


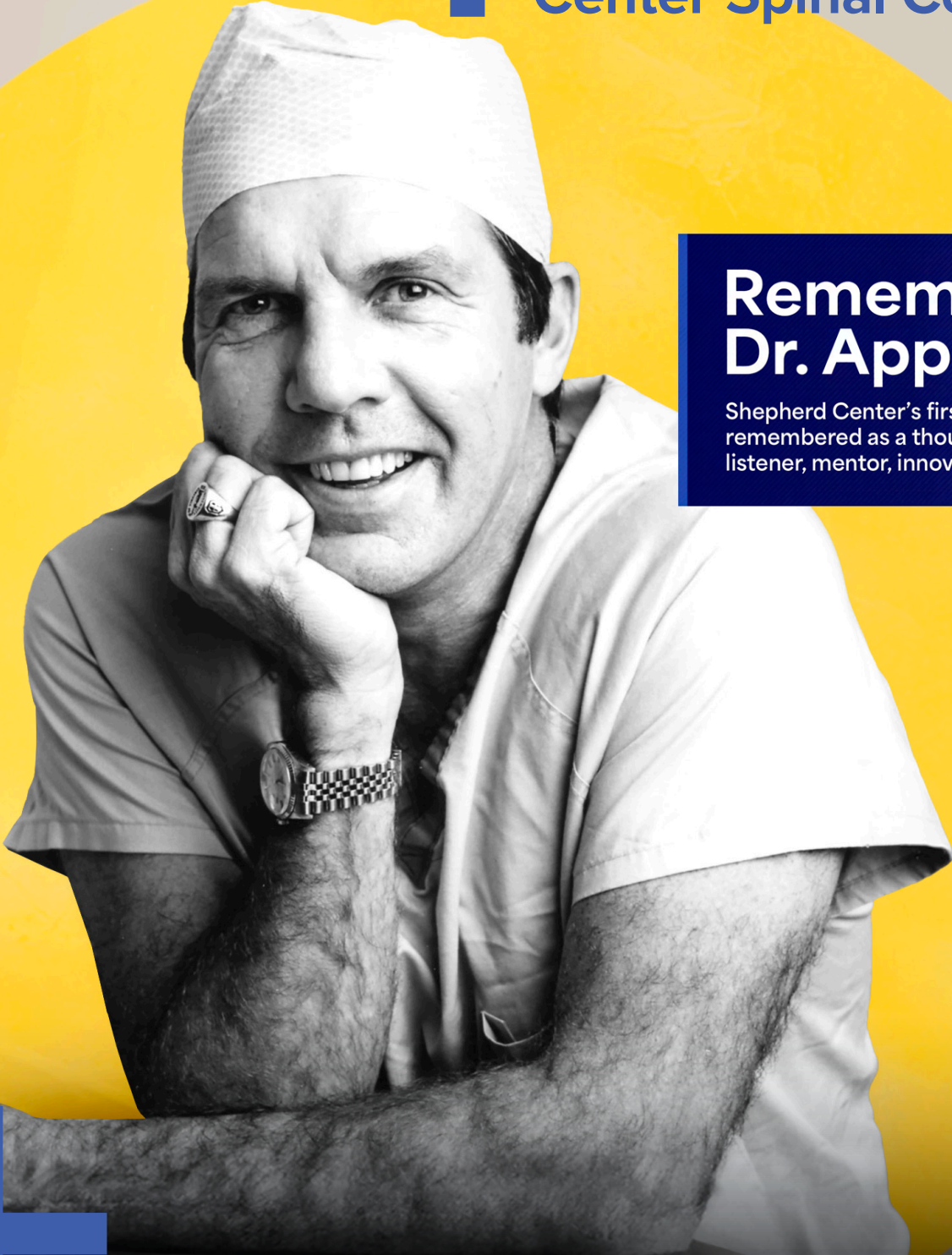
Medical Treatment • Research • Rehabilitation

Shepherd

Center Spinal Column®

Remembering Dr. Apple

Shepherd Center's first medical director remembered as a thoughtful leader, listener, mentor, innovator, and friend



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About the Cover

David Apple, Jr., M.D. helped found Shepherd Center over 50 years ago. He died this spring, just shy of his 90th birthday.

