

Medical Treatment • Research • Rehabilitation

Shepherd

Center Spinal Column®



Back to

✓ **School**

✓ **Work**

✓ **Life**

How Shepherd Center helps patients get back to the roles that mean most to them.

Also Inside

Robby Barbieri's Path to Advocacy | An Inside Look at Adventure Skills Workshop | 10 Tips to Ease the Transition Home

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About the Cover
Cynthia Trawick walks and talks with McNair Scholar Isaiah Frazier at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.
Photo by Bitá Honarvar

Letter from Jamie Shepherd



Dear Readers,

As I begin the role of CEO, I'm so excited and proud to be, along with my sister Julie, part of the third generation of our family representing Shepherd Center. I've always loved our co-founder Dr. Apple's observation that "with the right people, you can do rehab in a barn." And he's right, Shepherd Center is an amazing place because of our staff, and I'm humbled and honored to be able to represent them and lead this organization.

From day one of a patient's journey at Shepherd, our staff helps patients focus on making and achieving goals and re-learning life skills. That includes everything from activities of daily living to recreation therapy and preparing to return to school or work.

In this issue of *Spinal Column*, we explore the many ways our therapists, academic coordinators, and vocational rehabilitation counselors smooth the transition back to school, work, or "adulting" — teaching patients to advocate for themselves and let their schools and employers know what accommodations they may or may not need. You can read more about the power of these programs beginning on page 6.

On page 14, you'll find a helpful checklist to prepare for returning home. From organizing medical information to building a support team of friends, family, and Shepherd's peer support program, these tips empower patients to continue optimizing recovery even after they have left Shepherd Center.

And on page 16, you'll meet former Shepherd patient Robby Barbieri. When Robby was ready to rejoin the workforce after sustaining a spinal cord injury (SCI), he encountered an obstacle that set him on a path to political advocacy to help himself and others.

Our patients want and deserve to return to fulfilling lives and reach their educational and career goals, and I'm honored to work alongside a team of talented staff committed to Shepherd's mission to help them get there. Read on to learn more about our programs that help patients forge that path and feel empowered to overcome obstacles along the way.

Warm regards,

Jamie Shepherd

Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE
President and Chief Executive Officer of Shepherd Center

Fall 2024 | Shepherd Center

Contents

Features

6 Back to Life
How Shepherd Center helps patients get back to the roles that mean most to them.

16 Man on a Mission
Robby Barbieri's spinal cord injury set him on a path to advocacy.

Departments

4 Short Takes

13 Staff Profile
Kathleen Levenson, RN, CRRN,
transition support case manager

14 Spotlight
Practical tips to help ease the transition to home so you can optimize recovery and help prevent rehospitalization.

20 Foundation Features

29 Honorariums and Memorials

Photo by Bitá Honarvar

Tayla Mangus, MS, OTR/L,
works with Luke Kimbril.
Mangus helps with the
Adulting Program, curated
for young adult patients.

 See news.shepherd.org
for additional online content.

Gifts of Generosity

If you would like to make a gift to support the work you have read about, please contact Sarah L. Batts at the Shepherd Center Foundation at 404-350-7305 or scan the QR code.



Sarah Morrison Retires as CEO After 40-year Career at Shepherd Center



Sarah Morrison began her career at Shepherd Center as a physical therapist in 1984. Since then, she has served in various leadership roles including vice president of clinical services, director of the Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program, and director of the medical/surgical and ICU programs, among others. She became CEO of the 152-bed hospital in 2017.

Shepherd Center has flourished during Morrison's tenure as CEO. With her leadership, Shepherd Center's outcomes have regularly exceeded national averages, and the neurorehabilitation hospital became one of an elite group of hospitals

recognized as both Spinal Cord Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems. She also led efforts to increase patient access and improve the patient and family experience through Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center.

"It has been one of the highlights of my life to serve our patients and their families alongside our staff — the best team in the world," says Morrison. "I am so proud and grateful for what we have accomplished together to help thousands of patients and families begin again after injury or illness."



(from left) Morrison joined Shepherd Center in 1984, immediately after earning her bachelor's degree in physical therapy at the University of Miami, where she graduated summa cum laude. ► Sarah Morrison with the late Harold Shepherd, Shepherd Center co-founder.

Upon her retirement, Shepherd Center's current president and chief operating officer, Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE, will become CEO.

"Jamie Shepherd is an immensely talented leader who is well-positioned to usher Shepherd Center into its next 50 years," Morrison says. "He knows our culture, business, and community inside and out."



(from left top) Morrison with long-time Shepherd supporter and emeritus member of Shepherd Center's Board of Trustees, John Carlos. ► Sarah Morrison, (right) with her husband, Jeff Morrison. ► (below) Sarah Morrison, Alana Shepherd, and Jamie Shepherd, at the topping off celebration for the new Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation.



(from left) In 2020, Morrison was recognized as one of Atlanta Magazine's 500 Most Powerful Leaders in Atlanta. ► Ben Thrower, M.D., medical director of the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute, and Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, ride tricycles in a friendly ShepherdCares campaign competition.



Farewell: A Journey of Gratitude and Hope

As I write this farewell message, I am overwhelmed by a flood of emotions. These past 40 years have been an incredible journey of growth, resilience, and unwavering dedication to our mission of hope and healing. As I retire from my role as CEO of this remarkable hospital, I am filled with immense gratitude for all of you who have been part of it.

It seems like just yesterday that I came through the doors of Shepherd as a young physical therapist, eager to make a difference in the lives of our patients. Back then, we were a modest 40-bed facility with a BIG dream. But with the support of our dedicated staff, volunteers, donors, and community, we have transformed into a beacon of excellence in neurorehabilitation.

I will never forget when James Shepherd encouraged me to step forward for CEO consideration or the day my new role was announced seven years ago. The excitement in the room was palpable, and the outpouring of support from our incredible team humbled me. Together, we have faced numerous challenges, but none as daunting as the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, through it all, we

remained strong, ensuring the safety of our patients and staff without resorting to layoffs or compromising on the quality of care.

Over the decades, we expanded our mission to serve those with traumatic brain injury, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and complex pain, as well as veterans and first responders with traumatic brain injury and PTSD. Today, we lead the country in patients returning to home and their communities while minimizing hospital readmissions. Most of all, we maximize our patients' return to productive, meaningful lives.

I am filled with pride as I witness the realization of Vision 2025 — a vision that promises expanded services, enhanced accessibility, and groundbreaking research. From opening additional housing for our patients and families to expanding our inpatient and outpatient capacity and advancing discoveries through innovation, we are on the cusp of even more extraordinary accomplishments. But our work is far from over! As we look to the future, let us embrace the challenge of defining the next generation of neurorehabilitation. As one donor recently shared, "If anyone can deliver, it is Shepherd

Center." So let us continue to be guided by our North Star — our patients and their families — and never lose sight of the importance of sustaining our remarkable culture, infused with humor, resilience, and compassion.

To our staff, physicians, board members, volunteers, donors, and supporters like you — I extend my deepest gratitude. You have made these past 40 years truly unforgettable, and Shepherd will always hold a special place in my heart.

I also can't forget the countless individuals who have inspired and guided me along the way. To James, Harold, Alana, Dr. Apple, and all those who have helped us bridge the gap between "I can't" and "I can," I am eternally grateful. Together, we have embarked on a mission that truly matters — a mission of healing, hope, and endless possibilities.

Thank you for being part of this special family. May our journey continue to inspire and uplift, as we strive to make the impossible possible for generations to come.

Sarah Morrison

Research and Innovation Updates

1 Tetraplegia treatment shows improved upper body function

Edelle Field-Fote, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA, FASIA, Shepherd Center's director of spinal cord injury research, served as a lead researcher in a trial for ONWARD Medical's ARC-EX Therapy, a non-invasive therapy to improve strength and function for people with incomplete tetraplegia. In the trial results published in *Nature Medicine*, 90% of participants improved either strength or function of upper limbs, and 87% reported improvement in overall quality of life.

(below) Portable Neuromodulation Stimulator (PoNS®) devices stimulate the part of the brain that controls balance and gait.

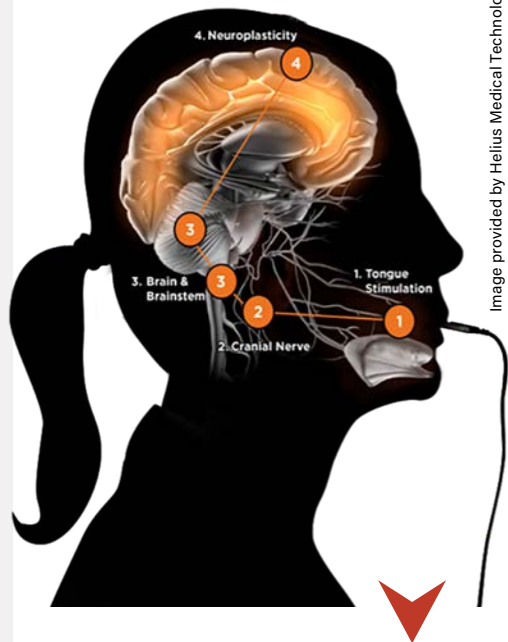


Image provided by Helius Medical Technologies

2 Improving balance and walking mobility after stroke

Shepherd Center is partnering with Helius Medical Technologies to improve balance and walking mobility in people who have experienced a stroke. With the leadership of Chief Medical Officer Michael

Yochelson, M.D., MBA, FAAN, FAAPMR, Shepherd Center is implementing a study using Portable Neuromodulation Stimulators (PoNS®) — devices that rest on the tongue and stimulate the part of the brain that controls balance and gait — in combination with physical therapy to treat people who have experienced a stroke. To learn more about this research study, please contact Cathy Furbish at cathy.furbish@shepherd.org.

3 Using AI to enhance postural assessments

For patients experiencing pusher syndrome after brain injury, an impaired perception of their body in space results in a loss of balance. To better understand this, Shepherd Center is partnering with Kemtai to use its AI motion-tracking technology to co-develop assessments and exercises. Shepherd plans to expand the use of Kemtai's technology for patients with spinal cord injuries and multiple sclerosis. For more information on these projects, visit news.shepherd.org.

4 Potential myelin repair

Shepherd Center researchers are studying the safety and potential effectiveness of adding an experimental therapy to standard-of-care disease-modifying treatments in people with relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. The study will test an experimental oral therapy that may promote the repair of nerve-insulating myelin. Study participants undergo a series of screening assessments to determine eligibility and then return to the clinic for follow-up testing multiple times during the treatment period. To learn

more about the enrollment criteria for this study, please discuss the add-on therapy study with your neurologist.



