

Medical Treatment • Research • Rehabilitation

Shepherd

Center Spinal Column®

'All In'

How Shepherd
Center Helps Athletes
Stay in the Game



Mermaids at Shepherd » **2** Inaugural Research Week
a Success » **4** An Unforgettable Trip to the Ozarks » **18**

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

Editor
Erin Kenney

Design
Soloflight Design

Contributing Writers
Damjana Alverson, Sara Baxter, Phillip Jordan, Erin Kenney, Ruth Underwood

Contributing Photographers
Laura Barnard, CatMax Photography, Eley, Ben Gray, Kathryn May, Drew Oswald, Jennifer Pierson, Joann Vitelli, 524 Creative

Board of Directors
Officers
Jim Thompson, Chairman
Clark Dean, Chair-elect
Sara Chapman, Corporate Secretary
Juli Owens, Recording Secretary

Ex-Officio
Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE,
President and Chief Executive Officer
Beth Giles, CPA, Treasurer
Chief Financial Officer
Michael Yochelson, MD, MBA
Chief Medical Officer

Members	Molly Lanier
Andrew Alias	Doug Lindauer
Fred Alias	Talbot Nunnally
Shaler Alias	Sally Nunnally*
Cyndae Arrendale	Vincenzo Piscopo
Bryant Coats	Kelly Regal
Robert Cunningham	John Rooker
Chip Davidson	Alana Shepherd
John Dryman	Clyde Shepherd
Gen. Larry R. Ellis, Ret.	Boynton Smith
Susan Hawkins	Jim Stephenson
Justin Jones	Jarrad Turner

*Board Member Emerita

Shepherd Center Magazine: Spinal Column is published quarterly by Shepherd Center, a private, not-for-profit hospital that provides world-class clinical care, research, and family support for people experiencing the most complex conditions, including spinal cord and brain injuries, multi-trauma, traumatic amputations, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and pain. To request removal from our mailing list, email magazine@shepherd.org or mail Shepherd Center, Attn: Shepherd Center Magazine Mailing List, 2020 Peachtree Road NW, Atlanta, Georgia, 30309. Please include mailing label. Shepherd Center Magazine accepts no advertising. Spinal Column is a registered trademark of Shepherd Center.

About the Cover
Christina Young has played wheelchair basketball since she was a kid. She's a veteran member of the Shepherd Stealers. *Photo by Kathryn May*

Letter from Jamie Shepherd



Dear Friends,

During a patient's first week at Shepherd Center, our recreation therapists begin preparing them to navigate life post-injury. Trips to the grocery store, outings to Chick-fil-A, and even short trips down Peachtree Road begin to show patients that even after injury or illness, they can regain their independence and have whatever they define as an adventurous life. But it doesn't stop there.

Recreation therapy goes beyond the clinic. For some, it may look like time spent creating in our art studio or gardening in the Anna and Hays Mershon Secret Garden, where patients are using new planters donated by Gerald Bilsky, M.D. The garden also provides space for putt-putt and other outdoor games that support therapeutic goals in a natural, encouraging setting. Recreation therapy may include attending an airport outing to learn how to board a plane when using a wheelchair, or trying out adaptive waterskiing at Adventure Skills Workshop. It may mean discovering new passions altogether.

A fundamental part of rehabilitation, our donor-funded Recreation Therapy Program is the largest program of its kind in the country. And it provides more than just fun. Research shows that staying active improves physical fitness, boosts self-esteem, and strengthens social connections. More than that, it helps reduce medical complications, lowers the likelihood of hospital visits, and eases the transition from hospital to home after injury.

For some of our former patients, recreation therapy led them to join one of the Alias Family Sports Teams, nine different adaptive sports teams that call Shepherd Center home. Athletes from these teams have won national and international competitions, with over 20 competing in the past several Paralympic Games.

In this issue, we celebrate recreation therapy and the Alias Family Sports Teams, which have a tremendous impact on our patients and community members. Starting on page 6, you'll meet Ryder Crosby and Christina Young, both Shepherd athletes who've found family in our wheelchair softball and wheelchair basketball teams, respectively. You'll also meet Davin Cosby and MaryGrace Guzzino, collegiate athletes who turned to Shepherd Center for the specialized care they needed to get back in the game.

Even as Atlanta winds down from World Cup festivities this summer, the athletic spirit in our city is alive and well, at Shepherd Center especially. Thank you to our staff, former patients, volunteers, donors, and community members, who allow our athletes to go all in.

Sincerely,

Jamie Shepherd

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



Josh Carter braves the zipline at Adventure Skills Workshop.

Fall 2026 | Shepherd Center

Contents

Features

6 Sporting Chance
Shepherd Center helps athletes stay in the game

16 For the Love of the Game
Video games keep Koltyn Roper connected to the sport he loves

Departments

2 Short Takes

4 Research & Innovation
First annual Research Week celebrates research and clinical care

5 Staff Profile
Andrew Corbett on wheelchair rugby and finding movement that brings joy

18 Foundation Features

27 Honorariums and Memorials



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.



An Independence Day Tradition

Elite Wheelchair Racers Compete in 2026 Peachtree Road Race

This year marked the 45th Shepherd Center Wheelchair Division of the Northside Hospital Peachtree Road Race. Thousands of spectators celebrated by cheering on the best wheelchair racers in the world in Atlanta's iconic race.

The 6.2-mile competition began at 6:12 a.m. on July 4 in the heart of Buckhead and followed Peachtree Road for six miles, passing Shepherd Center, before speeding through the heart of Midtown to the finish line at 10th Street and Piedmont Park. This year's competition included 65 racers — 12 women and 53 men — ranging in age from 13 to 67.

Tatyana McFadden, 37, of Clarksville, Maryland, won the women's open division with a finishing time of 23:02. This was her ninth win. In the men's open,

Daniel Romanchuk, 27, of Champaign, Illinois, took the crown to win with a finishing time of 19:00. It was his ninth consecutive win. McFadden and Romanchuk both took home a \$12,500 prize for their first-place finishes.

"This race draws some of the world's most elite racers, and it's exciting to show them and all of the racers what Atlanta and the Northside Hospital Peachtree Road Race have to offer," said Rebecca Washburn, MS, manager of Shepherd Center's Beyond Therapy®

and wellness programs. "This race serves as a powerful display of the inclusion of athletes with disabilities, and it shows patients at Shepherd Center what's possible as they cheer on the athletes on race day out in front of Shepherd Center."



Daniel Romanchuk (left) and Tatyana McFadden were top finishers in the race, both achieving their ninth Peachtree Road Race win.

Pool Staff Recognizes 'Mermaid of the Month'

A slightly silly award spotlights camaraderie and dedication at the ProMotion pool

This summer, the team at Shepherd Center's ProMotion Fitness Center pool devised a way to commend pool regulars through a new recognition: Mermaid of the Month.

Essentially, the pool team posts each mermaid or merman's photo on the pool bulletin board for a month to highlight their dedication. The recognition is an encapsulation of the things that make Shepherd, Shepherd: it's community-focused, celebratory, and slightly silly, all while recognizing hard work and dedication.

"Basically, we select a person who sees the value of the pool and enjoys coming to the pool regularly," says Brigid Sykes, PT, D.P.T., CLT, a physical therapist specializing in

aquatics. "It started with a community member who comes to the pool all the time and basically just plays around. He reminded me of a mermaid with the way he was swimming around, floating, and just generally enjoying the mermaid life, and thus we named him 'Mermaid of the Month.' He was really proud of it, so we thought it would be fun to continue."

To read about some of this summer's featured swimmers, visit news.shepherd.org. And to enroll at ProMotion Fitness today, **scan the QR code**. Who knows, you may be the next Mermaid of the Month!



Pool staff (from left: Emily Bandy, Elijah Watkins, Bennie Kempton, and Brigid Sykes) have started a tradition of naming a "Mermaid of the Month."

Introducing the Adaptive Wellness Collective

Shepherd Center launches new platform for on-demand health and wellness content



(Above) Exercise physiologist Nathan Kimmel and AWC participant Patrick Jones participate in a strength training class. (Right) Art specialist Claire Tadeo shares her knowledge of watercolor techniques.



Welcome to the kind of wellness that meets you exactly where you are on your journey.

This summer, Shepherd Center introduced its new Adaptive Wellness Collective (AWC). A digital wellness platform, an AWC membership gives you ongoing access to expert-led classes and educational content that support recovery, health, and wellness for people living with brain injury, spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis, stroke, and other neurological conditions.

AWC is proud to offer:

- » Guided wellness and fitness classes
- » Content tailored to your abilities and goals, no matter where you are on your journey
- » Flexible, on-demand classes accessible anytime, anywhere
- » Livestream classes you can join in real time
- » In-person coaching and exercise classes at Shepherd Center

To explore the AWC's catalog of virtual on-demand classes, visit adaptwell.shepherd.org. And for listings of in-person classes offered at Shepherd Center's campus, visit shepherd.org/events.

From Harvest to Holiday Gifts

It's almost time to place your order for Pecans on Peachtree!

For over 40 years, Pecans on Peachtree has marked the start of the holiday season at Shepherd Center. Running from Nov. 1 to Jan. 31, the fundraiser serves as the perfect opportunity to stock up on fresh pecans for holiday baking, as well as treats like chocolate-covered pecans and pralines. Through supplier Ellis Bros. Pecans, Shepherd Center is pleased to offer gift boxes and flavorful selections of pecan bags and tins.

Ellis Bros. Pecans, located in Vienna, Georgia, has been growing pecans since 1944. The multi-generational family business harvests between late-September and December each year, ensuring fresh pecans in time for the holidays.

To order yours, or to learn more about corporate orders, visit pecansonpeachtree.org.



Celebrating the Intersection of Research and Clinical Care

First Shepherd Center Research Week a Success

By Erin Kenney

Two things that help define Shepherd Center are exceptional care and meaningful research. In June, the hospital recognized the team's commitment to providing both with the first annual Research Week. For a week, programming brought together clinicians, researchers, and other curious staff members by celebrating how Shepherd integrates research into clinical practice, and how clinical questions drive scientific discovery.

The event was born out of what used to be Research Day, an all-day affair that united researchers and clinicians for poster presentations, research updates, and a keynote address. The annual event was put on pause in 2020, and as leadership discussed how to revive it, the idea for Research Week was born.

"We wanted to create opportunities for more staff to engage with research without having to step away from their daily responsibilities," says Shepherd Center's Vice President of Research and Innovation Deborah Backus, PT, Ph.D., FACRM. "By offering sessions during lunchtime throughout the week, we were able to bring research directly into the flow of clinical care and make it more accessible to everyone."

Dr. Backus kicked off the week by detailing the sessions attendees could look forward to: presentations from colleagues on their ongoing research, "lighting round" presentations from clinicians, and a keynote address. Shepherd's Chief Medical Officer Michael Yochelson, M.D., MBA, also spoke, highlighting how research at Shepherd is a team effort and how research directly informs and influences clinical practice, as well as how gaps in clinical care can inform research.

