patient outings, chaplaincy, assistive technology, peer support, back-to-school programs, and family programs. We also offer specialized programs tailored to adolescents, patients with dual diagnoses (both brain and spinal cord injuries), patients on ventilators, and patients with low-level brain injuries.

## Quick Stats:

**152**  
Licensed  
Beds

**1,850**  
Employees

**23**  
Attending  
Physiatrists

**303**  
Nurses

**349**  
Therapists

## Patient-Centered Care

Shepherd Center focuses on patient-centered care and offers a broad continuum of care and exceptional quality that is unique in the setting of a rehabilitation hospital. Our continuum of care includes Intensive Care Unit (ICU), inpatient care, Day Program, outpatient programs, research programs, and more. Our value-added, or “community benefit,” programs provide our patients with the resources to re-learn activities of daily living and achieve the goals they have set for themselves post-injury. Those goals include returning to home, school, and work as independently as possible. They also include regaining the ability to enjoy life through social events, hobbies and leisure activities, as well as providing for themselves and their family. While these value-added programs help our patients restore their hope and rebuild their lives, they often are not reimbursed by insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid. We believe these programs are essential to a patient’s successful recovery and directly contribute to our much-greater-than-average clinical outcomes that lead to greater independence for the patient. We offer these programs with the generous support of thousands of donors annually and from any excess revenue the hospital earns through conservative financial management.

Shepherd Center defines community benefit as a planned, organized, and measured approach to services and activities that specifically address the healthcare needs of people with spinal cord and brain injury, multiple sclerosis, chronic pain, other neuromuscular diseases, as well as the family or loved ones impacted. Patients at Shepherd Center get more than medical care, they also receive evaluation and medical treatment to rehabilitation and lifelong support programs -- that extends back to their communities. Our patient population has unique needs that are typically under-served, which makes Shepherd an important lifeline and resource for our patients throughout their life. Shepherd Center’s community includes current patients and their families, as well as former patients and their families.

Shepherd Center has been recognized as one of the top rehabilitation hospitals in the nation by *U.S. News* in the magazine’s 2023-24 Best Hospitals rankings.

The annual Best Hospitals rankings, now in its 34th year, are designed to assist patients and their doctors in making informed decisions about where to receive care for challenging health conditions or for common elective procedures. Shepherd Center was ranked No. 12.





## Injury Prevention: Community Safety Is Our Priority

Traumatic injuries are a leading cause of death and disability for young people through middle age. That's why we're dedicated to dramatically reducing risks and increasing protective factors to create a safer environment to prevent critical injuries from occurring through our injury prevention program.

Developing evidence-based initiatives to educate health professionals, policymakers, employers, and the public on injury prevention to make our communities and each other safer is one of our core strengths.

We collaborate with state and federal agencies, private and public health organizations, schools, and our patients and families.



**Emma Harrington,**  
Director of Injury  
Prevention

## Injury Prevention: Rural Roads Project

The statistics are alarming: rural roads account for 45% of all fatal crashes, with a staggering 62% higher risk of death compared to urban roads for the same trip length, as reported by The Governor's Highway Safety Association. However, amidst these concerning figures lies an opportunity for change.

Shepherd Center's Injury Prevention Program, in collaboration with Montana State University Center for Health and Safety Culture, is spearheading a transformative effort to enhance rural road safety. This endeavor is made possible through the Safe System Approach to Rural Roads grant, generously awarded by the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS). This initiative is slated to commence on October 1, 2023, with the goal of improving rural road safety in Georgia by September 30, 2024.

Central to this initiative is a pioneering social norming campaign aimed at promoting seat belt compliance among rural Georgians. Emma Harrington, director of injury prevention at Shepherd Center, underscores the urgency of the matter: "Although seat belts are widely recognized as life-saving devices, achieving compliance remains a persistent challenge. Our aim is to reverse this trend and save lives on Georgia's roads."

The data underscores the critical need for action. In Georgia alone, nearly half of all roadway fatalities involved unrestrained occupants, equating to an estimated 644 lives that could have been spared annually between 2016 and 2020.

Rural road users are disproportionately affected, with nearly half of all fatal crashes occurring on these routes. However, this initiative offers hope, merging Federal Highway Administration priorities with an innovative social norming seat belt campaign.



Social norming campaigns, with their proven efficacy in altering risky behaviors, form the cornerstone of this initiative. By spotlighting the positive actions of the majority, dispelling myths, and promoting accurate information, this campaign seeks to usher in a new era of safety on Georgia's roads.