Image provided by Kemtai

(above) Shepherd Center is partnering with Kemtai to use its AI motion-tracking technology to co-develop assessments and exercises.

5 Upper extremity spasticity

Shepherd Center has started a clinical trial with the leadership of John Lin, M.D.; Erik Shaw, D.O.; and Angela Beninga, D.O. The iovera® device treats pain by applying cold to specific nerves. This study will evaluate how the system affects shoulder and/or arm spasticity in people with brain or spinal conditions. Study participants will visit Shepherd Center five times over approximately four months for assessment and treatment. To qualify, participants must be 18 years or older, have shoulder/elbow spasticity due to a brain or spinal condition for longer than six months, and not have taken a neurotoxin injection within the past three months. To learn more, please contact Kayla Tarpley at kayla.tarpley@shepherd.org.

SCI Ventures Aims to Advance SCI Research

Fifteen million people have a spinal cord injury (SCI), but there are limited options to address the dramatic impact SCIs have on quality of life. Now, a new venture philanthropy fund is aiming to change that.

SCI Ventures, the first venture philanthropy fund of its kind for SCI research, aims to advance breakthroughs for people living with paralysis by supporting cure-oriented therapies and emerging technologies. Shepherd Center has joined other leading foundations like the Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation and Wings for Life as co-investors in the project, which launched in June with \$27 million in commitments.

SCI Ventures invests in early-stage companies developing the next generation of treatments, emphasizing technology to restore function on the path to a cure for paralysis. The fund pours 100% of its investment earnings into companies working toward treatments and cures for paralysis. The fund anticipates raising \$40 million by year-end, with plans to support 20 companies in the paralysis research space.

"We're confident that the SCI Ventures team has the experience and tenacity necessary to have a positive impact on people living with spinal cord injury," says Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, recently retired CEO of Shepherd Center. "When Shepherd's administration and clinical and research leaders discussed this investment, they agreed that when a cure for spinal cord injuries is found, this will be the group to have found it."

 SCI Ventures

SCI Therapy Manager Appointed to State Board of Occupational Therapy

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Therapy Manager Rebecca Hammad, MHS, OTR/L, CLT, was appointed to the Georgia State Board of Occupational Therapy in April. The state board plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality of occupational therapy services provided to Georgia residents while upholding professional standards and protecting patients.

"I applied to the board to protect the integrity of the profession and keep the general population safe," Hammad says. "You want there to be practitioners available to treat people, but ultimately, you can't have people treating under a license if they're not meeting the standard."

Hammad began working at Shepherd Center in 2006. In her current role, she supports occupational therapists in her unit, provides patient care, and works on

Rebecca Hammad, MHS, OTR/L, CLT, was appointed to the State Board of Occupational Therapy in April.

special projects like leading the lymphedema program, which proactively addresses lymphedema, or excess build-up of fluid under the skin that can impede rehabilitation.

"I absolutely love Shepherd Center, and it's been such a great place to work and grow as a clinician," Hammad says.



Photo by Annalise Morning

Shepherd Center Welcomes New Chief Financial Officer

Beth Boatwright, CPA, recently joined Shepherd Center as chief financial officer. As CFO, Boatwright serves on the senior management team (SMT) and oversees the hospital's budgets, financial strategy, and day-to-day business operations.

Boatwright comes to Shepherd with 27 years of experience in finance management across the medical field. In her most recent role as CFO of Emory University's School of Medicine, she oversaw a \$1.3 billion budget while also providing day-to-day management for the fiscal affairs team.

"Beth is passionate about people and champions an innovation-friendly culture, helping to support breakthrough ideas," says Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE, president and chief executive officer of Shepherd Center. "We are confident that her strategic vision and dedication to financial excellence



will greatly contribute to our continued success."

Boatwright is involved in several community organizations for leaders in finance, as well as The Women's Collective in Atlanta and Leadership

Perimeter, whose mission is to inform and guide community leaders to align their individual skills and passions to address community needs. She received her Bachelor of Science in accounting from Georgia State University and is a certified public accountant.

Boatwright assumed the CFO role as Steve Holleman, MBA, CPA, retired after a nearly 30-year career at Shepherd Center.



Back to
 School
 Work
 Life

How Shepherd Center helps patients get back to the roles that mean most to them.

By Phillip Jordan



Photos by Bita Honarvar and Phil Skinner



Dominique Ross is a 17-year-old aspiring actor who loves comic books, theatre, and Spider-Man. She and her favorite superhero share a superpower, too. Peter Parker might sew his own costumes, but Dominique boasts a much more diverse wardrobe. She has hand-sewn much of her own clothing since she was a kid.

In the summer of 2023, however, Dominique assumed her sewing days — and much more — were behind her. That June, in a terrifying incident, she was shot 13 times in a case of mistaken identity. Two of the bullets lodged in her spinal column — one in her L2 vertebra and another fragment between her T7 and T8 vertebrae.

Her rehabilitation led her to Shepherd Center. Here, Dominique dedicated herself to her multiple modes of therapy, including physical, occupational, and recreational therapy, slowly regaining her independence and learning to accomplish tasks in new ways. One example: Shepherd Center found a sewing machine that Dominique could operate without having to use a foot pedal. In no time, she was making clothes again — including a red jumpsuit for Shepherd Center's

“It was a lot that went into it. Kelsey was so helpful. The whole staff was. I mean, my OT and PT were measuring me for new tables at school. It was that level of support.”

— Dominique Ross

adolescent rehabilitation program counselor, Cheryl Linden, MA, LPC; MS, OT/L.

But in the back of Dominique's mind, she still worried about how she would return to school and, most importantly, how she would get around the theater that was home to her beloved drama classes.

Enter Shepherd Center's transitional program, No Obstacles, which was created to alleviate adolescents' concerns about returning to school. One of the program's most impactful elements is the collaboration between Shepherd Center staff and each student's school.

In Dominique's case, that took the form of a meeting between Kelsey Shearman, MA — an academic coordinator in Shepherd Center's Adolescent Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program — and Dominique's teachers, drama department, and principal. Shearman went over what Dominique would need to succeed: assistance with note-taking, a seat in the back of class to give Dominique the freedom to move around frequently, accessibility improvements in the theater, and renovated bathrooms.

“It was a lot that went into it,” Dominique recalls. “Kelsey was so helpful. The whole staff was. I mean, my OT and PT were measuring me for new tables at school. It was that level of support.”

And it's made a world of difference. Dominique is thriving back at Bearden High School in Knoxville, Tennessee. She's aiming to graduate cum laude in this, her senior year. But she's even more excited about performing in her first school musical this fall. Oh, and she just started a new job at — get this — a local comic book shop. Life is, again, good.

“For the first time in my life, I'm thinking I might go to college,” Dominique says.

She envisions herself studying theatre and film. Maybe costume design. After all, somebody's going to have to make the next generation of Spider-Man costumes for the big screen.



Photos by Bitra Honarvar

Beginning Again

Anxiety about returning to school or work is a nearly universal concern for patients who have experienced life-altering events such as brain and spinal cord injuries. Thankfully, Dominique Ross is one among thousands of patients — adolescents and adults alike — who have benefitted from Shepherd Center's innovative programs that help ease the transition back to work, school, or even into adulthood itself.

Each program utilizes a person-centered approach that meets the unique goals and needs of each individual. That may include assistive technology and adaptive programs they'll eventually use in the classroom or office. And it always includes advocacy on

behalf of each patient with their school, employer, or other affiliated organizations, as well as teaching patients and families to advocate for themselves.

Returning to work or the classroom might not be the first thing on someone's mind after a catastrophic injury. But as recovery progresses, it often becomes the most important goal looking forward.

“It's easy to forget how essential working is to our human experience,” says Laura McDowell, MS, CRC, CVE, a vocational rehabilitation counselor at Shepherd Center. “It's about our ability to participate in our culture, provide for ourselves and our loved ones, and to feel productive and valuable in our society.”

Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Laura McDowell, MS, CRC, CVE, meets with Alexi Dodson, a patient in Shepherd's Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program.

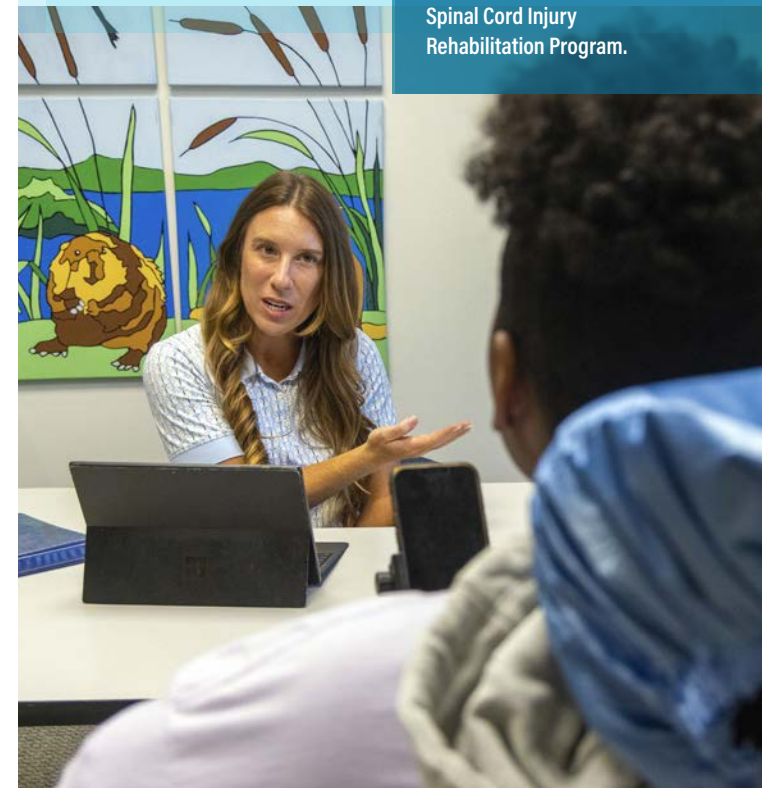


Photo by Phil Skinner



Skylar Miller was a patient at Shepherd Center in 2022, rehabilitating from a paralyzing injury that occurred during a complicated surgery to remove a tumor in his spinal cord.

While at Shepherd Center, Skylar became proficient in using his new wheelchair. And his employer became proficient in supporting Skylar.