Letter from Jamie Shepherd



Dear Friends,

There are moments we wish would never come — and this is one of them. We are saddened to announce the passing of Shepherd Center co-founder and founding medical director David Apple, M.D., on March 23, 2026. This is an enormous loss for Shepherd Center, the field of rehabilitation, the community, and most of all, his family.

It took great courage and a fair bit of boldness for a gifted young orthopedic surgeon, with small children and another on the way, to leave a traditional path and accept the mission to build a hospital from the ground up. Dr. Apple, together with my family, saw what rehab care could be, and they made it real for Atlanta and beyond.

From 1975 to 2006, Dr. Apple served as our chief medical officer, growing the hospital from six beds to 152, and soon to be even more. With his leadership, more patients were able to return home, to their families, to their careers, and to the things they love. While caring for patients, he also co-founded the American Spinal Injury Association (ASIA), helped launch a leading orthopedic journal, mentored generations of clinicians and scientists, and was honored in the SCI Hall of Fame. Even after stepping down from formal leadership, he continued to pour his time, talent, and passion into research, advocacy, and supporting our patients and staff.

And while his accomplishments are remarkable, what truly defined Dr. Apple was his heart. He gave with joy, humility, and generosity. He saw needs and met them, often quietly and out of his own pocket. When he witnessed the life-changing impact of recreation therapy, he personally funded the salary of our very first recreation therapist. That one generous act grew into the largest recreation therapy program in the world, delivering joy, healing, and hope to thousands.

He believed in the power of sport, movement, and celebration. He wore Superman shirts in the gym to inspire patients to become their own heroes. He cheered from Hope Hill during the Peachtree Road Race every July 4, dressed up for holiday parties, embodied “Dr. Legendary” for our annual gala, led teams to victory in the annual Field Day Challenge, and sent honorariums for new team members to say, “Welcome to the family.” And during the darkest days of COVID, he gave apple-shaped cookies to staff with a note that read, “An Apple from Dr. Apple.”

In this issue of *Spinal Column*, we remember Dr. Apple and his impact on Shepherd Center. He believed in our mission, our vision, and the future we were building together. Every time we dream bigger, love deeper, or go the extra mile for our patients, families, and staff, we honor Dr. Apple’s legacy.

Sincerely,

Jamie Shepherd

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



Photo by Ben Gray

Clinic renovations recently wrapped up for the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute, resulting in a beautiful, comfortable clinic space.

Spring 2026 | Shepherd Center

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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.





Over 200 fish call the family lounge home, with more on their way!

A Space to Recreate, Relax, and Reset

New Lounge Open for Families and Visitors

As part of renovations transforming Shepherd's sixth floor into a new brain injury unit, the family lounge was relocated to the first floor, adjacent to the Anna and Hays Mershon Secret Garden.

In addition to its proximity to the garden, the new lounge includes a pool table and shuffleboard table, a fish tank, and a children's play and reading area.

Volunteer Services, including Family Support Services, also moved to the first floor, ensuring that families using the lounge can also access additional services, such as receiving mail, getting transportation to nearby stores, and other support services.

"The family lounge is a communal space that provides a place to search the internet and print documents or watch Wheel of Fortune and watch your kiddos play," says Rebecca Shearin, family support services coordinator. "Family Support Services can copy, scan, fax, and notarize documents, assist in finding hotels, and help find a volunteer driver for any local errands."

Celebrating Dr. Bilsky's Retirement



Gerald Bilsky (right), M.D., a longtime Shepherd Center physiatrist pictured with Michael R. Yochelson, M.D., MBA, Chief Medical Officer.

After nearly 30 years at Shepherd Center and 40 years of practicing medicine, Gerald Bilsky, M.D., celebrated his retirement at the end of January. As a physiatrist, he worked with patients in the Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program and the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, and eventually served as associate director of the latter. Dr. Bilsky made a name for himself at Shepherd through more than practicing rehabilitation medicine — his generosity leaves behind a huge legacy of compassion. Dr. Bilsky generously donated to each of the hospital's transformative campaigns and has supported annual fundraising events throughout his tenure and into retirement.