"At Shepherd Center, research is not something we do in addition to clinical care. It is part of how we care," Dr. Yochelson says. "It is how we advance the field of rehabilitation, create better outcomes for our patients, and honor the trust our patients place in us."

On Wednesday, James S. Krause, Ph.D., a distinguished university professor in the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) College of Health Professions, the director of the Center for Rehabilitation Research in Neurologic Conditions, and a frequent Shepherd Center collaborator, gave the keynote address. In his presentation, "Surviving and Thriving After Physical Disability: 50 Years of Research, 20,040 Days of Survival," Dr. Krause discussed his own experience living with a spinal cord injury, as well as his research, a 50-year study regarding spinal cord injury (SCI), quality employment, and longevity.



(Above) Dr. Backus kicked off research week by addressing attendees in the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation Tech Hub.

► (Left) Posters displayed in the lobby of the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation showcased research findings across multiple disciplines.



To round out the week, research leadership presented awards for research posters and presentations, recognizing work for its excellence, innovation, and applicability to the

clinical space. And Dr. Backus and her team are already preparing for next

year's Research Week, with hopes to include more Shepherd staff members and community researchers alike.

"Research Week highlights what makes Shepherd Center unique — the close partnership between those asking important questions and those delivering exceptional care," Dr. Backus says. "When research and clinical practice inform one another, we accelerate innovation and create better outcomes for the people we serve."

For more information on Research Week and to see the list of award winners, visit news.shepherd.org. *

Advancing the future of neurorehabilitation, together

Are you interested in participating in research at Shepherd Center? Find actively recruiting studies by scanning the QR code. To learn more about research and innovation at Shepherd Center, visit shepherd.org/research.



Wheelchair Rugby Coach Wants Athletes to Get Their Due

Exercise physiologist Andrew Corbett, MS, CSCS on working with patients, community sports, and finding movement that brings joy

Interview by Erin Kenney

When did you first learn about Shepherd Center and how long have you been in your role?

My godfather, basically he's like an uncle to me, is Bill Furbish. He is the coach of the waterski team here. He and my dad grew up on the same street, so they were very close. He was a patient here in the '80s, and so growing up, I always just knew about Shepherd Center through him because we went to different events.

Originally, my goals were to work with professional and collegiate athletes. But I realized it wasn't the right client population for me. Then I had that late-20s moment of, "Oh shoot, what do I want to do?" It just so happened when I was moving up to Atlanta from Florida that a position was opening up here, and Bill and his wife, Cathy [Furbish, PT, DPT, CLT, CCRP], who works here as a research physical therapist, thought I'd be a good fit, so I applied, and I started in February 2020.

What does a typical day in your role look like?

I'll come into work and see patients throughout the day. I work in a hybrid position, working in Beyond Therapy® and working with patients from other departments in a community-based gym setting. During rugby season, our practices are Mondays and Wednesdays from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m., so I will stay here, help wrap up with stuff, work out before practice, and then go through practice.

Did you know when you started at Shepherd that you wanted to work with the rugby team?

I was hoping that there'd be an opportunity when I started. My managers knew about my background — I started getting involved with a wheelchair rugby team in South Florida, just north of Miami, in 2017. I had worked with them for about two years before coming up here. It was definitely on my radar to get back into it.

What are your favorite parts of your role?

One of the most rewarding things is when you have patients return that you haven't seen for a while. Seeing them come back

with more independence or seeing that they've improved since they've been here. Rugby is kind of the same. I like seeing our newer players learning and developing. Some of the athletes on the team now, they were some of my first patients that I worked with here. So, it's really cool to have seen them in inpatient, and now they're on the team playing.

I also just enjoy seeing athletes get their due. One of our athletes who had been playing for a long time was named MVP at Nationals a few years ago, that was very cool for him. He definitely earned that. And then one of the other players — generally players with lower function in their extremities don't get as much attention — and he was voted MVP for one of the major tournaments last year. And he had even said before the award ceremony, "Yeah, we do all the grunt work, but we never get recognized." So, it was very cool to then see him win that award. I just enjoy seeing athletes get recognized for what they're doing, because ultimately as a coach, my goal is to facilitate and allow them to show their performance. Whatever they're doing on the court, it's them, and we just try to put them in a position to show that.

What else should people know about sports programming at Shepherd Center or more widely?

Having grown up around Bill and just seeing what adaptive sports can do for people, I would encourage people to think about finding ways to stay active — it doesn't have to be rugby, it doesn't even have to be a team sport. Sports and hobbies can give people a sense of normalcy [after injury or illness].

My philosophy is that therapy, what patients are doing with physical therapists and occupational therapists, is very important for them. But replenishing the spirit and



Andrew (left) works with a patient in the gym.

the soul is another important part of recovery. I think it's very easy for patients to get focused on the physical side, and they may not realize that by nourishing their spirit, they could improve in ways that may carry over into therapy. You need to have those pursuits that are just for you, not necessarily toward an end goal, just something that fulfills you, whether it's sports or something else. *

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Education

- University of Miami, Bachelor of Arts, Psychology
- Barry University, Master of Sciences, Movement Science
- Georgia State University, Ph.D., Kinesiology (*in-progress*)

Fun Facts

- Andrew lived in Germany for two years.
- Andrew likes to go hunting for gems at thrift stores.
- If he's at home, he is loving on his dog Sol and doing some type of arts and crafts, usually painting miniatures.

Sporting Chance

By Phillip Jordan



Photo by Ben Gray

How Shepherd Center Helps Athletes Stay in the Game

Shepherd Center knows athletes. We know that drive, dedication, and a little friendly competition go a long way in the gym, on the court, and in rehabilitation. That's why we use recreation therapy, adaptive sports programming, and state-of-the-art care to get athletes back in the game after a life-changing injury or illness. It's also why we believe in providing a variety of adaptive sports opportunities to our wider community, so everyone gets a chance to play. Because for athletes, sports are more than just a game. They're a way of life.

Keeping the Dream Alive

For **Davin Cosby**, basketball is far more than a game.

Photos Courtesy of Kennesaw State University

"Basketball has been life-changing for me," he says. "Coming from where I was, you don't always see a lot of options ahead of you. Basketball brought so many connections to my life, so many opportunities I wouldn't have had otherwise."

For one, it took him to college. The Richmond, Virginia, native began his collegiate career at the University of Alabama before transferring to Wake Forest and, eventually, to Kennesaw State. There, he was reunited with the

the skilled staff performed two major surgeries and stabilized his condition. Like many who have sustained spinal cord injuries, Davin faced challenges. He lost 50 pounds and had diminished mobility in his lower body. He recalls days he could barely sit up, much less stand or walk. He was also struggling with his blood pressure.

"Literally the day before I transferred to Shepherd Center for in-patient rehab, that day with my BP had

coach who'd originally recruited him to Alabama. Davin was to be a key part of Kennesaw State's team in 2025-2026. On July 13, 2025, however, he was in a car wreck that resulted in serious injuries, including a C-6 spinal cord injury (SCI).

He was transported to Northeast Georgia Medical Center, where

been one of my worst days post-injury," Davin recalls. "Then, like two days later, I was walking with assistance at Shepherd Center ... that was a moment of, 'Oh, things are going to get better.'"

Davin says he most appreciated that his care team recognized what was most important to him — and what he was willing to do to get better.

"They knew I was an athlete and I could take the hard work," Davin says. "They also knew that I wanted to get out of the chair as quick as possible. Basketball was the goal. So, they built all that into the rehab."

His physical therapists took him down to the gym and had him start dribbling basketballs to rebuild skill-specific muscle memory — even when his dominant right hand was barely responding. They threw chest passes, simulated drills, and put Davin on the treadmill.

The hoops didn't end there. Nikki Kiley, CTRS, was Davin's lead recreation therapist; she filled his rec therapy time with even more





basketball-inspired fun on Shepherd Center's court.

"They were so joyful and positive, even on the hard days," Davin says. "Always laughter, always jokes. They made it fun and really brought the joyfulness back into my system."

On Aug. 27, with some help from his Shepherd care team, Davin returned to Kennesaw State's campus for the first time since his injury. And he did so in style — surprising his teammates by walking, on his own, into the gym during team practice. It was an emotional moment for all, and another joyful step in Davin's journey.

Today, Davin continues to work on a return to basketball.



basketball, regaining his explosiveness, and getting his right hand into shooting form again. For that, Davin's back at Shepherd Center, training in Beyond Therapy®, which incorporates cutting-edge neuroplasticity research into physical therapy that can rebuild strength and restore function.

Along the way, Davin's storing away everything he's learning about the game, about the resilience it requires, and the lessons he's learning. Because he sees a possible pipeline to coaching in his future, too.

"Using all my experiences to be a coach, to be a mentor, that would be a joy, too," Davin says. "Basketball has always been a therapy thing for me, my little get-away. I want to share that joy with others and help them make the most of the game for themselves."

'All In:' Finding New Thrills

Ryder Crosby is an adrenaline junkie. Full stop. He'll tell you himself. As will, well, pretty much everyone in his life.

Photos by Ben Gray

By the time he was 21, Ryder had been racing dirt bikes competitively for 11 years. He skateboarded every day of his life and mountain biked nearly as much. If it sped, roared, or soared, he was on it.

"So," Ryder shares, "to go from all that to a chair was pretty demoralizing."

He's talking about the spinal cord injury he sustained back in 2016, one that resulted in a T-12 complete fracture. And if you're guessing how it happened based on Ryder's passions, you're going to be wrong. Proving that injuries can happen any number of ways, Ryder's occurred when he fell from a tree. He simply grabbed a dead branch that gave way while he was putting up a rope swing for his younger sister at their family's home in Athens, Georgia.

Ryder's rehabilitation took him to Shepherd Center for an anticipated nine-week inpatient stint; he went home in three. Ryder attributes his ability to adapt quickly to three things: his athleticism, his positivity and mental strength, and Shepherd Center's staff.

"A big part of it was that everyone on the rehab team there — occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists — helped me get a grip on what I'd have ahead of me, right away. It was straightforward, no sugarcoating, and it really kickstarted my mind into the state I needed to be

in. Sports would be possible to do again, and if I just went all in, they'd show me how."

All in, indeed. Ryder's injury happened in April 2016. By the following January, he was on a sit-ski in Alaska, hitting the same slopes that he'd run there on a trip the year before.

Ryder says two things stood out in his recovery at Shepherd Center. First, it was the recreation therapy that allowed him to quickly get active again and reconnect with sports right on Shepherd's campus. Another big boost for Ryder was the peer support sessions. One of the SCI program alums he met was Jeremy Maddox, a bit of an adrenaline junkie himself. Jeremy sustained a spinal cord injury at 16, rehabbed at Shepherd Center, and found new ways to

compete in sports — including as a national, and international, champion in adaptive waterskiing.