Ten days before the injury, Skylar had gotten a new position at PDI Kitchen, Bath, and Lighting that was a perfect fit. But the job required a great deal of mobility — he was a showroom manager at PDI's Atlanta location, overseeing sales of bathroom, kitchen, and lighting fixtures.

Thanks to Shepherd Center's expertise, the job remained a perfect fit post-injury.

"My counselors had great conversations with my employers to come up with a game plan for my return," Skylar says. "And my boss was on board. He said, 'I didn't hire you to do this job because you could walk. I hired you because you could do the job.'"

By his first day back, Skylar's company had moved his desk to a spot that was easier to get in and out of, rearranged floor items to make it easier for Skylar to navigate the showroom, and even ripped out a vanity sink in the bathroom to install a wall-hung sink that Skylar could get his wheelchair underneath.

"It was a brand-new job with a brand-new body, essentially, but it went as smoothly as possible," Skylar says.

Less than two years after returning to work, Skylar was assigned to PDI's Alpharetta location — a higher-volume store and one of the company's top showrooms. He also now volunteers as a guest speaker in Shepherd Center's return-to-work classes, sharing his journey with current patients.

"Shepherd Center just prepares you so well to return to daily life," Skylar says. "I remember Laura (McDowell) was such a great advocate and so good at taking my anxiety away. She would say, 'Hey, you're still you. It's about what's up here, not anything else. Your mind, your abilities will shine through.'"

Photos by Bitia Honarwar

(Clockwise from left) Support from his vocational rehabilitation counselors and his supervisor at work made Skylar Miller's transition back to work a smooth one. ▶ Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist Zac Bradley, MS, CRC, NCC, CVE, helps patients navigate their return to work. ▶ Cynthia Trawick speaks with McNair Scholar Raquan Clemmons. After rehabilitation at Shepherd Center, she returned to work as director of TRIO and public health programs at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia.

Collaboration & Communication

The Genuine Parts Company Vocational Rehabilitation Program at Shepherd Center is unique in a couple of ways. First of all, in addition to GPC's philanthropic support, the company also hosts tours for Shepherd Center patients to give them in-person experiences navigating office, retail, and warehouse environments. Secondly, vocational services at Shepherd Center are offered early in each patient's stay — within the rehabilitation setting. This approach allows Shepherd Center staff to collaborate closely with other members of a patient's treatment team and clearly communicate the paths forward for each patient.

"I think the most important thing we do is demystify the process of returning to work after a catastrophic injury," says McDowell. "Many patients, especially early on, think there is no way they will be able to work again. But our process helps to open their eyes to new ways of approaching the work."

And, sometimes, it works the other way around — with patients initiating the fresh approaches.

Cynthia Trawick is the director of TRIO and public health programs at Morehouse College. In January 2023, Trawick sustained a hemorrhagic stroke while playing tennis. After just four days in the intensive care unit at Atlanta's Grady Memorial Hospital, she began Shepherd Center's Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program. As Trawick's speech and motor skills returned, she found herself itching to work again. "I lobbied to start working while still inpatient," Trawick says with a laugh. "To Shepherd Center's credit, they allowed me to do it." Her vocational, physical, and speech therapists

observed her in the process — communicating on Zoom, writing on her computer, researching grant proposals — and identified the cognitive gaps she was still experiencing.

"It was very helpful," Trawick says. "By watching me work, they figured out what I needed to work on the most based on the type of work I do. There probably aren't many places that would do that!"

Once it was time for her to leave Shepherd Center and return to campus, Trawick received the same type of support that Dominique Ross did when returning to school. Trawick's vocational rehabilitation specialist — Zac Bradley, MS, CRC, NCC, CVE — got on the phone with her boss, as well as Morehouse's HR director and facilities director. Together, they mapped out a plan for her return, which would eventually include a more accessible office.

"Zac was awesome in advocating for me," Trawick recalls. "Everyone at Shepherd Center, what they do for patients just shows how much they care. They make you feel confident, and it's such a holistic approach. I have so much respect for what they do."

"I know we're talking about work," Bradley says, "but my role is really to assist folks in getting back to life. Because our lives revolve around our work. My



goal is to make the path clearer, less confusing. To ease people's minds and clear the hurdles between where they are and where they want to be."

And where Trawick is today is far, far removed from the Atlanta tennis court where she collapsed that winter afternoon. Literally, far. When reached for an interview for this story, Trawick was on St. Thomas in the U.S. Virgin Islands, helping lead a group of Upward Bound pre-college students on a cultural tour of the islands. She secured the grant that funded the trip, too.

"This is what I love," Trawick says. "These are first-generation college students who have never been on a flight before. Now, they're being exposed to experiences that let them know there's a whole world beyond their home communities."

"I'm so thankful to still be doing this. I may be a work in progress, but I know I wouldn't be here right now if not for Shepherd Center."





When talking about returning to work or school, a sizeable group of folks gets left out of the conversation. A group that doesn't fit neatly into either category of adolescence or adulthood.

Indeed, many young adults arrive at Shepherd Center just as they're poised to launch into the next phase of their lives — whether that's college, the workforce, the military, a committed relationship, or something else.

"'Adulting' for anyone is daunting," says Tayla Mangus, MS, OTR/L, an occupational therapist at Shepherd Center. "Throw in a life-changing spinal cord injury, and it seems even more overwhelming."

That's why Shepherd Center created the Adulting Program for those who are beyond high school (so they've aged out of Shepherd Center's adolescent program), but still navigating life as young adults. The program offers mixers and outings designed to get patients talking about topics ranging from financial planning and health literacy to partner intimacy and travel advice.

"I love to see the organic conversations that happen between patients when we're on an outing," Mangus says. "They become a little more vulnerable with each other, and they are able to discuss their injuries, their plans for after discharge, their dreams for careers or living independently, and the friends and significant others they miss back home."

Alexi Dodson agrees. The 23-year-old resident of Norcross, Georgia, is currently in Shepherd Center's Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program — and taking advantage of the Adulting Program, as well.

"Just having an open and honest environment for talking about things like dating, sex after injury, independence, that's what I've enjoyed the most," Alexi says. "Doing this with peers makes it easier to get more personal questions answered without it feeling uncomfortable or intrusive."

As part of the program, she's also gone on a group outing to an Atlanta United soccer match. While there, Alexi

enjoyed a meal of salmon and fried rice, spinach artichoke dip, and tiramisu. And she ate it without assistance.

Maybe that doesn't seem like much, but for Alexi, it was momentous.

"You want to know that you can go out and do normal things again," she says. "Feeding myself there at the game — that was a big moment. There was a long stretch where I couldn't have imagined doing that in a million years."

Feeling prepared and feeling confident about engaging with the world around you — that's what anyone wants as they grow into adulthood. And the goal of Shepherd Center's Adulting Program is no different.

"Before doing this, I kind of just wanted to keep to myself," Alexi says. "But I'm feeling comfortable opening up more, making plans, getting out. I'm more excited to live, honestly, than just exist." *



(Clockwise from left) ▶ Occupational therapist Tayla Mangus, MS, OTR/L, works with Luke Kimbril. Mangus also works with the Adulting Program at Shepherd Center. ▶ Alexi Dodson smiles for a photo at an Adulting Program outing to an Atlanta United soccer match in July.

Photos by Bitia Honarvar and Erin Kenney

Instilling Confidence through Education and Expertise

In her role as transition support case manager, Kathleen Levenson, RN, CRRN, guides, educates, and advocates for patients.

Interview by Ruth Underwood



The culture was like no other. It had such a family feel. You would see staff going out of their way to do things for the families, the patients, and for me, a student at the time.

What do you find most rewarding about your job?

I love my role because you really get to dig in and meet the families, caregivers, and patients where they are. Each patient's situation is unique depending on the injury, how much support they have, and where they reside. The discharge process can be overwhelming, and it's nice to be that lifeline for them while they're trying to get into the swing of things and reacclimate into the community setting. It's rewarding to help guide patients and family members and be a point of contact where they can truly open up and trust our expertise.

How do you think your role impacts patients and family members?

When patients are in the hospital, if something goes sideways, the families, the caregivers, and the patients themselves feel like, 'OK, there are plenty of folks here if we need something. We have all the support that we need. We have all the equipment we need. If anything goes wrong, it's just hitting the call light and staff will come.' But after discharge, it can be really anxiety-provoking for the families or the patients themselves. And seeing the transformation from the very first call to when we discharge services from transition support is really fun. You can hear the confidence. It's empowering for them to know, 'OK, I think we can do this, and I love being home. I have my true life, my friends, my family, the extension of who I am, what I've been doing beforehand.' Hearing the joy and the experiences that they're starting to have again is a big deal. It's really rewarding.

What was one of your best days at work?

One of the best days was when a previous patient came back to see me and to share some amazing news — that he was getting married, and he wanted me to attend his wedding. I thought that was really neat because he went through a really tough time when he felt like things weren't going to get better for him. So, seeing him get to experience that joy and know that he was going to continue to live his life to the fullest — that was a really cool day. *

EDUCATION

- BS Nursing, Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University

FUN FACTS

- Kathleen is from Miami, Florida, but has lived in Georgia most of her life.
- She met her wife at Shepherd!
- She's always been involved in sports, and soccer is her passion.
- Lionel Messi is her favorite soccer player.

What is your role at Shepherd Center?

I'm a transition support case manager. We provide education, guidance, and support to the families and patients who need extra help after discharge.

The goal is to support positive outcomes, decrease the chances of ER visits and readmissions to the hospital, and help patients regain their independence and feel more confident about their overall care and everything they learned while they were at Shepherd.

What made you want to work at Shepherd?

When I was a nursing student, we did rotations at Shepherd, and I remember this place really stood out to me.

Photo by Phil Skinner

10 Tips to Ease the Transition Home

Below are some tips to help you optimize recovery and prevent rehospitalization.

1 Prepare before leaving the hospital. Taking the time to get organized before heading home is important.

+ **Identify a primary care doctor if you don't have one and schedule any follow-up appointments** to avoid gaps in your care. You may also need to see other specialists, including a physiatrist, neurologist, orthopedist, wound care expert, cardiologist, pulmonologist, or urologist. You also can take advantage of Shepherd Center's Rehabilitation Medicine Clinic for ongoing evaluations.



+ **Create an emergency card** that lists your medical conditions, current medications, allergies, healthcare providers, and emergency contacts. Keep one copy with you and another one at home.

+ **Fill your prescription medications** and order any medical supplies (bowel and bladder aids, tracheostomy supplies, skin needs, etc.)