Along with his son, Marc, he gifted The Bilsky Garden, raised garden beds used for horticulture therapy in the Anna and Mershon Hays Secret Garden. The Bilsky Garden features wheelchair-accessible beds where patients can grow herbs and other edible plants to use in cooking healthy meals. Dr. Bilsky also created The Bilsky Grant, which funds staff creative projects that spread kindness, inclusion, and community. He is also a member of the J. Harold Shepherd Bridge Builder Society, a group of donors dedicated to leaving legacy gifts to support the hospital and its patients.

SHARE Expands to Help More Heroes

After over a year of renovations and a successful search for an additional doctor, the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center has expanded.

The renovations concluded in the fall of 2024, resulting in seven new offices for program staff and a restructuring of therapy spaces to better serve veterans, service members, and first responders who struggle with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. Following the renovations, the search began for an additional doctor and other clinicians to lead a new patient care team.

Hayley Shade, M.D., joined the program in September. A sports neurotrauma-trained physician specializing in the diagnosis, management, and long-term care of concussions and other traumatic brain injuries,

Dr. Shade will provide care for clients at SHARE, as well as patients at the Complex Concussion Clinic.

"Dr. Shade's collaborative, patient-centered approach to care makes her an excellent fit for our culture, and her extensive training will allow us to expand access to Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative," says Michael Yochelson, M.D., MBA, chief medical officer at Shepherd Center. "She is an excellent addition to Shepherd Center's medical staff."

Jackie Breitenstein, MS CTRS, CCM, SHARE program manager, says that with the new medical staff on board, the program will be able to provide potentially life-saving care to approximately 60 additional clients each year.



Hayley Shade, M.D., joined the Shepherd Center team in September. She will support the SHARE Military Initiative.

Photo by Bitia Honarvar

Rural Roads Seatbelt Safety Project Continues for Third Year

Shepherd Center is pleased to announce it has received a \$233,971.59 grant from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS). For the third consecutive year, Shepherd Center will utilize the Safe System Approach with its Rural Roads Seatbelt Safety Project.

In the project's second year, Emma Harrington, director of injury prevention at Shepherd Center, continued working on a renewed media push as well as several community events geared toward seat belt safety, specifically targeting rural Georgians.

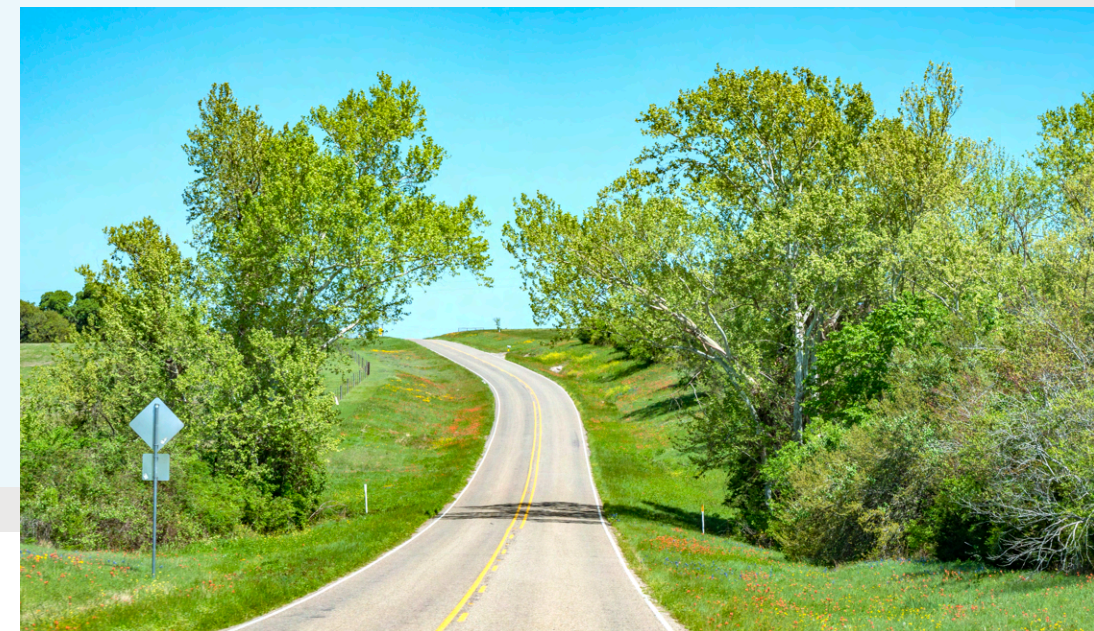
"Although seat belts are the best way to protect yourself in the event of a crash and have been well-documented to save lives and reduce injuries, seatbelt compliance continues to be a challenge," Harrington says.