The two bonded over their love of sports and remain friends to this day. Jeremy also connected Ryder to his first team sport opportunity — joining Shepherd Center's competitive softball team, the Shepherd Sluggers.

"That's been huge for me," Ryder says. "I was always a solo sport guy for the rush of them, but joining the softball team is all about camaraderie. We get to travel, play other teams, and hang out with each other before and after the games. It's a new avenue for competitiveness and friendship."

“Sports would be possible to do again, and if I just went all in, they'd show me how.”

Ryder followed Jeremy's lead in other ways, too. Within a month of completing his inpatient rehabilitation, Ryder was back as a volunteer in the peer support program.

Ryder still volunteers at Shepherd's adaptive sports expos, often demonstrating how he uses his sit-ski. Shepherd Center hosts a wide range of health and wellness clinics through





A Lifetime Love of the Game

Even as a kid, **Christina Young** was competitive. That happens when you're trying to keep up with three brothers, she jokes.

Photos by Kathryn May



the hospital's donor-funded Recreation Therapy Program, giving people the opportunity to try everything from adaptive skiing to adaptive hiking, target shooting, wildlife viewing, horticulture, jewelry making, and cycling, to name a few. The clinics are open to former patients and community members alike, taking place in both the metro Atlanta area and around the country. Led by Shepherd Center recreation therapists and subject experts like Ryder, the clinics offer people a chance to try something new while knowing they're in good hands.

The teaching talent comes naturally to Ryder, as he taught production and robotics for several years at Athens Academy. This year, he's transitioning to a new opportunity as a full-time film editor.

He's also passing on his love of sport to the next generation. Ryder and his wife Carly have a daughter, Ramsey, who he often takes hunting, fishing, and camping.

"Before my injury, I was always so fast-paced, just go, go, go," Ryder says. "I still love the thrills, but I can appreciate the slower moments now, too. It's all fulfilling now."

In elementary school, she started going to a summer camp through Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. The camp was designed for children with spina bifida, like Christina, and she fell in love with the thrill of adaptive sports. She began playing on youth teams through BlazeSports, and basketball quickly became her favorite. Eventually, she met teammates who told her about another playing opportunity — one made possible through Shepherd Center's Alias Family Sports Teams.

Shepherd Center's sports teams, open to former Shepherd Center patients and to community members, provide opportunities to compete and travel while serving as a support system for athletes with disabilities.

For Christina, Shepherd's sports teams represented something else — a chance to grow and learn more about her potential, on and off the court. In high school, she started playing softball, swimming, and road bicycle racing, with the Shepherd Sluggers, Shepherd Sharks, and Shepherd Spinners, respectively. But she found her home on the basketball court with the Shepherd Stealers.

"Blaze Juniors was somewhat competitive, and being an athlete, going to that next level with Shepherd's teams is what helped me get better at my sport," Christina says. "It also got me out of my comfort zone, playing with people from different ages and backgrounds. I became less shy and made so many important friendships."

"Honestly, Shepherd made me who I am today. Not just playing,

but just life lessons. How to be fully independent. I traveled on the team without my family, so I learned how to navigate the road and be responsible for myself. That was invaluable for me."

Christina had hoped playing with Shepherd Center would help her grow. What she hadn't expected was that it would also chart a path forward for her, both academically and competitively. A path that would take her to the University of Illinois, home to one of the oldest and most illustrious adaptive basketball programs.

"Going to college and playing college ball would not have happened without playing at Shepherd," Christina says. "For one thing, I was seen by college coaches at our tournaments. And I definitely wouldn't have been prepared for the level of competition in college if I hadn't played with Shepherd Center."

Fast forward more than a decade and Christina is back in the metro Atlanta

area. Now 32, she'd gone a while without playing after graduating from Illinois — work and adulthood will do that. But two years ago, she reconnected with Shepherd Center sports, sparking her love for the game once again.

Today, she's a veteran sparkplug on the Shepherd Stealers. She's also mentoring her younger teammates and coaching junior teams in the local BlazeSports leagues.

"I absolutely love coaching," Christina says. "Being able to give back with the younger generation brings such joy to me. Seeing their smiles and loving the sport as much as I do. That's probably my favorite thing."

Just don't assume that it's only Coach Christina now. Christina the player is as competitive as ever. And she's dreamed up a new dream to pursue: Get an invitation to try out for the Team USA Women's Wheelchair Basketball Team in advance of the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles.

"I'm kicking it into gear for that now with training, diet, workouts, all of it," Christina says. "Why not give it a try, right? That's what I've learned from this journey. Put yourself out there and try!"



“

Honestly, Shepherd made me who I am today. Not just playing, but just life lessons.



A Student-Athlete Jumps Back In

Water is life to us all. For **MaryGrace Guzzino**, though, it's more than that.

Photos by Kathryn May



"I love everything about swimming," says the rising senior on Georgia Tech's swim team. "It's just pure love, pure enjoyment. The competitive aspect is so personal. You have opponents and you want to win as a team. But it's really just you against yourself. I love that."

So, when swimming was taken away from MaryGrace — due to a pair of concussions she sustained in "freak accidents" in the water in 2025 — the pain wasn't relegated to her brain alone. Thankfully, MaryGrace landed at Shepherd Center's Complex



Concussion Clinic (CCC). CCC offers fully integrated, multi-disciplinary treatment for patients whose concussions have produced more complicated, persistent symptoms.

The clinic is led by founding director Russell Gore, M.D., an expert in neurotrauma who has significant experience in working with athletes specifically; in fact, this past summer, Dr. Gore served as concussion consultant and advisor for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. A Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket himself, he is an assistant professor in the Walter H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering at Georgia Tech and Emory University.

"Dr. Gore and the whole care team understood how frustrated I was with the symptoms and how hard it was to not be swimming," MaryGrace says. "They shared it all with me and they really understood the love I have for the sport. I felt like I was really being taken care of, just fully supported."

Her care included testing, treatments, and exercises to directly address symptoms such as dizziness, blurred vision, fatigue, and light sensitivity. MaryGrace also participated in physical therapy and speech therapy to address cognitive issues that were making her academic life more difficult, as well.

"I was kind of re-learning how to do school," MaryGrace says. "It was learning new study techniques — re-reading chapters before class, writing things down, charting what I knew and what I

didn't know to put markers in place that we could track. It was all about memory recall and retaining things again."

For the better part of a year, she was fully away from the sport. The absence was painful, but her body was healing. Gradually, things improved. As she could get back in the water again and start training more, her mental health strengthened along with her physical health.

"Being at Shepherd Center and going through this, it sounds so cliché, but it really did make me so much more mentally strong," MaryGrace shares. "And mentally strong in the water, specifically, as an athlete. Those

“

Being at Shepherd Center and going through this, it sounds so cliché, but it really did make me so much more mentally strong.

mental exercises from the clinic carry over to the pool." Starting with her senior year this fall, she'll have two seasons of eligibility left at Georgia Tech. She plans to get her master's degree during that extra year and consider what comes next after college. One thing she's sure of: Swimming will always be part of her life. "Oh, I'll keep swimming forever!" MaryGrace says. "I've realized that all over again this past year. I've also learned more about resilience. This has all just reinforced for me that even the craziest setbacks can make you come back even stronger." *



Want to Get in the Game?

Shepherd Center offers a variety of opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in team sports, outdoor adventures, and other athletic opportunities. Shepherd's Recreation Therapy Program, the largest program of its kind in the country, helps people redefine what's possible after injury or illness. The donor-funded program helps patients in every stage of recovery embrace new challenges, build independence, and get back to the

things they love most. Once patients leave Shepherd, rec therapy health and wellness clinics continue this journey. Open to former patients and community members alike, health and wellness clinics give people chances to try a wide opportunity of activities, from adaptive kayaking to jewelry making, in a supportive environment. To find upcoming health and wellness clinics hosted by Shepherd's recreation therapists, visit shepherd.org/recreation-therapy. And for more information about Shepherd's Alias Family Sports Teams, visit shepherd.org/adaptive-sports.

By Erin Kenney

For the Love of the Game

After a spinal cord injury, video games help keep Koltyn Roper connected to the sport he loves

Koltyn Roper has been playing baseball for eight years.

It would be a long time for anyone, but for 12-year-old Koltyn, it seems even longer. He's been playing the sport for two-thirds of his life.

Koltyn's baseball career shifted, however, after he sustained a spinal cord injury in an accident in December 2025. After two weeks in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, he transferred to Shepherd Center to begin rehabilitation in the Adolescent Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program.

"It's been a lot of fun," Koltyn said before leaving Shepherd Center to return home to Dawsonville, Georgia, in April. During his several months at the hospital, he became known on the floor for telling jokes and getting laughs out of his therapists.

Throughout his time at Shepherd Center, his therapy team found ways to infuse his passion for baseball into his therapy. One activity brought the baseball diamond straight into his room: video games.

"I did play a lot of video games before, I played with a lot of my friends from different counties, just because [we aren't able to see each other as much]," Koltyn says. "I played with my brothers, too."

Playing video games after his injury proved to be a little different. Koltyn had reduced mobility in his hands and couldn't use the controller the same way he did before his injury. But Graylyn Jones, OTR/L, an assistive technology therapist in the Access Technology Lab, showed Koltyn how an adaptive controller could help him play his favorite XBOX games again. Video games are often incorporated into recreation therapy sessions at Shepherd Center, which aim to help patients rebuild confidence and independence after injury through engaging in activities outside the hospital room or therapy gym. Thanks to generous donor support, rec therapy

is a throughline over the course of a patient's time at Shepherd.

For Koltyn, other recreation therapy sessions included playing wiffle ball and going on outings to the World of Coca-Cola and the SkyView Ferris wheel in Atlanta. But video games, especially, have been a continued hobby for him throughout his rehabilitation. After Koltyn's session with Jones, his mom, Heather McCall, applied for an adaptive controller from AbleGamers Foundation. AbleGamers' mission is to create opportunities that enable play in order to combat social isolation, foster inclusive communities, and improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. The organization provides adaptive controllers and other assistive technology to people like Koltyn, keeping them in the game.

While Heather and Koltyn awaited the adaptive controller, there was still one game Koltyn could play with the standard controller. It just so happened to be MLB The Show, a baseball game. During his time in the Spinal Cord Injury Day Program, he would play the game in his family's apartment at the Woodruff Family Residence Center.

Koltyn had other baseball experiences during his time at Shepherd, too. In March, he returned to his middle school to throw out the first pitch of a baseball game. And in April, just a couple of days before his graduation from the day program, he and his family attended the annual University of Georgia versus Georgia Tech baseball game at Truist Park. Outings like these prepared Koltyn and his family to return home, even if it was bittersweet to say goodbye to their care team here.

"You know, never being in this situation, somebody might not understand, but when they say you're part of the Shepherd family, you really are," Heather says. "These people have become our family."