+ **Set up transportation** to and from your medical and/or therapy appointments and recreational activities. If you have Medicaid, you might be able to use Medicaid Transportation. Find out if you have access to paratransit transportation services.

+ **Know the symptoms to watch for** to determine if your health is deteriorating and who to call.



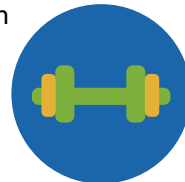
+ **Know what is and isn't covered by your insurance plan.** Case managers at Shepherd Center can provide information and guidance on how to access funding based on your condition and finances.

2 Map out a schedule and stick to it. Even if you aren't quite ready to return to school, work, or parenting, having a routine with tasks to work on every day can be very motivating.

+ When initiating new outings, give yourself an extra 30 to 60 minutes until you fine-tune your routine.

3 Follow the exercise program recommended by your therapy team.

+ Doing so will help you maintain and continue to build strength and range of motion.



4 Survey your home environment. Take a look around to make sure your home is safe and accessible.

- + Are there rugs that could get caught in your wheelchair or serve as a tripping hazard?
- + Can you reach things like your phone, medicines or a cup for water?
- + Do you have an emergency plan in place?

5 Know how, when, and why you are taking each of your medications.

- + Talk with your health team if you have concerns about your medications (for example, cost, side effects, remembering to take them, etc.). Consider using a pill box to stay organized.
- + Check out MyChart, an online tool that helps you access your medical information and manage your care.



6 Post reminders around the house if memory is an issue.

+ Leave notes or set alarms to help you remember what you are supposed to do before you cook, when to take your medicine, etc.



7 Build your team.

Make a list of family and friends who can help you — even if it's just to listen.

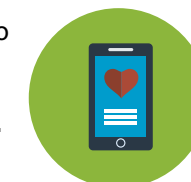
+ Tap into the peer support program at Shepherd Center. It can be helpful to talk with someone who has faced a similar injury and made the journey back home and to their community.



8 Check in with yourself or your loved ones and stay engaged.

+ Recovering from a spinal cord injury, brain injury, or other complex injury or illness can take an emotional toll. You will likely have good and bad days.

+ Remember that you don't need to do it alone, and there are counseling services to help. Make sure you are taking part in activities that give your life meaning. You can often do more than you think you can. Your therapists can show you how.



+ Shepherd Center also offers virtual and in-person Health and Wellness Clinics. Visit shepherd.org/rec-therapy/events to find an event near you.

9 Be proactive about potential complications after injury or illness.

+ **UTI Prevention and Management:**

Know the signs and symptoms of a urinary tract infection (UTI), such as cloudy or strong-smelling urine, fever greater than 101 degrees, blood in the urine, leaking between intermittent catheterizations (ICs, burning pain when you urinate, feeling like you have to urinate all the time, or autonomic dysreflexia of unknown cause.

+ **To help prevent UTIs:**

- » Drink plenty of water to flush the bladder.
- » Maintain good hygiene.
- » Perform your bladder program as prescribed and do not allow the bladder to get too full.
- » Take your temperature if you suspect a UTI and call your primary care provider (PCP) to request a urine culture. If you have a Foley catheter or suprapubic tube (SPT), the catheter must be changed before collecting a urine specimen for the urine culture.

+ **Symptoms of Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) may include:**

- » Severe, pounding headache
- » High blood pressure (a 30-40 point rise above your normal)
- » Sweating, goosebumps, or red blotches above the level of injury
- » Stuffy nose

+ **Common causes of AD include:**

- » A full bladder, full bowel, bladder infections, skin pressures/sores, tight clothing, ingrown toenails, and stimulation during bowel programs.

+ **If you experience symptoms of AD:**

- » Get help immediately.
- » Sit up if you are lying down.
- » Check your bladder and perform your bowel program.
- » Check your skin and toenails for pressure areas or irritants.
- » Loosen tight clothing.

10 Speak up and advocate for yourself.

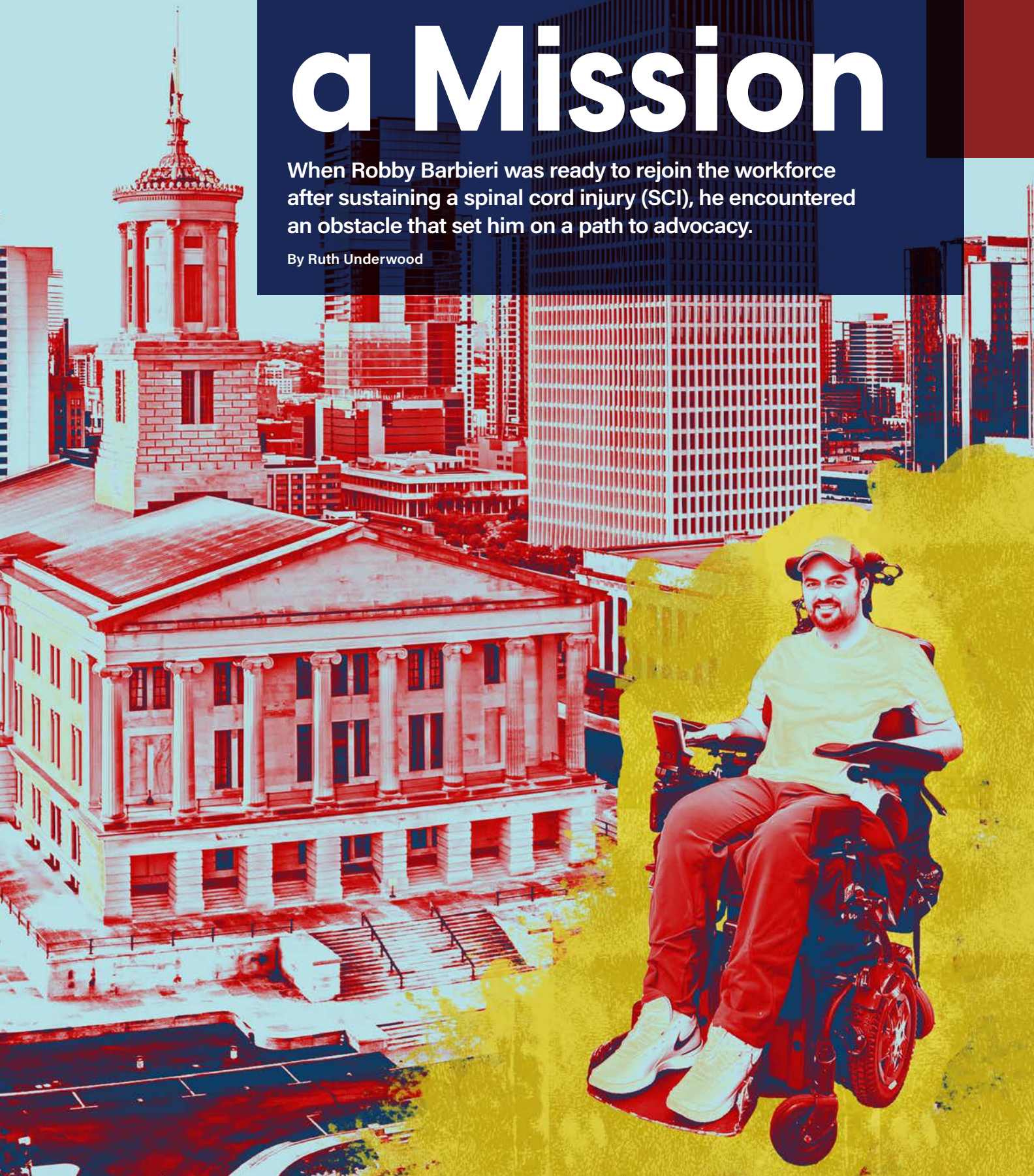
+ Let someone know if your needs aren't being met.

For ongoing support and resources, check out the family and patient education at myshepherdconnection.org.

Man on a Mission

When Robby Barbieri was ready to rejoin the workforce after sustaining a spinal cord injury (SCI), he encountered an obstacle that set him on a path to advocacy.

By Ruth Underwood



(clockwise from top) (left to right): Back Row: Tom Jedlowski, Tennessee Disability Coalition; Jeff Strand, Tennessee Disability Coalition; Melanie Bull, Capitol & 5th Public Strategies; Courtney Atnip, Capitol & 5th Public Strategies, Tennessee State Senator Bo Watson. Front Row: Disability advocates Robby Barbieri and Bliss Welch ▶ Robby Barbieri, golfing with friends and former Vanderbilt football teammates Carey Spear (left) and Andrew East (right), and Robby's uncle, Jack McGovern (rear center). ▶ Robby Barbieri (right) and fellow disability advocate Bliss Welch (left) with Tennessee State Senator Bo Watson at the Tennessee State Capitol on the day the TennCare for Working Individuals with Disabilities Act became law.



A Minnesota native, Robby Barbieri fell in love with Nashville, Tennessee, while attending Vanderbilt University, playing football, and earning his undergraduate degree in economics and a master's degree in finance. After graduation, he had been working in finance in the healthcare industry for several years when he sustained an incomplete C4-C5 spinal cord injury in a car crash early in 2022.

Robby went first to Vanderbilt University Hospital, where he spent three weeks in the ICU. When he arrived at Shepherd, he still used a ventilator to assist with breathing.

"Prior to Shepherd, I was having a hard time coming off the vent. It was an agonizing process. I think I was completely off the vent two and a half weeks after I got to Shepherd. I remember drinking water and eating for the first time, and it was the greatest thing in the world for me at the time," Robby recalls.

While in Shepherd's Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program, Robby tried to soak up all the education offered, learning to care for his skin, working on a bowel and bladder program, and exploring assistive technology options.

"The adaptive tech gave me a lot of hope because I realized I can work again," Robby explains. "Now, I use a lot of technology to make my life work."

Once he returned home, Robby began to feel the pressure of his mortgage and medical and caregiver expenses. He felt ready to rejoin the workforce. That's when he discovered another obstacle to building the life he hoped for. Tennessee was one of a handful of states without a Medicaid buy-in program. A buy-in program allows participants to earn income and have assets while paying a premium to Medicaid.

Because no such buy-in program existed as part of TennCare, Tennessee's Medicaid

program, Robby faced income limits of \$2,829 per month and asset limits of \$2000 to receive Medicaid — insurance coverage essential for his care.

Through a former coach and mentor, Robby met Josh Basile, a disability lawyer, and discovered a mission that would occupy the next several months of his life and change how he views himself.