The grant from the GOHS will support continued efforts to increase seat belt compliance.

"The Governor's Office of Highway Safety and our

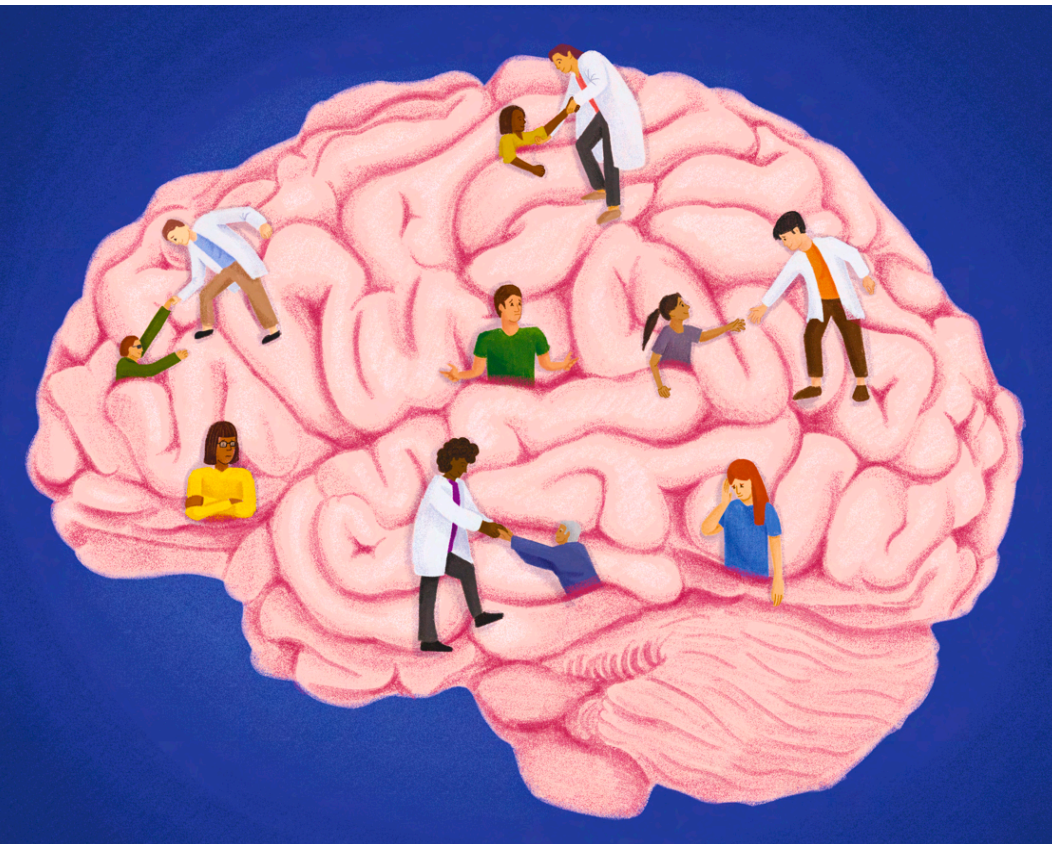
partners continue to implement programs designed to save lives and promote safe driving behaviors," says Allen Poole, director of the GOHS.

The mission of the GOHS is to educate the public on safe driving behaviors and implement highway safety campaigns and programs designed to reduce crashes and eliminate fatalities and injuries on Georgia roads. For more information on GOHS and its other highway safety programs, visit gahighwaysafety.org.