Even though Koltyn's discharge meant saying goodbye to his Shepherd family, going home meant he, his parents, and siblings were all under one roof again, after four months apart. While Heather and Koltyn were at Shepherd Center, Koltyn's dad, Brady McCall, went back and forth between the hospital and Dawsonville, participating in Koltyn's therapy sessions and also taking care of his three siblings at home. Getting ready to return home, Koltyn was excited to be with his siblings again, and especially excited for home-cooked meals made by his dad.

It wasn't long before Koltyn and his family returned to Shepherd Center for a visit. By the time they came back for Project Rollway in June, they had been settling back into life at home.

AbleGamers sent Koltyn an adaptive video game controller, giving him the ability to play more video games with his siblings and friends. When Koltyn took to the stage that evening, he and his family got to celebrate the progress he's made so far.

"It has been absolutely amazing," Heather says. "From start to finish, he's made so much progress that we know he would not have made elsewhere. It has been life changing."

Koltyn plans to return to Shepherd Center next summer for continued therapy, more laughs with his therapists, and to keep making progress. But in the meantime, video games are keeping him connected: to his friends, to the sport that he loves, and simply to life as a 12-year-old kid. *

Photos by Laura Barnard and Heather McCall

(From left) Koltyn on stage at Project Rollway. ► Koltyn throws out the first pitch during a baseball game at his middle school. ► Koltyn and Shepherd Center physical therapist Brian Tanner. ► Koltyn and occupational therapist Hayley Carver practice skills in the kitchen by making frog legs, one of Koltyn's favorites!



Shepherd Alums:

Hope in Healing

By Damjana Alverson, Sara Baxter, and Ruth Underwood

Gabrielle Hodges | Atlanta, Georgia
Spinal Cord Injury Patient



Gabrielle Hodges won the title of Ms. Wheelchair Georgia in March. The competition included delivering a speech to share her advocacy platform, which focuses on improving accessibility in Georgia's transportation and infrastructure. But there was a time when Gabrielle had to work hard just to regain her voice. In September 2019, she sustained a spinal cord

injury during an ATV excursion while vacationing in Aruba. She was medically transported to Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta for surgery and then came to Shepherd Center for nine months of inpatient therapy. In speech therapy, she worked on regaining her voice; in physical therapy, she worked to strengthen her core, roll, and improve bed mobility. On recreation therapy outings, she learned how to navigate public transportation while using her wheelchair. After graduating from Shepherd in 2020 she returned home, where she saw a post about the Ms. Wheelchair pageant on social media, and the rest is history. After winning the title this spring, Gabrielle received a commendation from Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp for her advocacy work. Now she's fundraising to cover the cost of a trip to Michigan this August, where she'd like to compete for another crown — Ms. Wheelchair America 2027.

“ I remember [arriving at Shepherd] like it was yesterday. It was the Halloween of 2019. Everybody was dressed up in Halloween costumes. ”

Kobe Gibbs | Tampa, Florida
Acquired Brain Injury Patient

On Nov. 2, 2025, **Kobe Gibbs** was riding in a car when it hit a concrete wall. He sustained a traumatic brain injury, fractured spine, broken jaw, and collapsed lung. He was unconscious in the ICU at Tampa General Hospital for 25 days. Kobe transferred to Shepherd Center on Nov. 22, still unconscious and using a ventilator to help him breathe. Three days later, he woke up. He spent the next three months relearning to walk, talk, swallow, and working to regain his memory and his strength. Kobe, who is 6-foot-8, played college basketball before the crash and brought that same discipline and work ethic to his rehabilitation. He also stayed positive and tried to share that positivity with others. He was walking on his own by the time he left Shepherd Center to continue his recovery at Shepherd Pathways, Shepherd Center's comprehensive outpatient brain injury rehabilitation program. He returned home on Feb. 20. Kobe now plays some basketball, helps train people at his church gym, and continues physical therapy. His goal is to return to college and possibly become a personal trainer.

“ I was motivated by the ‘no’s.’ When they told me I couldn’t do something, I worked hard to prove them wrong. If I doubted myself, then it would become a reality. ”



“ They were treating Kobe, but they were also taking care of and supporting me. They showed us so much hope, encouragement, and knowledge through the darkest time of my life.”
— Jamila Gibbs, Kobe's mom ”

Laura Jones | Snellville, Georgia
Patient, Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute



After months of confounding symptoms like drop foot and short-term memory issues, **Laura Jones**, 49, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS) in 2024. Laura made the difficult choice to pause her doctorate program in English at Georgia State University and focus on her health under the care of Jacqueline Rosenthal, M.D., medical director at Shepherd Center's Andrew C. Carlos MS Institute. In addition to receiving monthly infusions to halt the progression of the disease, Laura worked with physical and speech therapists to regain her quality of life and return to work.

As Laura reevaluated her career trajectory, she found an open position as a physical and occupational therapy aide at Shepherd. She began her role in December 2025, and her hard work as a Shepherd patient has paid off as an employee.

“ It's been 100% patient-centered care. I knew from minute I showed up, I was in right place and in the best hands. ”

“ Speak up for yourself and find healthcare professionals who will make you part of their team. Things will change, but it's important to not give up on the things that you love about this life that we live. ”

“ I have a physical role helping therapists work with patients through their sessions, and I'm really happy I can do it! My plan now is to prioritize my health and happiness so I can be a great me, a great mom, and a great part of my community.”

Nate Slack | Gulf Shores, Alabama
Graduate, SHARE Military Initiative

Nate Slack spent 20 years in the U.S. Coast Guard as a fast boat operator and a federal boarding officer. He conducted fast boat operations and was stationed in New York City during 9/11 and was directly involved in several operations in and around the harbor. He now believes the “wave slamming” from the boats traveling at high speed over the ocean caused multiple health problems, though he didn't know it at the time. Nate started noticing his symptoms in 2006 — intense migraines, dizziness, confusion, light sensitivity, hypervigilance, anxiety, depression, suicidal ideations, and an unhealthy relationship with substances. He was also having difficulty regulating his emotions. Doctors treated his symptoms but could not identify the cause. Fortunately, in fall 2025, Nate discovered the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center, a comprehensive rehabilitation program for service members, veterans, and first responders. He spent three months in the program working on his mental health, memory, balance, and chronic pain, and saw a lot of improvements in his health. Since retiring from the military in 2020, Nate now works as a freelance boat captain on Alabama's coast.

“ Seeing the care in my doctor's eyes made me feel that I was not alone. I finally felt at peace knowing I was going to get help. Those therapists and clinicians are truly saving lives. They care about the clients who walk through that door. ”



To read more about these Shepherd alums, visit news.shepherd.org.



A three-day adventure reminded me of recreation therapy's impact

By John Ross
Austin Yarbrough's life changed in an instant after sustaining a spinal cord injury in a motorcycle crash. During inpatient rehabilitation at Shepherd Center nearly five years ago, he

quickly formed a bond with outdoor recreation therapy specialist Gavin McClintock, CTRS. Their relationship began in therapy, but their friendship was shaped by love for the outdoors and a refusal to let injury limit adventure.
Austin embraced every challenge Gavin threw at him: fly-fishing, boar hunting, adaptive outdoor skills, even "truck-sinking," a story best saved for another day. After returning home to

Chattanooga, Tennessee, Austin stayed connected to Shepherd, returning for clinics, outings, and Adventure Skills Workshop. So, when an opportunity arose to explore the possibilities of a new patient partnership, Austin was our first call.
Thanks to Jim Balkcom, former Shepherd Center Foundation Trustee and generous donor of 20 years, we were invited to experience Big Cedar Lodge through the hospitality of his close friend, Johnny Morris, founder of Bass Pro Shops and visionary behind it all.
Set across 4,600 acres in the Ozarks, Big Cedar is more than a resort, it is a tribute to conservation and the outdoors. With world-class golf, fishing, trails, marinas, restaurants, and accessible adventures at every turn, it felt tailor-made for the spirit of recreation therapy.
What struck us immediately was the intentionality. The incredible staff designed an itinerary around Austin's interests and needs, proving accessibility was not an afterthought but is woven into the guest experience. In many ways, this was a fact-finding mission:



(From left): The group poses for a photo during the resort's sunset ceremony (from left, back row) Sarah Batts, Jim Balkcom, Johnny Morris, Gavin McClintock, John Ross, Courtney Munday, John Ross, and (front row) Austin Yarbrough. ▶ Austin, an avid outdoorsman, enjoyed fishing for largemouth bass on Table Rock Lake. ▶ Austin and Gavin pose for a photo at Cliffhangers Golf Course.

could Big Cedar become a place where more patients, regardless of injury level, can come to reconnect with life beyond the walls of Shepherd

Center? We quickly realized the answer was yes.
The experiences were extraordinary. Johnny Morris personally led us through the Ancient Ozarks Natural History Museum, appearing almost magically from one of the exhibits to share stories behind acquiring his favorite pieces, including the mystery of a missing 13-million-year-old mammoth tusk. At Top of the Rock, we experienced the resort's iconic sunset ceremony, where a bagpiper played as the sun sank below the hills, followed by the thunderous boom of cannon fire over the water. It felt surreal, and somehow routine at Big Cedar.
Later, over dinner, Johnny and Jim shared stories of a friendship born from business disagreements and strengthened over decades of mutual admiration. But what moved me most was watching Johnny turn his attention to Austin and Gavin, peppering them with questions about accessibility. He scribbled notes on a napkin as Austin offered suggestions, and Gavin shared solutions. He made them promise to inspect the property and report back on anything that could be improved, because if something needed attention, he intended to fix it!

The next day, we set out to Dogwood Canyon Nature Park, a 10,000-acre masterpiece owned and operated by the Johnny Morris Conservation Foundation. Waterfalls, trout streams, and roaming bison created a wild scene. We toured the canyon, heard stories of Johnny Cash and President George H.W. Bush fishing with Johnny nearby. Jim was there, too, for those unique moments years ago.
That afternoon, we played the new Cliffhangers Golf Course, designed by Johnny and his son John Paul. Calling it golf hardly does it justice. It felt more like traversing caves, cliffs, waterfalls, and canyons in-between errant shots.
But the heart of the trip was on the water. No visit to Big Cedar is complete without fishing on Table Rock Lake. Watching Gavin help Austin transfer seamlessly from wheelchair to the boat, seeing Austin settle in with humble confidence, and then watching him reel in largemouth bass under the open Ozarks sky, it was impossible not to understand what recreation therapy means to patients.
For Austin, this was another return to the outdoor adventures that have shaped his life post-injury. For Gavin, it was yet another display of what his team does every day: help people get back to the passions that make life feel whole. That is the magic of recreation therapy.
It is never just about fishing or golf... or bison. It is about restoring identity. It is where courage meets creativity, where independence is rebuilt, and where small victories become life-changing turning points.
As a philanthropy officer in the Shepherd Foundation, I often speak about donor-funded programs like recreation therapy through outcomes and impact metrics. Too often, it can become a numbers conversation. This trip offered another lens to see the impact of our donor-funded programs.
At Big Cedar, I saw generosity translated into freedom. I saw a former patient express his passion and joy for the outdoors. I saw a therapist doing life-changing work. And I saw what is possible when visionary philanthropy meets innovative care. *

Apples at Adventure Skills Workshop

At the Recreation Therapy Program's largest and most-popular annual event, organizers and attendees remember the man who gave the program its start

Adventure Skills Workshop (also known as ASW, or to many patients and therapists, simply "camp") is a mainstay of Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy program. Shepherd Center staff, camp participants, and their families make the trip to Camp ASCCA in Jackson's Gap, Alabama, for three days of activities: ziplining, archery, waterskiing, basketball, fishing,

kayaking, arts and crafts, and roasting marshmallows, to name a few. "ASW is very unique, because there are so many activities that participants can really try out a lot and learn what they need and what they're able to do," says Kelly Edens, the director of the Recreation Therapy Program. "That's what [ASW] is for. We want people to experience life."