Robby learned that Josh, who also has tetraplegia, has a job, bought a house with his partner, and has two kids.

"After the first conversation with Josh, so much hope came into my life," Robby says. "I thought a lot of those life events were unattainable for me because of my injury. Our conversation lit the fire," he explains.

To change the law that made him feel he had to choose between work and health insurance, Robby spent months making connections, building a task force, and drumming up support. He started a nonprofit, Music City Wheels, to highlight the issue. He worked with the Tennessee Disability Coalition, which connected him with Tennessee State Rep. Darren Jernigan, who also has a spinal cord injury and supported Robby's efforts. Robby reached out to experts to help him make the case for changing the law by gathering data and crunching numbers for the budget. He also worked, alongside others, to get sponsors for the bill in the Tennessee House and Senate.

"I feel like it's every human's right to be able to earn income and also get the

health care that they need," Robby says. "This is about affirming the dignity and potential of every Tennessean, empowering us not just to survive, but to thrive."

All the hard work paid off, and on April 24, 2024, with sponsors Senator Bo Watson and Representative Tim Hicks, the TennCare for Working Individuals with Disabilities Act became law, allowing qualified individuals with disabilities to pay a premium to access Medicaid's long-term support services, even if their income exceeds the current Medicaid eligibility requirements.

"This bill marks a historic step forward," he says. "It ensures that individuals with disabilities no longer have to choose between maintaining health coverage and pursuing their career aspirations or personal happiness, such as marriage. As someone who has lived through the limitations of the previous system, this change isn't just policy to me, it's personal. It represents a future where disabilities do not define our capacities to contribute, to succeed, and to build lives of fulfillment," he explains.

And Robby is enjoying the benefits of his advocacy. He recently started a full-time job in corporate finance with NuMotion, a wheelchair and mobility equipment company.

He's continuing his advocacy work, connecting with organizations in Louisiana and Utah to improve laws surrounding working with a disability.

"I never thought advocacy would be a big part of my life," Robby says. "But I really like it — it kind of makes everything make sense. I always want to be in this disability arena, giving back." *

Photos provided by Robby Barbieri

Shepherd Alums:

From “I Can’t” to “I Can”

By Sara Baxter and Erin Kenney

Greta Anderson Atlanta, Georgia

Discipline, dedication, and persistence — these are all qualities of a successful athlete. And Greta Anderson, a former competitive tennis player who is now an LPGA professional and golf instructor, is using those qualities as she navigates a recent multiple sclerosis (MS) diagnosis.

“I wrapped my mind around it,” Greta says of the news that the symptoms she’d been experiencing — extreme fatigue, dizziness, pain, and weakness throughout her body — were caused by MS. “But I didn’t wallow — the condition was not going to take over my life.”

It took a few months to get the diagnosis. She received hypotheses from doctors but no real answers and nothing to relieve her symptoms. “I had to cut back my teaching as it was difficult to move,” she recalls. “I stopped going to the gym. It was a scary and stressful time because no one had any answers.”

Last September, she visited another doctor who suspected MS. An MRI confirmed that diagnosis.

“I was actually relieved,” Greta says. “I knew what I was dealing with, and I could move toward progress.”

Greta sought treatment at the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute at Shepherd Center, impressed by their holistic approach to care.

“I’m going to have MS the rest of my life,” she says. “I wanted a place that could give me a whole cadre of care.”

Greta began regular physical and occupational therapy, incorporated stretching into her routine, and was careful to eat a healthy diet and get plenty of sleep.

“I’m very coachable,” Greta says. “Tell me what to do, and I will do it faithfully with as much effort as I can. I felt empowered to improve.”

Greta also works out at Shepherd Center’s ProMotion Fitness Center, taking classes tailored to people with MS. Her hard work has paid off with improvements in her strength, mobility, and balance.

She has adapted her work schedule, and now teaches at an indoor facility, which helps her avoid the heat.

She’s cut back on teaching but expanded her business in other ways that are not as physically demanding. She uses a walking stick to help with balance. She is grateful for the MS Institute.

“MS can be overwhelming,” Greta says, “especially if you don’t have a place where you can get physical and emotional support.

Shepherd Center does that. Everything you need is right there. It is a life-changing, life-affirming place.”



Katie Stembridge Montgomery, Alabama

A C4 spinal cord injury (SCI). Fractures in her legs and pelvis. A traumatic brain injury (TBI). A severe burn on her hand. These were just some of the injuries Katie Stembridge sustained as a passenger in a car crash in October 2022.

Katie, then 21 years old, was taken to the ICU at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Hospital, where she underwent multiple surgeries to stabilize her injuries. She was paralyzed from the chest down, and doctors believed she wouldn’t regain any movement in her arms.

Katie arrived at Shepherd Center in November, with her older sister Megan taking time away from her work as a travel nurse to be one of Katie’s primary caregivers.

“She was my rock throughout everything,” Katie says of her sister. During Katie’s treatment, her sister and parents stayed in Shepherd’s family housing.

In the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU), Katie regained control of her shoulders and biceps. She also learned how to leverage assistive technologies, allowing her to use her phone, get around in a power wheelchair, and feed herself. She says her care team gave her the support she needed through it all — on the days she’d break down crying, they’d comfort her. And on the days she had a success, they’d celebrate alongside her.

“Shepherd Center is like the Disney World of rehab hospitals,” she says. “I’m so grateful I ended up at Shepherd.”

CRU also gave Katie a new best friend. Hannah Anderson was also a patient at the time, receiving treatment for Guillain-Barré Syndrome. The two have stayed in touch since Katie graduated from inpatient treatment in February 2023.

Katie has since returned to Shepherd for two rounds of the SCI Day Program, allowing her to continue building mobility in her arms while trying recreation therapy activities like power soccer. Now, she has control of her forearms and wrists. One day, she hopes to become a case manager and return to Shepherd as a staff member, rejoining her friend Hannah, who is now a nurse on CRU.

In the meantime, Katie has returned to many of the activities she enjoyed before her injury.

“It’s nice because I still get to be 23,” Katie says. “Shepherd showed me I still have so much life to be lived.”



Jeff Richmond Chattanooga, Tennessee

It took paramedics 20 minutes to find Jeff Richmond after he was thrown from a car in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. He was almost pronounced dead at the scene before a paramedic spotted his eyelids fluttering. They immediately life-flighted him to HCA Florida Memorial Hospital in Jacksonville.

Years earlier, Jeff had sold an asphalt paver to late Shepherd Center co-founder Harold Shepherd, who gave him a tour of Shepherd. Jeff’s family remembered him talking about a hospital that fostered “miracles upon miracles.” So, Shepherd Center felt like an obvious choice for his treatment.

Jeff arrived at Shepherd in a state of minimal consciousness. When his mom reflects on his first few months at Shepherd, she says, “Yeah, you were 41, but it was like you were my 4-month-old child again.” His background as a Marine Corps veteran, however, helped him push through even the biggest challenges in rehab. With the help of his care team, he relearned how to breathe, swallow, and speak on his own.

After completing the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, Jeff moved to Shepherd Pathways, a comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation program for people recovering from brain injury. He went from using a wheelchair to a walker to walking with no support at all. After Pathways, he continued outpatient rehabilitation closer to home at Siskin Hospital in Tennessee.

After Siskin, however, Jeff stopped treatment for a year. Some of the abilities he worked to restrengthen, like his memory and ability to multitask, regressed. That’s when Jeff heard from a representative from SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center, which provides rehabilitation for military veterans, service members, and first responders with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. SHARE gave him what he was missing — not just rehabilitation but a community to share his thoughts, challenges, and successes. The program reminded Jeff that there’s no finish line for brain injury rehabilitation.

“The best way to sum it up is to tell people I’m like an airplane, only I don’t have a cruising altitude,” he says. “I’m either taking off, or I’m crashing.”

It’s clear that now, Jeff is taking off. Since graduating from SHARE, Jeff lives independently, drives, volunteers, and speaks out about brain injuries, even appearing on his local news station.

“I want to share my story so that others with a brain injury can see that there is light at the end of the tunnel,” Jeff says.

“I’m not even supposed to be alive, yet I live in an apartment by myself. I drive again. I love to share my story to give hope and inspiration.”



Raymond Leonard Douglasville, Georgia

When Raymond Leonard began experiencing upper respiratory symptoms in August 2021, he thought he had COVID-19. He tested negative and chalked it up to the flu. However, over the next three days, his symptoms worsened, and by the time he arrived at Emory University Hospital’s emergency room, he couldn’t move. Doctors diagnosed him with Guillain-Barré Syndrome, which causes the immune system to attack the nerves and sometimes results in paralysis.

Because he had struggled with breathing, doctors placed him in a medically induced coma and put him on a ventilator to give his lungs some relief. During that time, Raymond also had a stroke.

“I woke up at Shepherd Center a month later, still on the ventilator, and I was only able to move my head from side to side,” Raymond remembers.

He spent the next three months in the Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU), receiving many forms of therapy, including physical, speech, and occupational therapy. He learned to walk again and to feed and dress himself.

His progress was slow but steady. He started using a power wheelchair, and by the time he returned home just before Thanksgiving, he was using a manual wheelchair. He continued in outpatient therapy, practicing walking on the Lokomat®. He eventually moved to a walker and set a goal of walking up the stairs with only the aid of a cane.

“I was motivated by setting incremental goals,” Raymond says. “That really helped because I could see progress.”

Raymond, who has spent his career in education, set another goal for himself: to return to Factory Shoals Middle School in Douglasville, Georgia, where he serves as principal.

Again, he had to take it slowly. Raymond and his doctors decided he should begin by returning to work for two hours a day, twice a week. In April, he increased that to eight hours a week through the end of the school year. He continued therapy throughout that summer, and in August 2022, he walked into the school unassisted and returned to work full-time.

When looking at the milestones he’s achieved, Raymond credits his family for their unwavering support — as well as the “family” at Shepherd Center.

“When you are in a mobility crisis, they give you a lifeline, and they give you hope,” Raymond says. “They were motivational and inspirational. It’s like a family. Three years later, I still have connections there.”



By Dom, Shepherd Social Media Specialist

From My Point of View

Shepherd's Social Media Specialist, Dom, shares his experience as a first-timer at Adventure Skills Workshop.