Reducing Racial Bias in Neuropsychology

Brain Injury Researchers Hope New Study Will Improve Patient Outcomes



Shepherd Pathways rehabilitation counselor Tim Riggins, LCSW, and brain injury research program manager Nicole Thompson, MPH, also worked on the study.

Using data from 239 patients with brain injuries at Shepherd, the study examined the team's method of neuropsychological evaluation. White patients and Black patients differed on some of the absolute scores (e.g., IQ, memory, attention), but the study shows that when comparing someone's post-injury function to their pre-injury function, the results were similar across the board (i.e., White and Black individuals had similar rates of mild, moderate, and severe impairment).

"These results further support the fact that people of different racial backgrounds — they all experience brain injury in a similar manner," Johnstone says. "So, we're really trying to indicate that there are different ways to look at data, to interpret it, and we think this is the most appropriate way to do it fairly."

Riggins says that while neuropsychological testing doesn't stand alone in the rehabilitation process, it can

inform the treatment opportunities a patient receives. As a rehabilitation counselor, Riggins supports patients in managing the personal, social, and psychological effects of their brain injury on their goals of returning to employment, school, or independent living.

"When it comes to return to work potential, [patients] go through neuropsych testing to assess their readiness for return to work and potential accommodations that are necessary," he says. "So, the outcomes of the testing directly influence their goals for their recovery ... [and] if they're not able to return to work, if the report doesn't support disability, it could make it more difficult for them to receive benefits they need to support themselves."

Riggins says the research results were validating, acknowledging that while racial bias is often present in traditional testing, there are different ways to evaluate patients in order to help them achieve better outcomes. That philosophy — helping patients achieve the best possible recovery — drives much of brain injury research at Shepherd, Johnstone says.

"Our brain injury research is really focused on improving community outcomes. We want to make sure that the services we provide, the research we do, is helping people successfully reintegrate into their community or to get jobs ... we're just trying to help all of our patients from many diverse backgrounds."

By Erin Kenney

Psychological evaluation plays a crucial role in brain injury recovery. Psychological test results can influence a patient's treatment plan and impact their long-term well-being, factoring in decisions like whether a patient can return home after injury or if they qualify for disability benefits.

But psychological testing doesn't always ensure fair and accurate results, especially for racially diverse patients.

"The primary issue is that most psychological tests were developed and normed on Caucasian populations, so they don't really apply as well to non-Caucasians," says Brick Johnstone, Ph.D., the O. Wayne Rollins Director of Brain Injury Research at Shepherd Center.

So, Johnstone, along with other researchers, worked on a study to show another way of evaluating patients, without relying on normed data.

The study was published in the January 2026 edition of the journal *Brain Injury*. Working with the study's lead author, Gary James, Ph.D., Johnstone and other researchers developed a method of evaluating patients' severity of brain injury based on the individual's estimated level of function pre-injury (such as their own reading score), rather than comparing results to normed data (i.e., a potentially inappropriate reference group).

Getting it (Exactly) Right

Laboratory manager Annette Konsdorf, MHA, MLS, ASCP, believes that accurate lab results lead to more precise treatment, ensuring every patient is ready for their best day of therapy.

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

I've been here for a year and six months. I'm the laboratory manager. That means that I make sure the lab is compliant with all the regulations that it needs to be through The Joint Commission and CMS [Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services].

What was your first day of work like?

It was very welcoming. This place has a very positive vibe, and I'm a very positive person, so I took to it like a duck to water. Everyone was so welcoming; everybody was happy to be here and happy to meet me. You don't see that a lot in hospitals. It's [usually] more corporate, and you don't get that feel here. This is not a corporation or a large hospital system where you can get lost in the weeds.

What happens in Shepherd's lab?

Any test that the doctors order that we can provide in-house, we do. And we're also the central point for any labs we don't perform in-house, which we send out to other labs.

What does a typical day at work look like for you?