**“This initiative is about more than just behavior change; it's about reshaping our traffic safety culture. By mobilizing non-traditional stakeholders and fostering community coalitions, we aim to empower rural road users to advocate for their own safety in Georgia.”**

**- Emma Harrington**



### Falls Free Fridays

Falls Free Fridays emerged as a vital response to the challenges posed by the pandemic, offering a crucial virtual alternative for fall prevention among individuals aged 55 and above. With statistics indicating that two-thirds of traumatic brain injuries in those aged 65 and older result from falls, the initiative aims to equip participants with essential knowledge and practical strategies to mitigate these risks. Through a series of hour-long sessions held every Friday throughout September, Falls Free

Fridays covers a spectrum of topics ranging from Tai Chi to medication management and music therapy. These sessions have garnered significant popularity and serve as a cornerstone of our efforts to safeguard the health and independence of older adults for as long as possible.

Last year, Shepherd Center, in collaboration with its public health and prevention partners, organized five events, collectively reaching over 100 community members. These events provided evidence-based interventions designed to minimize fall hazards and enhance protective factors, contributing to our ongoing commitment to fall prevention.







In 2023, Shepherd Center invested over **\$16 million** in our communities.

**\$5.3M**  
Charity  
Care

**\$2.6M**  
Community  
Health  
Improvement  
Services

**\$1.4M**  
Community  
Benefit  
Operations

**\$156K**  
Community  
Building  
Activities

**\$250K**  
Subsidized  
Health  
Services

**\$465K**  
Education  
& Training

**Experts in Brain and  
Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation**

## This report focuses on the following areas of impact:

- 1 Community-Building Activities:** programs that provide opportunities to address the root causes of health problems in our community.
- 2 Health Professional Education:** programs that provide scholarships or funding for professional education.
- 3 Financial and In-Kind Contributions:** Services donated to individuals or the community at large.
- 4 Subsidized Health Services:** Clinical services that meet a community need that are provided despite a financial loss.
- 5 Community Health Improvement:** Activities carried out to improve community health and do not generate inpatient or outpatient bills.

### Community-Building Activities

These are programs that provide opportunities to address the root causes of health problems in our community.



#### Advocacy • 11,025 patient/clients served

Supports the disability rights movement by monitoring local and federal legislation and upcoming issues that are expected to have an impact on the disability community.



#### Housing • 796 patient/clients served

Provides temporary housing at no cost for families of newly-injured rehabilitation patients who live more than 60 miles from Atlanta.



#### RESCUE • 75 patient/clients served

A program that provides home alert labels and education for people with physical and/or cognitive limitations who find themselves in emergency situations.



#### Injury Prevention • 1,476 patient/clients served

Provides materials and expert instruction to school, employers, and local organizations on simple steps to preventing catastrophic injury.





## Health Professional Education

These are programs that provide scholarships or funding for professional education.



### **Nurse Intern/Extern Program • 85 patient/clients served**

Trains new nurses in the specialized field of spinal cord and brain injury rehabilitation.



### **Residency Program • 374 patient/clients served**

Trains medical residents in the specialized field of spinal cord and brain injury rehabilitation.

## Financial and In-Kind Contributions

These are services donated to individuals or the community at large.



### **Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race • 1 patient/clients served**

A program partner event that helps raise awareness and educate the general public about services available to them.

## Subsidized Health Services

These are clinical services that meet a community need that are provided despite a financial loss.



### **Shepherd Pathways • 591 patient/clients served**

A community-based rehabilitation program for adolescents and adults recovering from brain injury, offering various therapy programs that focus on increased independence and community integration.



### **Acquired Brain Injury • 432 patient/clients served**

Donor restricted funds help offset the cost of therapy and to purchase patient therapy equipment for patients who have sustained a traumatic brain injury.



### **Animal-Assisted Therapy • 2,427 patient/clients served**

Utilizes specially trained animals to assist patients with physical therapy, motor skills, strength, and endurance.



### **SCI Program Fund • 280 patient/clients served**

Donor restricted funds help offset the cost of patient therapy for patients, and to purchase patient therapy equipment for people who have sustained a spinal cord injury.



### **Horticultural Therapy • 1,202 patient/clients served**

Trains patients to use adaptive tools for gardening as well as floral arranging and craft use.



### **Assistive Tech Program • 1,105 patient/clients served**

Provides patients with the latest high tech tools and equipment for independent living, communication, environmental control, and computer access.



### **Patient Equipment • 47 patient/clients served**

Provides vital equipment such as wheelchairs or home modifications to patients with limited financial resources.