In October 2022, I attended Shepherd Center's inaugural fall retreat at Camp Twin Lakes in Rutledge, Georgia. It was the first time I ever slept in a cabin. It felt like a true camp experience, from the gravel crumbling under the tires to counselors — Shepherd Center recreation therapists — greeting you at the entrance, showing all 32 teeth and ready to lend a helping hand with bags, to the eerie yet peaceful quiet of nature, accompanied by crickets, creeks, and cicadas. From the moment my partner and I settled into our cabin, it was one adventure after the next. Twin Lakes was a blast — from zip lining, kayaking, and archery to s'more making.

While I was at Camp Twin Lakes, I heard about Adventure Skills Workshop (ASW) for the first time. All the rec therapists told me that if I had fun at this camp, ASW would blow my mind. Alesha, a friend I made at Twin Lakes, seconded their point, gushing about how much fun she had when she attended. Despite this encouragement parade, I sashayed my way out of making any formal commitment to participate because of my apprehensions about getting in the water again. Eventually, my worries subsided. Alesha reminded me that applications opened for ASW in March. Unfortunately, I procrastinated, and the slots filled much faster than I expected.

I missed my chance in 2023, but in 2024, I applied as soon as the application window opened, which happens on March 17, St. Patrick's Day, every year. That ended up being lucky for me because slots filled in just three hours. Within a few days of applying, I knew I had gotten a spot. I received an email from Kelly Edens, CTRS, recreation therapy manager at Shepherd, who was

Yoda for the weekend, guiding me and all the participants — campers from more than a dozen states. She shared a list of everything we needed to pack, explained how the weekend would go with activities, asked what I wanted to do, etc.

Two months later, the first day of ASW finally arrived. My partner and I packed our 2017 Chrysler Pacifica and embarked on our journey to Alabama. It teetered between drizzle and steady rain the entire way there. From 20 West to 85 North to the back roads of Alabama, the trip took about 2 1/2 hours. With crinkles and crackles, the gravel road announced our arrival at Camp ASCCA, an accessible facility on Lake Martin near Jackson's Gap. We parked by the dining hall, unsure of where to go. Donning my camo poncho with my partner sporting a big umbrella, we got out of the car to explore and see precisely where we needed to go. Luckily, a group of volunteers from Brasfield & Gorrie happened to be passing by and pointed us to the pavilion. One person was even kind enough to walk us there.

Inside the pavilion/gym, Shepherd staff ushered us to tables where we registered and got a bag full of goodies: t-shirts, according to our size, a microfiber towel, a canteen, a baseball cap, snacks, sunscreen, and mosquito repellent. At the next table we received the schedule of activities. The weekend was scheduled to a T, including everything from when the swim test was open to when lunch and dinner were served to when you could try each activity you signed up for. The volunteers helped unload our vehicle, and we settled into the room.

The weekend was meticulously planned, and even the rain didn't stop anything. It only delayed some activities for safety

Photos by Bita Honarvar



Dom, Shepherd's social media specialist, (far left) enjoyed his first Adventure Skills Workshop in May. The weekend at Camp ASCCA in Jackson's Gap, Alabama, offers a schedule packed with a variety of activities to choose from, including zip lining, tubing, basketball, and, of course, campfires.

Passing the swim test was your golden ticket to water skiing, kayaking, tubing, jet skiing, scuba, water polo, and swimming without assistance. For safety reasons, if you didn't pass the swim test, those activities would be off-limits for you, but the therapists were encouraging enough to allow you to try again.

Taking the test was my first time in a pool since my accident, which is a huge feat. Even if you didn't pass the test, like me, you could still partake in enough activities — fishing, shooting, board games, etc. — to keep yourself more than occupied. For me, that included connecting with several people from the disability community, including professional swimmers and dancers. Not once did I feel out of place, which sometimes can occur when abled-bodied people surround me. A woman I met at a few different Shepherd Center functions described my feelings precisely but more poetically, "It's nice to be able look at people eye to eye rather than be butt-level all the time." These moments of camaraderie with people who have intimate knowledge of my daily experience is a truly one-of-a-kind adventure that I might not have had without the help of Shepherd Center. Thanks to the donor-funded Recreation Therapy Program, I've made lifelong friends and connected with people throughout the disability community.

ASW was the most fun I have had in a long time. After an injury or illness, it can be challenging to figure out how to get back in the swing of things and do activities that you enjoy. Without Shepherd's guidance, I would have struggled to learn to fish or kayak. The therapists were always encouraging. They dedicate their weekend to you, showing you what is possible and how you can still live your life. Anyone will have a great time, no matter their disability, at ASW. ✨



For more information about Adventure Skills Workshop, scan the QR code or visit shepherd.org/programs/services/sports-recreation/adventure-skills-workshop.



Travel to Mexico with Shepherd Center and Wheel the World!

Roll around the globe with Shepherd Center on a six-day, fully accessible adventure through the breathtaking landscape of Cancun and the Riviera Maya, January 18-23, 2025. From the luxurious Dreams Jade Resort & Spa to the historic splendor of Chichen Itza, every moment is designed for people who use mobility aids.

The trip hosts, Shepherd's Recreation Therapy Program and Wheel the World, are dedicated to ensuring that every part of the adventure accommodates people of all abilities.

To find out more, visit shepherd.org/rec-therapy/events or scan the QR code.



Upcoming Events

Shepherd Center Junior Committee's Second Annual Cornhole Tournament
Saturday, October 26, 2024
Steady Hand Beer Co.

Soque Slam Invitational Fishing Rodeo
Saturday, October 26, 2024
Clarksville, Georgia

Shepherd's Men Clay Shoot
Friday, November 1, 2024
The Burge Club

Legendary Party
Saturday, November 2, 2024
Flourish Atlanta

For more information on Shepherd Center events, please visit foundation.shepherd.org/events or scan the QR code.





Shepherd Teens Enjoy the Limelight

Project Rollway Celebrates Adolescent Patients

By Erin Kenney

Ben Kerbo, an 18-year-old from Nashville, Tennessee, used the stage at this year's Project Rollway to do more than model clothing. He also took it as an opportunity to make a special delivery, handing a peach Chick-fil-A milkshake to Shepherd Center co-founder Alana Shepherd in the front row. Like any dedicated Chick-fil-A employee, he answered her thank you with a genuine "My pleasure."

Ben was one of 28 participants in the 11th Project Rollway this past June. The event celebrates current and former Shepherd Center patients from the Adolescent Rehabilitation Program, which focuses on returning teenagers to the highest level of independence possible after spinal cord injury (SCI) or acquired brain injury (ABI).

"It brings the SCI and ABI programs into one unique event," says event co-chair Ashley Kim, MPT, ATC, who led colleagues from throughout Shepherd Center in organizing the event. "It gives current patient models an opportunity to see the progress of graduated patients and see their own possibilities."

Participants wore clothes from Elk Head, London Trading Company, Patagonia, Onward Reserve, and Megan Huntz, and a team of stylists offered hair and makeup services. Each model had a moment in the spotlight while event emcee Cheryl Linden, LPC, OT, shared their stories and favorite Shepherd memories, and family and friends cheered in support.

"Even though this is something I would not normally do or enjoy, my therapists encouraged me to participate, and I ended up having a great time," Ben says. "My favorite part was giving Mrs. Shepherd the Chick-fil-A milkshake."

It wasn't just adolescents who hit the stage — facility dogs and therapists also accompanied some models. Linden even modeled an outfit designed by 17-year-old Dominique Ross, one of this year's Project Rollway participants. Another participant, 18-year-old Leovie Lopez, was joined on stage by her nephew, who had been cheering her on from the front row.

(clockwise from left) Model Leovie Lopez makes her way down the runway with her nephew leading the way. ▶ Natasha Jenkins applies makeup to Bryson Parler. ▶ Lily Kuivinen makes her way down the stage. ▶ Jacob Kinderdine (left) and Ben Kerbo joke with each other as they ride the elevator down to take part in Project Rollway.

After the show was over, the excitement carried into the hallways and elevators at Shepherd Center, where participants and attendees talked about their favorite parts of the night. For former and current patients, Project Rollway was a reminder that no matter where they go, they'll always have their Shepherd Center community.

"In the end, this is not about modeling. It is about a community. The participants are sharing their story with a community always willing to listen," Kim says.

Thank you to our models, their families and friends, Shepherd Center staff, and everyone who made this event possible!

Donors

Andee's Army
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London Trading Company
Patagonia
Onward Reserve
Megan Huntz

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Jewels Beats

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Austin Jones Designs

Photographers

Laura Barnard
Drew Oswald

Hair & Makeup Specialists

Sam Henry
Morgan Hughes
Natasha Jenkins
Kaitlyn Radler

Celebrating Elite Racers with a Fourth of July Tradition

The sun was still below the horizon on July 4 as 60 elite athletes from around the world lined up for the start of Shepherd Center's Wheelchair Division of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Peachtree Road Race, but the anticipation of the racers and spectators lining the course was high.

Just 19:37 later, Daniel Romanchuk, 25, of Champaign, Illinois, sped across the finish line, winning the men's open for the seventh year in a row and setting a record for the most wins ever in his division. Aaron Pike and Geert Schipper finished second and third, respectively. In the women's open, Susannah Scaroni, 33, of Champaign, Illinois, finished in 21:39, winning her division for the fourth time. Jenna Fesemeyer and Kendall Gretsch followed. Both Romanchuk and Scaroni won a \$12,500 prize for their first-place finishes.

In an annual tradition, Shepherd Center patients, families, and staff lined the sidewalk in front of the hospital, first cheering on wheelchair racers and then runners. They passed out Shepherd Center sweatbands to race participants as they took on the infamous portion of the race dubbed "Cardiac Hill."

After the race, the wheelchair athletes escaped the morning's heat and humidity for a brunch with patients and their families at Shepherd Center.

"For our patients, watching the race and meeting the athletes can be a real a-ha moment that gives them a glimpse of what's possible," says Rebecca Washburn, MS, manager of Shepherd Center's Beyond Therapy® and wellness programs. "It doesn't mean everyone will want to train to be an elite athlete, but it's a great reminder for patients that they can pursue whatever they find meaningful and fulfilling."



(clockwise, from left) Daniel Romanchuk won the men's open division of the 2024 Shepherd Center's AJC Peachtree Road Race Wheelchair Division. ▶ Patients, their family members, and staff passed out Shepherd wristbands during the race. ▶ Susannah Scaroni won the women's open division of the 2024 Shepherd Center's AJC Peachtree Road Race Wheelchair Division.

Share a Laugh

Comedians Take the Stage in SHARE Fundraiser

The 6th annual Share a Laugh event at The Punchline Comedy Club in Atlanta featured emcee Tom Sullivan and several stand-up comics. Since its inception, the event has raised more than \$125,000 for the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center, which provides rehabilitation for military veterans, service members, and first responders with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns.