On typical days, I come in, and I have a game plan — and sometimes that game plan is executed! At the beginning of the month, I review all the records, including all the QC [quality control] records and maintenance records. Then, if I can, I'll review a procedure to make sure the procedure is following [the correct steps]. Then, I'll go over the regulations to make sure that we don't have any major violations or things we need to do. We are one of the most highly regulated departments in the hospital. We're inspected every two years. Quality is a big piece of [my role] — and managing my staff.

What does it mean to "review a procedure?"

Every blood test, every swab, everything we do in the lab has a procedure. It's not a policy, it's a procedure. So, when we do anything in the lab, there has to be a step-by-step way to do it. Here's how



you collect the specimen, here's how you process the specimen, and here's how you perform that test on that specimen. It just can't be done how you think it should be — we all must do it the same way, and all the controls have to work. If the controls work, then your testing works, and that's how you guarantee you have a correct result to treat the patient.

What part of your job do you find most fulfilling?

Solving problems or finding a new way to do something. That's sort of my jam.

How does your role impact patients and families?

Seventy percent of all decisions for the patient are based on lab results. If our lab results aren't accurate, then the treatment for our patients isn't going to be good. They're not going to have their best day to go to rehab. My role is to make sure that everything that comes out of this lab is precise and correct so [patients] can have their best day for rehabilitation.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Education

- Wright State University, Bachelor of Science, Medical Technology
- Saint Joseph's University, Master of Health Administration

Fun Facts

- Annette's son is a big part of her life. He will turn 31 this year.
- She enjoys playing golf, cross-stitching, and watching football, especially the Ohio State Buckeyes and the Cincinnati Bengals.
- Originally from Ohio, Annette and her partner of 12 years, Kevin, enjoy traveling, including a trip to Oahu and Maui to visit her son. Her son served in the military and was stationed in Hawaii after being deployed to Afghanistan.

Illustration by Abbie Herrin

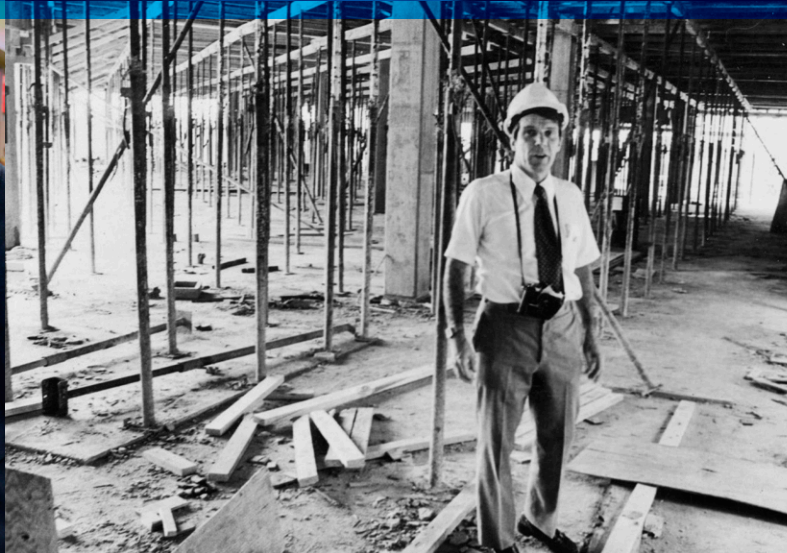
Photo by Ben Gray

Remembering Dr. Apple

Shepherd Center's first medical director remembered as a thoughtful leader, listener, mentor, innovator, and friend.



(bottom, left to right) Dr. Apple participating in the Peachtree Road Race. ▶ Dr. Apple with James Shepherd. ▶ Dr. Apple visits the construction site for Shepherd's new location in the early 1980s. ▶ Co-founders Harold and Alana Shepherd, Dr. Apple, and James Shepherd. ▶ Dr. Apple with participants from the wheelchair division of the Peachtree Road Race. ▶ Dr. Apple and his wife, Jane.





“ You can do rehab in a barn if you have the right people. ”

– David Apple, M.D.