(Opposite page, clockwise from left) Chalk art welcomes participants to camp. ▶ (From left) Casey Schumaker, David Pruitt, and Bradley Lowe hold on tight while riding on an inflatable tube. ▶ Madison Russell (right) colors at one of the arts and crafts stations. ▶ Harmony Perez poses by the lake. This year she enjoyed jet skiing, archery, a boat ride, and more. (This page, clockwise from left) ▶ (From left) Colby Higgins, Kevin Harp, and JJ Brown pose for a photo at the shooting range. ▶ (From left) Avery Blankenburg, Meghan Morin, and Kelsey Lee (right) pose for a photo on a jet ski with. ▶ David Pruitt holds up his catch while fishing on the dock at ASW. ▶ Mary Engleman enjoys waterskiing.

ASW By the Numbers



"Adventure Skills Workshop was an incredible experience for me," says participant David Pruitt. "Living with a spinal cord injury, it's easy to second-guess trying something new, but the workshop reminded me that some of the greatest barriers aren't physical — they're often the limits we place on ourselves. Stepping outside of my comfort zone gave me a renewed sense of confidence and showed me that there are still so many adventures waiting to be experienced."

This year's event comprised all the excitement that usually comes with "camp" weekend, coupled with a bittersweet note. This year's ASW was the first since the passing of Shepherd Center co-founder, David Apple, M.D., who started the Recreation Therapy Program in the hospital's early days. To honor Dr. Apple at ASW, Edens and her team made sure there were apples everywhere.

"We served apples [with meals] all weekend, the boat for tubing had apple flags, we did apple chalk art on the ground, all the directional signs had apples on them, we had apples at target practice," Edens says. "It was important to us to have these apples

The weekend gives people the opportunity to try new activities in a safe environment, with guidance from recreation therapists, specialists and other staff disciplines from the hospital. This year, 40 participants from 11 different states, as far away as Arizona and New Jersey, made the trip.

around camp to remember Dr. Apple and his legacy." The apples placed throughout camp memorialized Dr. Apple, a visible reminder that at Shepherd Center, and in recreation therapy programming in particular, his impact is everywhere you look. *

Want to join in on the fun?

Visit shepherd.org/events to browse upcoming health and wellness clinics near you. And save the date, registration for next year's ASW opens March 17, 2027.

Photos by Joann Vitelli and ASW participants



(clockwise) Ayden Harrison smiles during his turn on the stage. ► Alana Shepherd and Cheryl Linden pose for a photo before the show. ► Byron Blanchard took to the stage with help from physical therapists Zaria Maynard and Johnny Mclean. ► Campbell Tims sprays bubbles into the crowd from the stage, tying in this year's beach theme.

Project Rollway Brings the Beach to Shepherd Center

Annual Fashion Show Celebrates Adolescent Patients

It was a sun-drenched summer night for Project Rollway, an annual fashion show at Shepherd Center, celebrating current and former patients from the Adolescent Rehabilitation Program. This year, 22 models took to the stage to show off outfits and accessories generously contributed by the show's clothing partners. And more importantly, they showed off their progress since sustaining their injuries. Each model displayed resilience, creativity, and confidence.

The evening is a special night for the models, who may have missed milestones like prom or homecoming while they were recovering from their injuries. It's perhaps even more meaningful for their families, who get to see their loved ones in the spotlight and celebrate their achievements.

"[It's so special to] see Meghan who's all along been just so positive in her approach and hard work and focus on recovery," said John Morin, father of participant Meghan Morin. "We truly appreciate the people who work here. As we look at moving forward, we know that we're part of the Shepherd family, and they'll also be part of ours."

It's a special night for the adolescent program staff, too, who take on

everything from organizing the show to escorting some models on the runway. Cathi Dugger, PT, DPT, a therapy manager in the Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program, organized the show, and as always, Cheryl Linden, MA, LPC, MS, OT/L, a counselor for adolescent patients, emceed and introduced each model, sharing their stories and providing encouragement to anyone feeling a little stage fright.

"The kids really stepped out Friday night, some with all the confidence in the world and some who came out of their comfort zone. Each year they come back and give hope to others. And the hope they give is not just to other adolescent patients," Linden says. "I had the opportunity to speak to some of our adult patients who attended the event and had such a great time watching the younger people they rehabbed with. One even commented that it gave him hope that a good life continues even after injury. His wife said it was the best night she and her husband have had since his injury."

This year the show featured a beach theme, made complete by seaside-inspired decorations in the

elevator lobby and hallway outside the gym. Kelsey Lee, OT, and Tayla Mangus, MS, OTR/L, even led a short intermission by taking the stage to launch inflatable beach balls into the crowd, infusing Shepherd Center's signature sense of humor into the show.

Project Rollway, like rehabilitation, is a team effort. Thank you to everyone who made this year's show possible. For more information on supporting adolescent programming at Shepherd Center, visit foundation.shepherd.org. And stay tuned for the date of next year's show, which will be in June 2027. *



► This year's show featured a beach theme, made complete by inflatable beach balls that were tossed into the audience.

Thank You!

To our models, their families, staff members, and everyone who made this event possible!

Gold Donors

Gas South

Silver Donors

Ulta Beauty

Rachel Huber

Bronze Donors

Haug Barron

Law Group

Atlanta Sound

and Lighting

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the following individuals for their additional donations:

Jennifer Beato
Michael Werner
Atha Pryor
Isabella Parish
Angie Aiken
Samantha Turner
Sarah Spiller
Michelle Guthrie
Mason Asbury

Clothing Partners

Elk Head Clothing
London Trading Company
Megan Huntz
Onward Reserve
Patagonia

Graphic Designer
High Stakes Creative

DJ
Jewels Beats

Photographers
Laura Barnard
Drew Oswald

Hair & Makeup Specialists

Jamison Shaw
Hairdressers
(Lisa, Ale, Liyah)
Wildheart Salon
(Tiffany Washington and Tahmara Mines)
Ashley Levy
Sydney Marshall
Rachel Simmons

Real Estate Community Rallies for Shepherd

Second Annual Pickleball Tournament a Success



In May, Atlanta real estate professionals gathered for a pickleball tournament to reconnect, recharge, and enjoy a little friendly competition. But the afternoon served as more than a chance to flex their pickleball skills; it raised money for Shepherd Center.

Demonstrating remarkable leadership, Foundation Trustee Darren Ross spearheaded the second annual "Pickle for a Purpose" tournament. The funds raised at the event will provide support for specialized rehabilitation programs, adaptive equipment, and patient support services for individuals with life changing injuries or illnesses — individuals like Ross' wife who was a patient at Shepherd over 10 years ago. After seeing the level of care Shepherd Center provided her, Ross became determined to give back, first joining the Foundation Board of Trustees and last year, hosting the inaugural Pickle for a Purpose tournament.

After last year's tournament was a big success, Ross began planning to host the tournament again. This year's event, hosted by Colliers International at Painted Pickle in Atlanta, raised over \$33,000 for Shepherd Center, surpassing last year's total by over \$10,000. A special thank you to Ross, Colliers International, and everyone who made this meaningful event possible. *



(from top) Board of Trustees Member Darren Ross and Mack Freudenstein came to the tournament dressed for the part. ► Darren Ross and John Ross, a gift officer for Shepherd Center's Foundation, address event attendees.

Event Chairs Share the Impact of Recreation Therapy

Derby Day is one of Shepherd Center's most iconic annual events, raising money for one of its cornerstone programs, the Recreation Therapy Program. On May 2, attendees gathered at Chastain Horse Park to celebrate the race, bringing in over \$315,000. This year's Derby Day event chairs, Stephanie Surbaugh Payne and Greg Payne, shared why they took on the role, what they love most about the event, and what people should know about the cause it supports.

/// How did you first come to know about Shepherd Center?

Stephanie Surbaugh Payne: I have a very rare progressive neuromuscular disease. About six years ago, I had a fall and sustained a fracture in my back, but was able to rehab myself within the next year. But then one year after my first fall, I fell again and broke my back again, and this time it shattered the vertebrae. So, all of that landed me a sweet little bed at Shepherd Center after being at Piedmont for 14 days. And I was inpatient for almost two months, and then I did day program for about five months, and then outpatient physical therapy and occupational therapy, and then I did Beyond Therapy® for about two years. So, we first got involved when I was a patient, and then Greg was asked to join one of Shepherd's boards.

Greg Payne: Catherine Callaway, a former classmate of ours at Westminster, asked if I would be interested in serving on the Shepherd Impact Council. It started in hopes of getting more people involved at Shepherd Center earlier on in their careers and building a stronger pipeline for some of the other boards. So, I've been on the Shepherd Impact Council for three years, and it has been a great experience.

/// What was it like to chair this year's Derby Day? What was your favorite part of the event?

GP: I think my favorite part of the event was being able to go out and promote Shepherd Center and Derby Day within our networks. We were able to talk to friends, family members, people who go to church with us, coworkers. It was nice to really share what Shepherd means to us on a personal level: what [rehabilitation] means, what it looks like, why it's important. So, sharing something we are so passionate about with our extended

networks, not just the people who are closest to us, was very meaningful.

SSP: One piece that was fun for me was the education piece. When I arrived at Shepherd Center, I had no idea what rec therapy was. And I think a lot of people don't know what it is, because it's not necessarily a standard of care at most hospitals because it's not covered by insurance. So, I think a lot of people go to Derby Day because it supports Shepherd and it's a fun event, but they may not know the specific area within Shepherd

that it supports. Getting to teach people what the rec therapy program is — explaining that it's fully donor-funded and also sharing my personal experiences within rec therapy, was really cool.

/// What did recreation therapy look like for you, Stephanie, as a patient here? And what should people know about the program?