For event creator Charlie Fisher, Share A Laugh is more than a fundraiser — he has a personal connection to the SHARE program. His daughter, Sarah Begeal, CTRS, is a recreation therapist at Shepherd and worked with the first SHARE clients, and his son-in-law participated in SHARE after sustaining an injury while serving in Afghanistan.

"In SHARE, we are blessed to have a fantastic resource right here in our own community that is dedicated to returning our nation's heroes to happy, healthy, and productive lives," Charlie says.

Photos by Bitia Honanvar

Pecans Are Back!

Annual Pecans on Peachtree Fundraiser Returns

Since starting in 1982 with Shepherd Center auxiliary members selling pecans out of the trunks of their cars, Pecans on Peachtree® has been a cherished fundraiser for Shepherd Center and the community. Individual and corporate buyers can choose from a variety of Pearson Farm's offerings, from fresh pecans right off the tree to chocolate confections like Pecan Clusters, all of which make delicious holiday gifts. 100% of net proceeds from Pecans on Peachtree sales benefit patients and families.

Pearson Farm has been growing pecans for over 135 years. Just a couple hours south of Shepherd Center in Fort Valley, Georgia, the family-owned farm has 2,300 acres of pecan trees. And every year, Pearson Farm pecans fuel Shepherd's annual Pecans on Peachtree fundraiser.

Presale begins in October, and ordering runs between Nov. 1 and Jan. 31. To order or learn more about corporate orders, visit PecansOnPeachtree.com or contact: Porshia Lee Cause and Community Relations Associate at 404-350-7361.



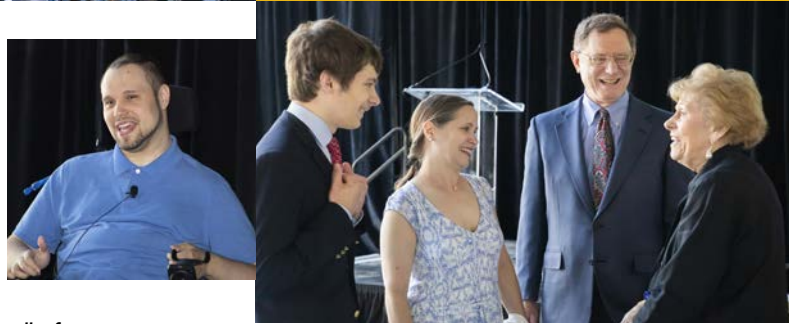
Trivia Can you guess which clothing sponsor has partnered with Project Rollway for all 11 years?

Answer on page 30

Celebrating Topping Out

A Construction Milestone for the New Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation

By Jon Roxland



On the morning of June 7, Shepherd Center board members, campaign donors, staff, and leadership gathered at the new Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation site to celebrate the construction "topping out" of the 11-story tower set to open next spring. Upon completion, the facility will provide a home for Shepherd's Innovation Institute, expanded outpatient programming, and many of the hospital's support services. The new building will also free up space in the existing Marcus-Woodruff building, allowing Shepherd Center to significantly expand its inpatient capacity to help more patients and families who need Shepherd's services.

"Shepherd Center needs this in order to take care of more patients in a better way," said Bernie Marcus, chairman of The Marcus Foundation, in a video statement shown at the event. "I'm happy to have this building named after us, but it's what is going to happen inside of this building that is going to make us proud. The fulfillment is what you see there today, but the dream is what you are going to see tomorrow."

A short program began with a welcome from Susan Hawkins, co-chair of Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center and member of the hospital's Board of Directors, who highlighted the generous community support that has led the campaign to achieve so much success.

Shepherd Center CEO Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, then shared an overview of the hospital's vision as it moves toward its 50th anniversary in 2025, emphasizing the impact this new building will have on patients and their families for years to come. Next, Chad Moser, senior superintendent

with Choate Construction, spoke about the Choate team's continued appreciation for Shepherd Center and the inspiration drawn from its mission.

Former Shepherd Center patient Dakota Walls spoke about his rehabilitation journey at Shepherd and his appreciation for all that the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation will provide for future patients. Alana Shepherd then highlighted the four-decade partnership Shepherd has enjoyed with Bernie Marcus, Atlanta philanthropist, Home Depot co-founder, and honorary co-chair of Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center. His foundation's \$80 million grant made this new building possible.

Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE, president and chief operating officer (COO) of Shepherd Center, concluded the program by expressing his continued appreciation for all campaign donors on behalf of his family and the Shepherd team.

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

(clockwise) Chad Moser, Kevin Baynard, and Croswell Brim of Choate Construction, with Alana Shepherd, Jamie Shepherd, and Sarah Morrison. ▶ Bernie Marcus, chairman of The Marcus Foundation, in a video statement shown at the event. ▶ Alana Shepherd greets Fred Marcus, Nancy Marcus, and their son, Joe. ▶ Dakota Walls, a former Shepherd patient, shared his journey and the immense difference rehabilitation at Shepherd Center made in his life. ▶ Shepherd Center board members, campaign donors, staff, and leadership gathered at the new Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation site to celebrate the construction "topping out" of the 11-story tower.

Photos by William Twitty

A Meeting with a Meaningful Twist

By Ruth Underwood

The annual joint board meeting on May 13, themed "Journey Through the Eyes of a Patient," offered attendees a meaningful opportunity to view Shepherd Center from a patient's perspective.

Upon their arrival at the hospital, Alana Shepherd, co-founder and chairman of Shepherd Center, welcomed attendees. They were divided into groups based on cards that briefly described the stories of three different patients — one who had sustained a spinal cord injury, one with an acquired brain injury, and one who had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Shepherd staff then guided board members through their respective patient's journey from admission to discharge, sharing some of the obstacles and triumphs each patient experienced.

At the end of the tour, attendees gathered in Shepherd's Callaway Auditorium for a continuation of the meeting and a cocktail hour. Shepherd Center CEO Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, welcomed board attendees and Sarah Batts, senior vice president, advancement and executive director, Shepherd Center Foundation, introduced Rob Holloway, Jordan McClinton, and Ann Vian, the patients whose experiences inspired each tour.

Rob, Jordan, and Ann each spoke, sharing memorable moments from their journeys and underscoring the difference rehabilitation at Shepherd Center has made in their lives.

Jo Tapper, vice president of marketing and communications at Shepherd Center, shared an update on plans for the hospital's 50th anniversary celebration in 2025, including the 50th-anniversary logo and a video introducing the theme for the year — On a Mission.

In her closing remarks, Alana Shepherd thanked everyone for attending and encouraged attendees to share feedback.

After the meeting, Board of Directors Chair-Elect Clark Dean reflected, "The meeting was creative, engaging, delightful, and moving. I loved following Jordan's experience and was surprised by how turning the story from "he" to "me" activated my emotions differently. I am always moved by hearing the tragic and heroic stories of our patients ... but I was moved in a different way through this experience, being drawn into his story as though it were my story. Powerful!"



(from top) In following the journey of a patient with MS, tour participants visit the MS Wellness gym. ▶ Confetti showers the audience upon the announcement of the theme for Shepherd Center's 50th anniversary year, "On a Mission." ▶ Tour participant Duane Morrow tries out prism glasses, which patients with acquired brain injury use to help re-train their eyes to work together. ▶ Tour participants Scott Hawkins and Rudy Fears (foreground) and Sarah Batts and John Rooker (background). ▶ Ann Vian, Franco Vian, Shani Edmond, Jordan McClinton, Stephanie Holloway, and Rob Holloway. ▶ Rob Holloway, a former Shepherd patient who spoke about his journey during the joint board meeting, shares a hug with Alana Shepherd.

Story Cards: The Journey Through the Eyes of a Patient

Each attendee received a story card with details about the patient whose journey they would follow for the evening.

How To Refer Someone To Shepherd Center
At Shepherd Center, our team approach starts the moment you call. Our staff of access care managers can assist patients anywhere in the United States within 24 hours of referral on business days. We offer this service free of charge and often serve as the referring hospital's primary educator and resource for family members.

Contact Our Admissions Department
Please contact our Admissions Department to refer a patient with a new or recent catastrophic spinal cord injury, acquired brain injury, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, or neuromuscular dyspraxia.

Phone: 1-800-527-5844
Email: admissions@shepherdcenter.org
Text: 404-321-5844

Patient 1 - Acquired Brain Injury
Age: 42 years old | Race: White | Sex: Male | Location: Georgia | Occupation: Police Officer
Personal Information/Interests: Husband, Father, Deeply Engaged in Church Activities, Community Service, and Actively Contributes to their Community
Cause of Injury: Traumatic Brain Injury due to gunshot wound to the head.

Patient 2 - Spinal Cord Injury
Age: 18 years old | Race: African American | Sex: Male | Location: Georgia | Occupation: Student
Personal Information/Interests: Son, Nephew, Friend, Collegiate Athlete, Member of Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity
Cause of Injury: Spinal Cord Injury due to a tumbling accident.

Patient 3 - Multiple Sclerosis
Age: 64 years old | Race: White | Sex: Female | Location: Georgia | Occupation: Topperware Consultant
Personal Information/Interests: Mom, Wife, die-hard UGA Fan, Involved in Church, makeup consultant
Cause of Injury: Presented Multiple Sclerosis symptoms 15 plus years ago with official diagnosis at 54 years of age.

Off to the Races!



Derby Day celebrates 40 years

By Erin Kenney

The Kentucky Derby celebrated its 150th anniversary this spring, but it wasn't the only event celebrating an anniversary on May 4.

Derby Day, an annual fundraiser supporting Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program, also celebrated a milestone with its 40th anniversary this year. Attendees gathered at Chastain Horse Park to socialize, enjoy gourmet catering, and watch the photo finish from this year's race.

Julie Shepherd and volunteer Rachel Simononis co-chaired this year's event, with support from the event's host committee, made up largely of Shepherd Center Junior Committee alumni. Rachel said co-chairing the event was one of the greatest honors of her career.

"The event gave Julie and me an opportunity to engage friends, family, and colleagues who may have had little or no knowledge of Shepherd Center," Rachel says. "I am confident that first-time attendees of this year's event will become frequent participants in the years to come."

In addition to Derby Day staples like casino games and a wine toss, attendees made their own Derby-worthy fascinators at a custom hat-making station. This year's silent auction featured jewelry from Brown & Co., golf outings, and other prizes donated by the host committee. Republic National Distributing Company and the Carlos family donated wine and spirits for the event, and Avenue Catering provided a delicious buffet.