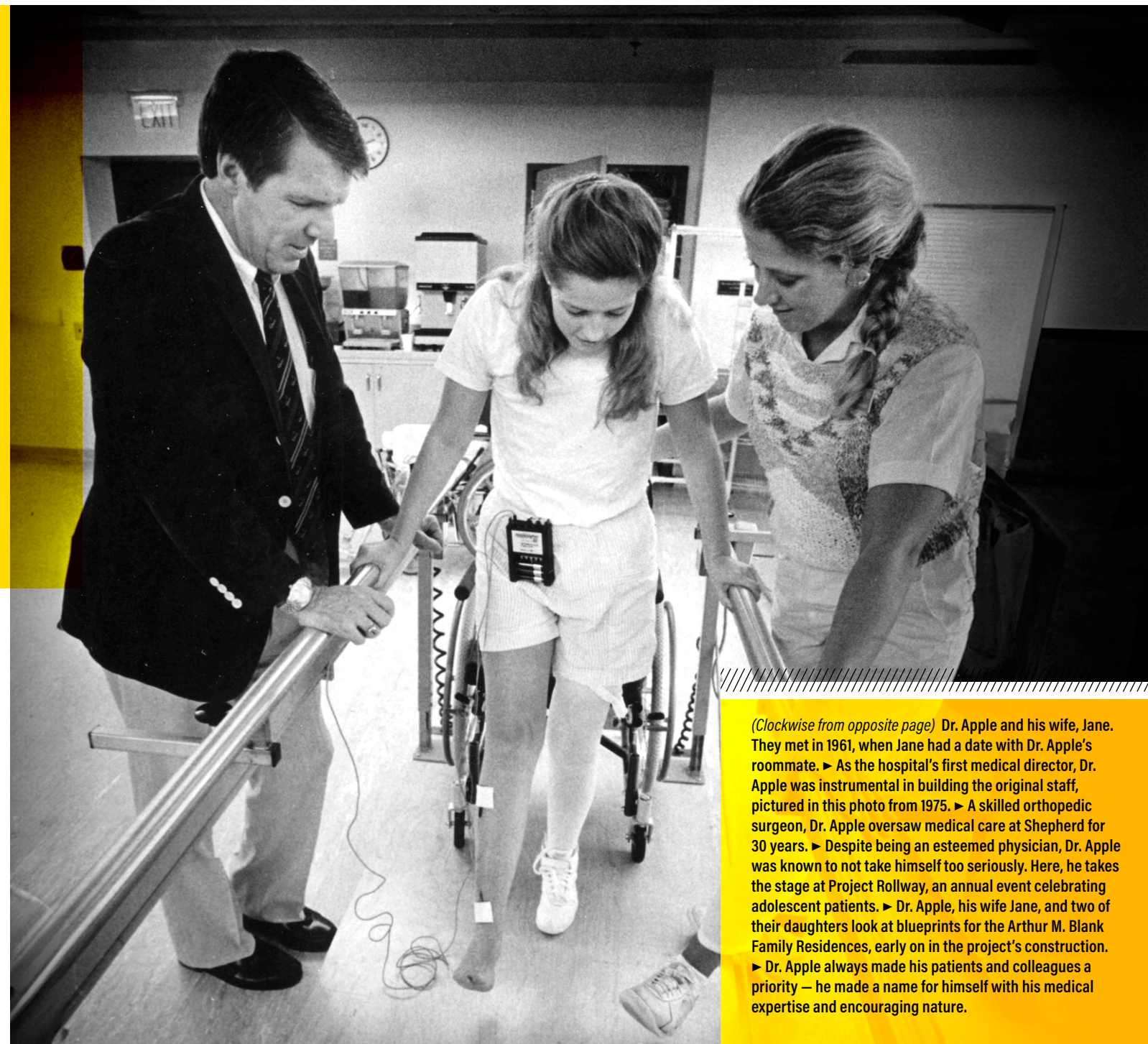
This “Apple-ism” often echoes off the walls at Shepherd Center, the hospital David Apple Jr., M.D. helped start five decades ago. It uniquely captures a key part of the hospital’s philosophy – with the best team, you can help patients achieve more, regardless of your facilities, financial resources, or access to high-tech equipment.