SSP: Like I mentioned, I had never heard of rec therapy before. I just remember on one of my first days at Shepherd, it showed up on my schedule. And I had zero clue what I would be doing for that hour. I came to enjoy rec therapy so much, because it teaches you how to do all of the normal, day-to-day life stuff. Like, 'How do we go to a restaurant?' 'How do we travel?' 'How do we go get our nails done?' All of these little things that wouldn't typically be part of a hospital stay. They wanted to make sure that I was set up for success and able to enjoy my life post-Shepherd. I was a tennis player growing up, and 10 years before I entered Shepherd, I had hung up my racket because I wasn't steady enough on my feet. But in getting to know me, my rec therapists found out I still had a love for tennis, and they got me back out on the tennis court. Now Greg and I, we get on the tennis court and play.

GP: I think beyond being part of the healing process, recreation therapy makes patients feel less like patients. It's one part of Shepherd that touches basically everybody who comes through the facility. It was great to host Derby Day, because we got to contribute to something that touches every single person who comes through those doors.

SSP: For many of those people, recreation therapy helps them build confidence and excitement about their lives. Right after your injury, most people look through some not-so-rosy glasses, thinking, 'My life is forever different. There are all these things I'm now not going to be able to do.' But rec therapy gives you the hope back. It lets you imagine an enjoyable life and live a fulfilling life after you leave the hospital. *

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.



Photos by CatMax Photography

(clockwise) Stephanie Surbaugh Payne and Greg Payne co-chaired Derby Day 2026. ▶ Attendees cheer on their favorite horses during the broadcast of the Kentucky Derby. ▶ David Dabbieri and Dr. Jane Puskas pose for a photo with hospital co-founder Alana Shepherd. ▶ Two attendees snap a selfie during the event.

DERBY DAY 2026 SPONSORS

Presenting Sponsor



Winner's Circle Sponsors

Doc Brown Distillery

Triple Crown Sponsors

Associated General Contractors of Georgia
Avenue Catering/Saratoga
The Baer Law Firm

Butler Prather
Centennial Yards
The Cooper Firm
Gas South

Gas Motorcars/Robyn and Tony Marzullo
Georgia Banking Company
Pete and Shannon Shoemaker
The Werner Law Firm

Platinum Sponsors

Batchelor & Kimball
Bennett Thrasher, LLP
Kari and John Dunn
Julie and Bryan Jones

Stephanie and Greg Payne
Pittman Construction Company
Protentis Law, LLC
New York Butcher Shoppe of Smyrna/Vinings

Synovus/Pinnacle
Lindsey and Mark Tidwell
Abby and Matt Wilson

Blue Ribbon Sponsors

Sarah Batts
Lisa and Russ Butner
David, Melinda and Courtney Dabbieri
Susi and Walter Driver
Meredith and Jeremy Forrester
Genuine Parts Company

Ryan Hoyt
Mary and Mike McDaniel
Spencer Moore
Noble Properties, Inc.
Kristine and John Ozug
John Sample
Schreeder, Wheeler & Flint, LLP

Alana Shepherd
Clyde Shepherd IV
Julie Shepherd
Sarah and Jamie Shepherd
ZJW Investment Counsel

Gold Cup Sponsors

Beasley Allen Law Firm
Brown & Co. Jewelers
Bonnie and Michael Carter
William Crozer
Ann and John Day
Leonard and Jerry Greenbaum Family Foundation
Highlands Treehouse Retreat
Cory Jackson

The Kingsleys
Zack Knight
Jackie Kraft
Elizabeth and Christopher Morris
Cheryl and Jerry Nix
Odd McLean
Juli Owens
Amy and Alex Panos
Elizabeth Pearce

Ashley and Magd Riad
Jill and John Seymour, Sr.
Elizabeth and Boynton Smith
Meredith and Wesley Snapp
Snapper Industrial Products, Inc.
Laura and Trammell Summers
The Service Fort
Terminus Racing/Twinker and Keith Mason

Silver Cup Sponsors

Beth Allen
Bone Solutions
Cade Therapy Services
Sara and Donnie Chapman
Quynh Davis
Robert Fowler and Anthony Rosen
Amy and Matt Hunter
Elizabeth Karcher

Catherine and Jonathan Marti
Shari McDowell
Patrick McShane
Motion Project NY in honor of Natalie
Debbie Murphy
Peach Press Lettering
Peak Wooten McDaniel & Colwell, LLP

ProCare RX
Melissa Slone
Jim and Carol Thompson
Kara and Trey Weatherly
Anne and Andrew Worrell
Michael Yochelson and Kevin Clift
Laura Martino and Jarrod Zurcher

A March to Remember



By Erin Kenney

Shepherd's Men's mission is to support veterans, service members, and first responders through Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative. But the group has an added charge to honor fallen service members, cherish their memories, and remember their sacrifice. This charge is especially apparent on Memorial Day.

Every year, the group hosts a Memorial Day Tribute March in Woodstock to raise awareness of mental health concerns in the veteran community. Taking turns carrying 75-pound and 100-pound weights, meant to symbolize the emotional and mental burdens veterans face every day, the group marched from Reformation Brewery's Canton location to its Woodstock location.

Reformation Brewery owner, Spencer Nix, has supported the annual event for years, hosting a celebratory event at the finish line for community members to enjoy. And year-round, Nix supports Shepherd's Men by donating one dollar from every pour or pint sold of Reformation's Clarity Lager to Shepherd's Men. Last year alone, Reformation donated \$10,000.

Other community businesses and organizations like Black Rifle Coffee Company and MilVet, a Woodstock-based community group for veterans,



supported this year's event by joining in the march and providing a BBQ lunch at the finish line, respectively. After the march, participants and other community members gathered to enjoy a meal, live music, and each other's company.

Through marching to remember fallen service members, Shepherd's Men also reminded event attendees of ways to help veterans, service members, and first responders who may be

(From top) Reformation Brewery in Woodstock served as the finish line for this year's Memorial Day march, where attendees enjoyed a meal and live music. ► A group of Shepherd's Men members pose for a photo on the day of the march.

carrying invisible burdens, such as brain injuries and mental health concerns, through programs like SHARE. For more information about SHARE's dedication to these individuals, visit shepherd.org/share. ✨

Photos Courtesy of f24 Creative

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 from **April 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026.**

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Flo Anderson
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd | Carol Densford
Mrs. Ashley Baker
Ms. Dorothy Densford
Ms. Charlotte Myers
Mr. Michael Peebles
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Mrs. Kelly Winston | Robin Marie Fisher
Mr. and Mrs. Tim Edwards
Shepherd Center Board of Directors | Elizabeth H. Homer
Mr. and Mrs. Roger W. Moister, Jr. |
| Laura and Karl Anschutz
Ms. Esther L. Abisamra
Ms. Hope Abisamra | Kevin Arthur
Ms. Jean Arthur
Ms. Marcia Cole
Mrs. Carol Doerr | John Garrett M.D.
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd | Ann Kauffmann
Ms. Shirley Blackwell
Mrs. Rita Eaton
Ms. Andrea Edwards
Ms. Caren Fetter
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Gardner
Ms. Priscilla Howard
Ms. Kelli Lanza
Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Morgan |
| Alan and Danny Arthur
Mrs. Billie Jo Arthur | Danny Arthur
Mrs. Billie Jo Arthur | Ed Golda
Mr. and Mrs. John R. Miller | Stephen Goot
Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Loomis, Jr. |
| Kevin Arthur
Ms. Beth DuVall
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Foran
Mrs. Margaret Judge
Ms. Mary Ellen Kenny
Ms. Debby Kerr
Mr. and Mrs. John Petit
Mr. and Mrs. Greg Ramirez
Ms. Kathryn Stitt | James Edgar
Gilmore and Bell | Robert "Bob" Goodsell
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd | Guy Harrison
Manila Elementary |
| Melinda Baldwin
Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Baldwin | Timothy "Tim" Evatt
Mr. and Mrs. Stan J. McCallum
Mrs. Amy R. Timms | | Elizabeth H. Homer
Mr. and Mrs. Roger W. Moister, Jr. |
| Natalie Barnhard
Castrogiovanni
Mrs. Mary Lynn Barnhard | | | Ann Kauffmann
Ms. Shirley Blackwell
Mrs. Rita Eaton
Ms. Andrea Edwards
Ms. Caren Fetter
Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Gardner
Ms. Priscilla Howard
Ms. Kelli Lanza
Mr. and Mrs. Richard W. Morgan |
| Joyce Beard
Anonymous | | | Stephen Goot
Mr. and Mrs. Edward P. Loomis, Jr. |
| Edgar Breda, Sr.
Mr. Ken Breda
Ms. Kimberly Bushek
Mr. Gary Fischer
Mr. David Zimmerman | | | Guy Harrison
Manila Elementary |
| Gordon C. Bynum, Jr.
Ms. Catherine C. Fike | | | |
| Betty Ann Chapman
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Chapman | | | |
| Dr. Grady Clinkscapes, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Harrison M. Schwall | | | |
| Kenneth Cornett, Jr.
Ms. Betty Marrs | | | |
| Marvin Henry Dawkins, Jr.
Mr. Jim J. Barber | | | |
| Marvin Henry Dawkins, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Laney
Ms. Eloise B. Mills | | | |

Remembering Bill Fowler

The Shepherd Center community mourns the loss of our dear friend, advocate, and board member, William C. "Bill" Fowler, who passed away on July 27. Bill was a supporter of Shepherd Center for more than 30 years, continuously serving on the Board of Directors since 1993 and as treasurer of the Board from 1993 to 2021. Known for his wit, charm, business acumen, and contagious smile, Bill brightened every room he walked into.

Bill lived with multiple sclerosis (MS) and was a tenacious advocate for Shepherd's Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute, championing research and rehab therapies to improve the lives of MS patients. Bill was instrumental in raising funds to launch the Shepherd Center/Harvard Research Initiative, served as honorary chair of the 1997 Legendary Party, and served on the Major Gifts Committee of the Shepherd's 25th Anniversary Campaign in 2000.

Along with his wife, Cindy, and daughter, Julie Fowler Rackley, Bill co-chaired the 2015 Legendary Party, Party of the Century, which raised funds to expand Shepherd's Eula C. and Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Rehabilitation and Wellness Program, including convincing a slightly skeptical chief executive officer to purchase an Alter G Anti-Gravity Treadmill for therapy, which proved to be a popular machine in the Wellness Program.

Much like his friend and Shepherd Center co-founder, James Shepherd, Bill never let his diagnosis define or limit him. Instead, he passionately championed programs and causes that treated and improved the lives of patients with MS, as well as the Atlanta community as a whole.



Remembering Dr. Apple

1936 – 2026

David Apple, M.D., 89, died on March 23, 2026, in Atlanta, surrounded by loved ones. He is remembered as a thoughtful doctor, leader, listener, mentor, innovator, and friend. In 1975, he helped start Shepherd Center alongside James Shepherd and his parents, Alana and Harold Shepherd. As the hospital's founding medical director, he helped shaped Shepherd Center's culture and values.