Photos by Erica Aitken



This year's event raised \$262,000 for the donor-funded Recreation Therapy Program. This cornerstone program engages patients in adaptive activities and community reintegration outings to prepare them for fulfilling, meaningful living back home. Whether a patient is trying out a new activity or learning new ways to enjoy a lifelong hobby, therapists work closely with them to help them reach their goals and return to their communities with confidence after injury or illness.

"The highlight of the event for me was the ability to spread awareness of how special a place Shepherd Center is, and what a necessary resource rec therapy is to their patients," Rachel says. "I love the community that Shepherd cultivates, and I hope that awareness of Shepherd Center continues to grow with their annual events." *

(clockwise from top left) Attendees enjoyed perfect race-watching weather at Chastain Horse Park. ► *(front row)* Athlete Vincen Liddle and former Shepherd patient and Paralympian Bill Furbish. *(back row)* Sarah Shepherd, Jamie Shepherd and Shepherd physical therapist Cathy Furbish. ► Alana, Julie, Jamie, and Sarah Shepherd pose for a family photo in their Derby Day attire. ► Alana Shepherd places a bet on the race, next to a photo cutout of her late husband Harold Shepherd in his Derby Day hat.

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Elizabeth Pearce
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Michael Yochelson and Kevin Clift

Shepherd's Men Gather Community to

Honor the Fallen on Memorial Day

Drawing on the true meaning of Memorial Day, while incorporating a patriotic celebration, Shepherd's Men gathered with community members for a day of fellowship and remembrance on May 27, at Reformation Brewery in Woodstock, Georgia. The event was timed with the release of Reformation's Clarity Lager, made in honor of and to support Shepherd's Men. Reformation is donating \$1 to Shepherd's Men for each six-pack of Clarity sold.

The day began with Shepherd's Men and members of the community embarking on a march from Reformation's Canton brewery to Alma Coffee and ending at Reformation's Woodstock location. Along the way, teams of four alternated carrying a 140 lb. keg of Clarity, symbolizing the burden borne by the fallen servicemen and women who have given their lives in service to our nation.

As the group marched, hundreds gathered at Reformation Brewery in Woodstock for music by a local band and a concert by Kevn Kinney, frontman of Drivn' N Cryin'. Guests

enjoyed Clarity Lager and other Reformation beers. The event culminated with the triumphant arrival of Shepherd's Men, symbolically carrying the keg of Clarity with a SHARE Military Initiative graduate perched on top.

Follow Shepherd's Men on social media (@shepherdsmen) to see photos and news coverage of events and learn more about the volunteer group at shepherdsmen.com. *



► Participants in the Shepherd's Men Memorial Day march traveled from Reformation Brewery in Canton, Georgia, to Alma Coffee, and finally to Reformation's Woodstock location, where they enjoyed music and fellowship.

Travis Tritt Performs for Shepherd's Men

Platinum-selling artist performs at intimate benefit concert

On April 25, Shepherd's Men hosted a special evening with Grammy-winning artist Travis Tritt at the home of longtime supporters Kelly and Toby Regal. The intimate backyard concert, attended by 100 guests, raised nearly \$500,000 for Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative and The Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project. Guests had the opportunity to meet and chat with Tritt, receive a framed souvenir photo with him, and enjoy an up-close and personal performance of some of Tritt's most loved songs, plus a cover of Charlie Daniels' "Long Haired Country Boy." In a touching moment, Tritt dedicated his song, "Mama Used to Pray For Me," to his son, who was in attendance.

Prior to Tritt's performance, guests learned from Shepherd Center's Chief Medical Officer (and veteran U.S. Naval Officer), Michael Yochelson, M.D., MBA, how Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative provides

unique care, funded by donors, to military veterans, service members, and first responders who have traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. Rev. Brian Archer, USMC, Ret., a three-time deployed combat veteran and SHARE graduate, spoke on his experiences in the Marine Corps, his struggles post-combat, and his successful rehabilitation at SHARE.

Reformation Brewery and celebrated restaurant Local Three partnered to provide craft beer, cocktails, and a gourmet buffet for the guests. A live auction and specialty merchants helped make the fundraiser a huge success. After Travis Tritt closed the performance, Shepherd's Men co-founder Travis Ellis and Shepherd's Men member Jerry Jordan, MSGT, USMC, Ret., presented Tritt with a unique thank you gift: a Force Recon paddle, hand-decorated by Jordan. *



► Grammy-winning country music star Travis Tritt performed at an intimate gathering hosted by Shepherd's Men at the home of longtime supporters Kelly and Toby Regal. The event raised nearly \$500,000 for Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative and The Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project.

Photos by William Twitty

Memorials

Deceased friends of Shepherd Center are listed first in bold print followed by the names of those making gifts in their memory. This list reflects gifts made to Shepherd Center between **April 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024.**

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Remembering Duncan Beard

With sadness, the Shepherd Center community marks Duncan Beard's passing on Aug. 31, 2024. Duncan first met Shepherd Center Co-founder and Chairman (and fellow University of Georgia alum), the late James Shepherd, in 1977. Duncan happily accepted James's invitation to join the hospital board of directors in 1979. Duncan was an innovative leader, passionate champion, and tireless volunteer for Shepherd.

As a leader and board member, Duncan was instrumental in helping guide Shepherd Center through capital campaigns, beginning with the original campaign to move the hospital from rented space in another facility and build Shepherd Center's campus at its current location. Other campaigns added service lines and expanded the campus, and Duncan recently attended the ribbon cutting of the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences on August 27, 2024.

Duncan served as founding chairman of Shepherd Center Foundation's Board of Trustees and played a key role in recruiting



the initial board and developing the Foundation's bylaws. Duncan served two terms on the Board of Trustees and continued to serve on the hospital's Board of Directors.

As a supporter and advocate, Duncan was a faithful donor who gave an astonishing 247 gifts to the Center over 47 years of consecutive giving. Duncan served in a variety of fundraising roles for the campaigns, but his favorite was serving on, and in 2008, chairing, the Shepherd Center Cup golf tournament planning committee.

For decades, Duncan joined a group of volunteers at Shepherd Center three mornings a week to help patients with paralysis and mobility issues eat their breakfasts. The self-named "Breakfast Club" offers warm smiles, funny stories, and a friendly ear to patients, many of whom are far from their homes. This selfless service was perfect for Duncan, who had an infectious smile, true Southern charm, and a genuine caring heart.

When asked why Shepherd meant so much to him, he replied, "Shepherd Center is the best facility of its kind. They put people's lives back together. Everyone is so upbeat, including the patients, and I'm happy to be involved in such a positive, inspiring place."



Photos provided by 524 Creative

Lania Rittenhouse, President of Spirit Charitable Foundation and VP of Guest Experience and Brand for Spirit Airlines, and her husband, Miami-based chef Tom Rittenhouse, brought cooking magic to Shepherd patients with a cooking demonstration in the "I Can" Studio.

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The inpatient pharmacy department celebrated the graduation of inpatient resident Leena Salam (center). After graduation, Leena moved to Texas to become a clinical pharmacist.

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Many thanks to them and all our event sponsors.



Shepherd Center employees celebrated their graduation from the Quality Improvement Champion Program, where they earned a certificate in Quality Improvement from the Institute for Healthcare Improvement.

Honorees are listed first in bold print followed by the names of those making gifts in their honor. This list reflects gifts made to Shepherd Center between **April 1, 2024, and June 30, 2024.**

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Allison Harris in the ABI group and her PT team
Mr. David W. Hennessey

Karyn Harris
Mr. Ralph Stephens

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Ms. Marie Elysse Paulhus
Ms. Letitia Swain

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Mr. Alfredo G. Munoz

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Anonymous

Don Nelson
Kendall Nelson

The 60th Wedding Anniversary of Dr. Alan and Mrs. Ginny Plummer
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Craig Powell's Birthday
Mrs. Janet Powell

All Participants at Project Rollway
Mr. and Mrs. David Parler

Allison and Erwin Reid
Mr. and Mrs. David S. Martin

Brian Salmon
Mr. Thomas Brault

Craig L. Schwall, as a rising freshman at the University of Michigan and an Eagle Scout.
Judge Craig L. Schwall

Emory Ashford Schwall, Jr.
Judge Craig L. Schwall
Alana Shepherd's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. James M. Reynolds III

Alana S. Shepherd
Mr. and Mrs. William C. Fowler
Ms. Shanna Thorpe and Ms. Lydia Schubert

Ashley Wynne Shepherd
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Jamie Shepherd
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Mr. Andy Simm

Phyllis Smiley's Birthday
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Betty Sunshine's Birthday
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Danny Yates
Mr. Neal Hendee

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Elizabeth Zweigel's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. Steven L. Zweigel

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Shepherd Center Needs Your Feedback!

We would like your feedback on your experience with Shepherd Center. Please scan the QR code with the camera on your phone to participate in a quick survey. Thank you!

For a paper survey, contact Meena Iyer, MSIE, LSSBB, CPHQ, Manager Quality and Outcomes, at meena.iyer@shepherd.org or 404-367-1396.





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The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation and Shepherd Center Present

Self-Advocacy Video Series

The Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, in collaboration with Shepherd Center, proudly presents "Raise Your Voice: Succeeding through Self-Advocacy." This seven-part series empowers individuals living with paralysis by providing comprehensive resources and education on disability rights and essential self-advocacy tools. From exploring the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to navigating healthcare, employment, housing, transportation, and education, the series offers expert insights and honest testimonials from community members.

"The Reeve Foundation is committed to providing the necessary tools to those living with paralysis to champion their rights and thrive daily," says Emily Wolinsky, director, outreach and education, Reeve Foundation. "Through education and advocacy, and collaboration with our partners at Shepherd Center, this series spreads awareness on how to break barriers and build a

more inclusive and equitable society while advocating for yourself."

"After a complex disease, illness, or catastrophic event, it may be hard to find your voice — both literally and figuratively — to ask for help and advocate for your needs," says Diane Johnston, director of professional education, Shepherd Center. "Self-advocacy is more than speaking up and getting what you need. It includes essential elements of educating yourself and others to ensure

your needs are met. Self-advocacy helps you to thrive and live your life to your full potential."

For the complete video series and descriptions, check out the Reeve Foundation YouTube channel at [youtube.com/@ChristopherReeveOrg](https://www.youtube.com/@ChristopherReeveOrg) or scan the QR code.