### **Andee's Army • 89 patient/clients served**

Provides financial assistance to children and youth during all phases of inpatient care and rehabilitation, as well as their transition from hospital to outpatient rehabilitation and whom-life following a brain or spinal injury.



## Community Health Improvement

These are activities carried out to improve community health that are subsidized by the healthcare organization and do not generate inpatient or outpatient bills, although they may involve a nominal patient fee and/or sliding scale fee.



### **Fred, Shaler, and Andrew Alias Sports Teams program • 114 patient/clients served**

Provide operational, travel, and equipment to our accessible sports teams.



### **SHARE Military Initiative • 120 patient/clients served**

Provides evidence-based rehabilitation for military 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 at no cost to those we serve.



### **Complex Concussion Clinic • 328 patient/clients served**

Offers comprehensive and patient-centered rehabilitation and services to treat concussions and assists patients in returning to work, school, and play faster and with fewer long-term complications.



### **Wellness/Promotion Program • 150 patient/clients served**

Accessible gym and wellness programs to former patients and community members focused on improving strength, endurance, and wellness through exercise programs.



### **Adolescent Program • 20 patient/clients served**

Provides teen-specific activities such as group activities, games and sports, as well as community outings to familiar venues such as the mall, restaurants and sporting events to keep our teenage patients motivated and help overcome social fears associated with their new disabilities.



### **Transportation • 1,551 patient/clients served**

Provides transportation to patients and families who participate in the Shepherd Pathways Day Program, as well as those patients and families who stay in our off-site apartments. In addition, transportation is provided for patient/family outings, and other community outings.



### **Recreation Therapy • 1,583 patient/clients served**

Offers a wide-array of sports and leisure activities for our patients and others with physical disabilities. Recreation Therapy encourages teamwork, builds self-confidence, and improves overall quality of life.



### **Ambulance Fund • 32 patient/clients served**

Allows patients to access emergency transport services.



### **Genuine Parts Company Vocational Rehabilitation Program • 398 patient/clients served**

Provides current and former patients with vocation evaluation, counseling, and job placement services. It also partners with employers and community resources to increase employment for people with disabilities.



### **MS General Support • 8,200 patient/clients served**

Provides patients with multiple sclerosis (MS), suspected MS, or related disorders, assistance with transportation, utilities, medical equipment, medical expenses, and any other miscellaneous requests.



### **Chaplaincy • 1,170 patient/clients served**

As a vital part of Shepherd's interdisciplinary healthcare team concept, specially-trained chaplains provide counsel, support, and faith materials to patients and families of all faiths and conduct worship services at the hospital.



### **Noble Learning Resource Center • 1,625 patient/clients served**

Shepherd Center's library is the South's only consumer health library devoted to spinal cord and brain injuries and related conditions. The library also offers various resources and media including medical books and journals, educational DVDs, literature databases, and computers with internet access for library patrons.



### **Patient Assistant Fund • 222 patient/clients served**

Provides direct assistance to patients and their families to cover daily living and non-hospital expenses that are not covered by insurance.



### **MS Wellness and Rehab • 329 patient/clients served**

Provides a clinical environment for studies on multiple sclerosis (MS) disease-modifying therapies, rehabilitation, symptom management, and patient education.



### **Recreation Therapy Outdoor Program • 1,307 patient/clients served**

Provides outdoor activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, kayaking, boating and ATV riding to patients post injury.



### **Transition Support • 380 patient/clients served**

Provides education, guidance, and support to patients and their families upon discharge to home in order to improve health and safety outcomes and increase patient and family independence and autonomy.



## Community Partnerships are integral to the success of Shepherd Center.

Shepherd Center has more than 200 industry and academic partnerships to advance research and innovation. Sharing knowledge is the key to making progress on behalf of the people we serve. We collaborate with leading universities, including Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia to advance brain and spinal cord injury medicine and technology. Shepherd researchers also collaborate with international corporate technology partners to test and enhance new assistive and therapeutic technologies, including robotic devices to help restore function and assist with walking. Our partners understand our consumers are extremely underserved and need as much support as they can receive in order to achieve the fullest level of recovery and quality of life. Our partners include, but are not limited to:





## Shepherd Center Recognized as a Disability Equality Index Best Place to Work for Disability Inclusion.

**Hospital is a top scorer for disability inclusion in the workplace.**



*PHOTO CREDITS:* Courtesy of Stephanie Eley, Billy Howard, Louie Favorite, Shepherd Center staff, Heather Hercher, Phil Skinner, Joann Vitelli









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