Dr. Apple also pioneered the hospital's donor-funded Recreation Therapy Program and its renowned research programs. Through the programs and culture he shaped, Dr. Apple's legacy will be felt at Shepherd for many years to come.



This list reflects gifts made to Shepherd Center in memorial of Dr. Apple from March 23 to June 30.

Dr. David "Dave" Apple, Jr.

Mr. Fred V. Alias
Mrs. William B. Ansley, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Guy Arnold
Mrs. Lauren Felder Bacon
Ms. Meredith Bass
Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Battle, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Harvey R. Bauguess
Mrs. C. Duncan Beard
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas J. Bennett, Jr.
Mr. Daniel W. Boone III
Mrs. Susan M. Bowen
Dr. and Mrs. Brock K. Bowman
Ms. Jean F. Caldwell
Mr. and Mrs. Donald C. Chapman, Jr.
Mrs. Carol J. Clark
Mrs. Margaret C. Clinkscales
Mr. and Mrs. Bryant G. Coats
Mr. and Mrs. Charles S. Conklin

Mr. and Mrs. John B. Coppedge II
Mrs. Nancy Coverdell
Craig Hospital
Mr. James A. Curtis
Mr. and Mrs. John M. Darden III
Mr. and Mrs. F. Tread Davis, Jr.
Ms. Pollyanna Dunn
Mr. Franklin Edmonds
Mr. and Mrs. David Ellin
Dr. and Mrs. Carl D. Fackler
Mrs. Barbara K. Furbish
Mr. and Mrs. Kirtland C. Gardner III
Ms. Mellony Gaston
Mr. and Mrs. Donald W. Gillis, Esq.
Mr. and Mrs. David F. Haddow
Mr. and Mrs. Chris Hagy
Mr. and Mrs. Mark P. Hartigan
Ms. Dorothea Hassell
Ms. Pauline A. Hogue
Mr. and Mrs. Christopher D. Hohlstein

Mrs. Mary Kay Howard
Ms. Montez Howard
Mrs. Lesley M. Hudson
Ms. Nancy Isakson
Dr. Frank B. Kelly, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Hugh C. Kendrick
Mr. Alfred D. Kennedy III
Mr. and Mrs. James C. Kennedy
Dr. Jill M. Koval
Mrs. Meredith Lambe
Mrs. Marie Landis
Dr. and Mrs. S. Robert Lathan
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew K. Liggon
The Lovett School
Mr. and Mrs. Allen P. McDaniel
Mr. and Mrs. James C. McElroy, Sr.
McGlinn Family Charitable Fund
Mr. Dean Melcher
Mr. David Y. Millican IV
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey E. Morrison

Dr. and Mrs. Douglas H. Murray
Dr. and Mrs. H. Herndon Murray
Dr. Jeffrey T. Nugent
Mrs. McKee Nunnally
Peachtree Orthopedics Clinic
Mr. and Mrs. Edmund F. Pearce, Jr.
Mr. David L. Phillips
Pittman Construction Company
Mr. and Mrs. John R. Pope
Mr. and Mrs. James E. Prickett
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen M. Raeber
Dr. and Mrs. Marc A. Reiskind
Ms. Kathryn Rogers
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan G. Roxland
Ms. Lisa A. Ruger
Ms. Gillian Rumpf
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Schleusner
Mr. and Mrs. Harrison M. Schwall
Mr. and Mrs. James M. Schwarzkopf
Ms. Alex R. Seblatnigg
Dr. and Mrs. John G. Seiler III
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd
Mrs. Cathy C. Shepherd
Mr. and Mrs. James H. Shepherd III
Ms. Julie H. Shepherd and Mr. Andrew Louw
Mr. and Mrs. Dell B. Sikes
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Skinner
Mr. and Mrs. Mark W. Slonaker
Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.
Mrs. Mary C. Smith
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Sneed
Mrs. Laura Smith Spearman
Ms. Sandy Spears
Mr. and Mrs. John Staton
Mr. and Mrs. Barry Storey
Mrs. Julian W. Swann
Mrs. Kenneth S. Taratus
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Thomas
Mrs. Terrence M. Tracy
Dr. and Mrs. Gary R. Ulicny
Mrs. Mary Varner
Mr. and Mrs. William H. Verner
Mr. and Mrs. Karlo Vicente
Mr. and Mrs. Mark C. West
Mr. Gilmer G. Weston, Jr.
Ms. Jessica Williams
Mr. and Mrs. Zachary M. Wilson
Mr. Robert A. Yellowlees
Dr. and Mrs. Luther D. Stacy



Upcoming Shepherd Events

Shepherd's Men Clay Shoot
Friday, Oct. 23, 2026
The Burge Club

Adaptive Skeet Shooting Clinic
Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2026
Atlanta, Georgia

Soque Slam Invitational Fishing Rodeo
Saturday, Oct. 24, 2026
Clarksville, Georgia

The Legendary Party
Saturday, Nov. 7, 2026
Flourish Atlanta

Shepherd Center Cup
Monday, Nov. 2, 2026
*Cherokee Country Club
Atlanta, Georgia*

Snow Ski Clinic at the Adaptive Sports Center
Dec. 14 - Dec. 18, 2026
Crested Butte, Colorado

For registration information or to find additional upcoming events near you, visit shepherd.org/events

Mr. and Mrs. James G. Snead, Jr.
Ms. Anita Weiss
Ms. Brooke Woodard

Jane Lanier
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd

Carol Lindenbaum
Ms. Maria Andruszka
Mr. and Mrs. Howard C. Becker
Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell V. Brannen
Mr. and Mrs. James A. Dickson, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Flischel

Ms. Virginia Jackson
Mr. Frank W. Johnston and Dr. Janice W. Johnston
Mr. and Mrs. Paul J. Kendrick
Ms. Heather Kinard
Mr. Phil Lanier
Mr. Andrew Levy
Ms. Susan A. Lourie
Mr. and Mrs. Francis R. Millar
Mr. and Mrs. John F. Oglesby
Mr. and Mrs. Tom J. Oliver
Mr. Peter Saeger
Ms. Elena Schneider
Ms. June B. Sereque
Mr. and Mrs. Ed Gerson
Mr. Jeff Tucker
Mr. Harry Viener
Mr. and Mrs. Lee Wesselmann
West Paces Advisors
Mr. and Mrs. James R. Williams III
Ms. Victoria T. Winterer

Ray McDonald
Ms. Ashley Harris
Ms. Rachael Van Eijdsen

Carolyn McDowell
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Tapper

Alan McElheney
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Wiley

Sylvester McRae II
Columbus Phenix City
Tuskegee Alumni Club
Dr. Jayme Feagin
Mr. Carl Hamilton
Ms. Dorothy Hudson
Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Jackson
Ms. Florence Jay
Ms. Diane Johnson
Mr. and Dr. Frank Latimore
Ms. Kimberly McRae
Ms. Kristina Morris
Mr. William Roundtree
The Boyz Barber Shop Shop

Ryan Means
Ms. Laurie Gipson

Thomas "Tom" Morphis
Ms. Sacy Bryant

Ted Morrison
Mrs. Odile Basarich

Daniel Overstreet
Heather and Michael Overstreet

Thomas "Tommy" Packard
Ms. Laura Angelich
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Chapman
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Driggers
Mr. and Mrs. Scott Ferguson
Ms. Megan Head

Ms. Sandra Hude
Mr. and Mrs. Rob Miller
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd
Shepherd Center Board of Directors

Lorraine "Taffy" Parker
Ms. Patricia J. Anway
Ms. Judith Dierberg
Ms. Emma Pariera
Mr. and Mrs. David Ringenberg
Ms. Dorothy Santner
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Mr. and Mrs. Louis Voit
Mrs. Karen Wejzgowicz

Mary Taylor
Ms. Rebecca Taylor

Robbie McMenomy
Ms. Meaghan McMenomy

Pat and Bill Reese
Mr. Alfredo G. Munoz

Robert "Bob" Rhine
Mr. Gregory Rhine

Ivor Roberts
Mr. and Mrs. Gerard Heitzman

William "Bill" Robinson
Ms. Andrea Robinson

Jake Rogers
Anonymous
Ms. Elaine Almon
Ms. Danielle Alvarez
Mrs. Joanna Angelos and Mr. Don Erickson
Ms. Joyce Bennett
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas W. Bishop

Mr. William Boyington
Ms. Nancy Brashears
Ms. Anna Brown
Ms. Alexia Chamberlynn
Mr. David Chapman
Ms. Peggy Childs
Ms. Mary Ellen Clark
Ms. Tammy Cotton
Mrs. Beth Crossan
Mrs. Sara Cunningham
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Doherty
Azi Eftekhari
Ms. Susan Emmanuel
Mr. and Mrs. Segundo Fernandez
Ms. Emily Fulton
Mr. and Mrs. Gene Gainer
Ms. Barbara Gamble
Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Grappone
Ms. Octavia Guilbault
Mr. Paul Handerhan
Ms. Kari Hebrank
Mrs. Meredith Hunter
Ms. Danielle Johnson
Mr. and Mrs. John Kennedy
Ms. Natalie Kirbo
Mr. Brian Koffman
Ali Korman Shelton
Mr. Chris LaCivita
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Lau
Mr. Eric Maclure
Mrs. and Mrs. Joe Maffuccio
Mr. William McConnell
Mr. Todd McKay
Mr. Michael McSherry
Mrs. Kathy Mears
Mr. Richard Miller
Ms. Margaret Mirabal
Mr. Joe Mobley
Mrs. Sandy Mousa
Ms. Sophia Pablos

Ms. Peret Pass
Ms. Lissa Perrin Priddy
Mr. John Peyton
Ms. Terri Poore
Ms. Robyn Rachin
Ms. Annmarie Rose
Ms. Lisa Shumate
Ms. Abby Smith
Ms. Leslie Starkey
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Stepp
Mr. Patrick Weightman
Ms. C. Erica White
Ms. Dorothy Willard
Mr. Steve Zona

Jack Rooker
Sara and Donnie Chapman
Mr. Mel Stowers

Emory Schwall
Mr. and Mrs. Harrison M.
Schwall

Harold Shepherd
Mr. and Mrs. G. Alexander
Panos
Mr. and Mrs. Harrison M.
Schwall

Lori Sneed
Mr. Johnny Sneed

Robert "Bob" Springfield
Mr. and Mrs. Neal Abernathy
Ms. Stacey Powell

George Stewart
Ms. Sharon Hiner Franklin

Loretta Taninbaum
Mr. Sonny Harding
Ms. Patricia Holland
Ms. Gert Kipnis
Ms. Beth Ordman
Ms. Lisa Rudman
Shepherd Center
Board of Directors

Mr. Warren Taninbaum
Ms. Carol Zanin

Joe Tarpley
Ms. Pamela Bips

Anne Rose Vitkus
Mr. and Mrs. Tim Clark
FMC CPA's, PLLC
Ms. Alicia Rice
Shepherd Center
Board of Directors

Valery Voyles
Mr. and Mrs. John R. Miller

Elizabeth Lane Waas
Mr. and Mrs. James Gardner
Mr. and Mrs. Robert B.
Hubbard, Jr.

Randy Ward
Melinda Boothe
Ms. Teresa DeLamar

Beth Weber
Mr. and Mrs. James
C. Davis

Cliff Whitley
Mr. Bob Dukes
Ms. Kim Flynn
Mr. Robert Gerwig

Dennis Wilson
Ms. Sharon Gaskin

Lance Joseph Wilson
Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.

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, 2026 through June 30, 2026.

Adrien Alsobrook
Ms. Suzanne Wedin Wexler

**All of those who have been
taken care of at Shepherd**
Mr. Alejandro Esparza and
Ms. Joanne Esparza

Linda and James Balkcom
Mrs. Ree Hoffman

Sarah Batts
Ms. Mindy Kaplan
Ms. Jessica Williams

James Blackwell
Ms. Mary E. Graham

Benji Bozman
Mr. John Bullard

**Tom and Nell Bradbury's
Anniversary**
Mr. Thomas L. Bradbury

Jada Brown
Ms. Sirena Smith

E. Earle Burke, Esq. Birthday
Ms. Whitney Jackson

Tim Carlton
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Berry
Ms. Sarah Guest

Patricia Carr
Mr. Dennis Carr

Sabrina Charif
Ms. Marie Cassandra

Jake Ciccone
United States Soccer
Federation Inc.

Samuel Colon
Lopez Family Foundation

Laura Crawford
Mr. and Mrs. Kerry C.
Crawford

Kate Dahunsi
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald L.
Ceravolo

Joe DeAngelo
Mr. David Cote

Sean Deibler
Ms. Ashley Deibler

Eric Deutsch
Mr. and Mrs. Lee K. Deutsch

Rebecca Doty
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Duane

Jane Earl
Ms. Mary Samuelson

**Meredith and Jeremy
Forrester**
Mrs. Kimberly Loeb
Grossman

Kiley Gardner
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Dilley
Mr. and Mrs. Todd Starks

**Mackenzie Godwin 14th
Birthday**
Mr. and Mrs. Milton Godwin, Jr.

Emma Harrington
Congrats on your award
Ms. Jessica Williams

Caroline Hazel
Ms. Jordan M. Hinkebein

Michael J. Hull
Ms. Marjorie Hull

Jim Hunnicutt
Ms. Jacqueline H. Teal

Anne Hux's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. John R. Miller

Nancy Jackson
Mr. Thomas Jackson

Gerald "Andy" Jones
Ms. Theresa Bradford

Joe Jones
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J.
Feinberg

Joel Kaczorowski
Ms. Elena Kaczorowski

Howard Kaplan
Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth J.
Feinberg

Emily Kendrick's Birthday
Arrow Exterminators, Inc.

Jacob Kennedy
Jordan Crawford

William Kowal
Mr. and Mrs. Jack K. Holland
Mr. Arnold Kleiner

Jalen Locklayer
Ms. Martha Newsom

Lindsay Loflin, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Loflin

Hannah McIntosh
Ms. Ashlie Blount

Rose McRae
Ms. Maxine Lee
Mr. Alex Shalishali

Christopher Mesina
Ms. Leah Sanchez

Jimmy Moore
Mr. Michael A. Caplan

Meghan Morin
Ms. Claire Morin

Ali Muhammad
Ms. Nina Packer

Justice Munn
Mr. and Mrs. Harold Munn

Dr. Herndon Murray
Mr. and Mrs. Donald W.
Gillis, Esq.

Ryan Narramore
Anonymous

Sir Nelson
Ms. Fredia Lusk

Chris Nesbitt
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan G.
Roxland

Jason Sladek
Dodds Family Giving Fund

Stephanie Surbaugh Payne
Ms. Elizabeth Karcher

**Stephanie Surbaugh Payne
& Gregory Payne Jr.**
Mr. and Mrs. Russell E. Butner
Mr. Bryan Hill
Jackie Kraft

Ron and Lauren Perry
Mr. Bryan Decker

Ron Perry
Mr. Eric Benjamin
Mr. Aaron Lee
Mr. and Mrs. Marty Singer

Craig Powell's Birthday
Mrs. Janet Powell

Andy Pritchett
Ms. Anna S. Carter

Allison Robinson
Mrs. Terri M. Kearns

Oma Robinson
Ms. Lindsay Gordon

Jake Rogers
Mr. Allen R. Grossman

Bobby Rosenbleeth
Mr. and Mrs. Michael
Rosenbleeth

Harold Sells
Mr. and Mrs. Harold R. Sells II

Dr. Erik Shaw
Mrs. Nancy B. Carithers
Ms. Ruth Dorsey

**Alana Shepherd - Happy
Birthday**
Brittany Wilson

Jamie Shepherd
Ms. Jessica Williams

The Shepherd Family
Mr. and Mrs. Wade H. Boggs III

Paul Singh's Birthday
Ms. Vera Dang
Mr. Chuck Douglas
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan G.
Roxland
Mr. Carson Spencer

Neil Swenson
Ms. Anne H. Swenson

Jennifer Thomasson
Amy Jennings Patton
Foundation

Dr. Ben Thrower
Ms. Shirley H. Fishburne

Christopher Todd
Ms. Ranya Fischer

Tom Waggoner
Mr. Ty Krajec

Tommy Whatley
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas E.
Whatley, Jr.

Robin and Steve Williams' Anniversary
Ms. Cyndae A. Arrendale

Chip and Krissy Williams' Anniversary
Anonymous

Arc Wilson
Ms. Kashna Fletcher

Dennis Woodall
Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Woodall

Lois and Danny Yates
Mr. and Mrs. Pat Fischer





Do you have ideas on how to make Spinal Column better?

Maybe you want more staff stories, research updates, or news from around the hospital? We want to hear from you!

Scan the QR code to fill out a short survey, which will take five minutes or less to complete.

Thank you for helping us make Spinal Column a place for Shepherd Center patients, families, employees, volunteers, and community members to shine.



Celebrating the World Cup

While Atlanta's eight 2026 FIFA World Cup matches were held downtown, Shepherd Center found ways to bring the fun to the hospital. From outings to FIFA Fan Fest to soccer-themed activities, soccer fever was in the air all summer long!

Thanks to Whitney Paulowsky, patients enjoyed a variety of soccer-themed crafts, games, and snacks during a World Cup watch party in June.



Patients weren't the only ones in on the excitement for the games. Russell Gore, M.D., medical director of Shepherd Center's Complex Concussion Clinic and the SHARE Military Initiative, served as neuro trauma consultant for Atlanta's matches. He's a well-known expert in treating and leading research on complex concussions, mild traumatic brain injuries, and helping people meet their goals – even if that means scoring a few on the world's biggest stage.



The Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program took a group of patients to FIFA Fan Festival in Centennial Olympic Park, where they received VIP treatment. On top of experiencing the festivities, Shepherd's Director of Volunteer Services Alex Seblatnigg, CAVS, CPXP, made the patients swag bags with sunscreen, water bottles, sweatbands, stickers, and a U.S. Men's National Team scarf! The outing let patients practice real-world skills, build confidence, and of course, get in on the excitement.

Shepherd Center Foundation | Board of Trustees

Officers

Kelly Regal – Chair, President & COO, ONYX

Beth Giles, CPA* – Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, Shepherd Center

Jamie Shepherd* – President and CEO, Shepherd Center

Sarah Batts* – Senior VP of Advancement, Shepherd Center Foundation

Alana Shepherd – Secretary, Co-Founder of Shepherd Center

Michael Yochelson, M.D.* – Chief Medical Officer, Shepherd Center

Members

Patricia Alias, Civic Volunteer

Stephanie Anderson, Associate Judge, Rockdale County Probate Court

Eric Bernath, Chief Operating Officer, Advance Drum Service, Inc.

Angela Blank, Community Volunteer & Veteran Advocate

Sarah Borders, Executive Vice President & General Counsel, Novare Group

Robert Buck, Retired CEO, Beacon Roofing Supply

Eric Busko, Managing Director, Raymond James

Catherine Humann Callway, Advisor & Trustee, The Humann Family Foundation

Michael Carter – Head of Corporate & Investment Banking, Truist

Millard Choate, Principal, Packard Capital, LLC & Chairman, Choate Construction Company

Brad Courts, Vice President, Atlantic Investment Company, GreenCapRE

David Dabbieri, Private Investor

Keith Dockery, M.D., Founder & CEO, Buckhead Ear, Nose and Throat

Greg Dunavant, Vice President, Customer Operations, Gas South

Kari Carlos Dunn, Vice President, Republic National Distributing

Meredith Forrester, Retired Chief Audit Executive, Synovus

Debbie Howard, Retired Managing Director, Merrill Lynch Wealth Management

Cory Jackson, Market President, Synovus

Keith Johnson, East Group President, Brasfield & Gorrie

Emily Kendrick, CEO, Arrow Exterminators

Amy Rollins Kreisler, Executive Director, The Wayne O. Rollins Foundation

Tony Marzullo, President & Owner, Gas Motorcars

Spencer Moore, VP, Civil Identity North America, Thales

Elizabeth White Morris, Civic Volunteer

Kristin Replogle, President, Replogle Family Foundation

Darren Ross, Vice Chair, Principal, Colliers International

Eric Schelling, Chief Talent Officer, The Home Depot

Blair Schmidt-Fellner, President, Route 30-A

Kellie Schönberg, Retired, Former Executive, Invesco

Sheryl Sellaway, Chief Strategist, Righteous PR Agency

Ashley Shepherd, Civic Volunteer

William Stengel II, Chair-Elect & CEO, Genuine Parts Company

Jim Thompson, IV, Advisory Seat, Managing Director, Truist Securities

Richard 'Buck' Woodruff, Owner, Carland Group

* Ex Officio

Emeriti Members

Elizabeth Allen, Civic Volunteer

John A. Carlos, President & COO, National Distributing Company, Inc.

Billi Marcus, Civic Volunteer, The Marcus Foundation, Inc.



Shepherd Center

2020 Peachtree Road NW
Atlanta, GA 30309-1465
404-352-2020 shepherd.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Atlanta, GA
Permit No. 1703



“Sports would be possible to do again, and if I just went all in, [my rehab team would] show me how.”

– Ryder Crosby

After sustaining a spinal cord injury, adrenaline junkie Ryder Crosby was unsure what his future would hold. Thanks to his time at Shepherd Center, he's back to chasing thrills and competing in sports. Read more about how Shepherd Center supports athletes in recovery and introduces patients to new possibilities on **page 6**.