In the years since Dr. Apple helped start Shepherd Center, it has transformed into a world-renowned rehabilitation center, with a multi-building main campus, large, well-equipped therapy gyms, state-of-the-art technology, and room to grow. Thanks to Dr. Apple and his leadership, Shepherd Center also boasts a one-of-a-kind staff of over 1,800 people, all dedicated to serving patients through hope, humor, and hard work.

Dr. Apple took a chance on Shepherd Center as an early-

career doctor, eager to help those experiencing a catastrophic injury or illness. For half a century, he served Shepherd Center’s patients, staff members, and visitors with his compassion, dedication, and medical expertise. On March 23, 2026, Dr. Apple died at home in Atlanta, surrounded by his loved ones. Shepherd Center is saddened to say goodbye and grateful for his service, which has helped define the hospital he co-founded.

“Walk or roll through our halls, and you’ll feel Dr. Apple’s presence everywhere: in our culture of compassion, in the courage of our patients, and in the dedication of every team member,” says Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA, FACHE, president and CEO of Shepherd Center. “Over more than 50 years of service, Dr. Apple changed the world of rehabilitative medicine – and he did it with heart, humor, and an unshakable belief in what is possible.”



(Clockwise from opposite page) Dr. Apple and his wife, Jane. They met in 1961, when Jane had a date with Dr. Apple’s roommate. ▶ As the hospital’s first medical director, Dr. Apple was instrumental in building the original staff, pictured in this photo from 1975. ▶ A skilled orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Apple oversaw medical care at Shepherd for 30 years. ▶ Despite being an esteemed physician, Dr. Apple was known to not take himself too seriously. Here, he takes the stage at Project Rollway, an annual event celebrating adolescent patients. ▶ Dr. Apple, his wife Jane, and two of their daughters look at blueprints for the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, early on in the project’s construction. ▶ Dr. Apple always made his patients and colleagues a priority – he made a name for himself with his medical expertise and encouraging nature.



“ Dr. Apple is such a legend in the SCI research community, and meeting him for the first time as I considered relocating my lab to Shepherd was a tremendous honor. ”

— Edelle Field-Fote, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA, FASIA, director of spinal cord injury research and the Hulse SCI Research Laboratory

» Taking a Chance on Shepherd Center

When Harold and Alana Shepherd and their son, James, were working to start a new rehabilitation hospital in Atlanta, they approached Dr. Apple about being the founding medical director. While Dr. Apple was still early in his career as a doctor, he had quickly amassed clinical expertise and leadership abilities.

After his graduation from medical school at the University of Pennsylvania in 1962, he came to Atlanta, working first as a medical intern at Emory University and then in a residency in surgery at the Morehouse School of Medicine. He also completed an internship at Grady Memorial Hospital. Working in the region's foremost trauma center, he learned firsthand how to care for patients hurt by devastating falls, car crashes, gunshot wounds, pedestrian accidents, and other serious incidents.

In 1964, he joined the Air Force for two years — the last of which he served as chief of surgery. Then he worked as an orthopedic resident at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center in late 1969. He completed two fellowships, one in orthopedic rehabilitation at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in California and another in hand surgery in Louisville, Kentucky. Then, he was

the medical director for Easter Seals, an experience he said gave him the foundation to be the medical director for a brand-new facility.

By the time the Shepherds asked Dr. Apple to sign on as the medical director of their new rehab center, he already had ambitions to lead a hospital. Plus, he was familiar with James' story — he had been peripherally involved with his care at Piedmont Hospital after James sustained a spinal cord injury in 1973. Helping start what was then Shepherd Spinal Center was a great opportunity, as well as a huge risk. One of his colleagues warned that starting the hospital would ruin his career. But luckily, Dr. Apple was willing to take the chance.

“I'd been trying to start a rehab center in Atlanta, and this gave me the opportunity I'd been looking for,” Dr. Apple reflected in a video filmed for the hospital's 50th anniversary. “It all came together as if by magic.”

Looking back, Alana says that in hiring Dr. Apple, she, Harold, and James found the best medical director they could have had.

“When we asked him if he would consider being medical director, he said yes right away because he said he knew [a rehabilitation hospital] was needed and he knew it would succeed,” says Alana Shepherd. “We were lucky that we got the right one. That's the best part of all, [he was] the best choice that we could have

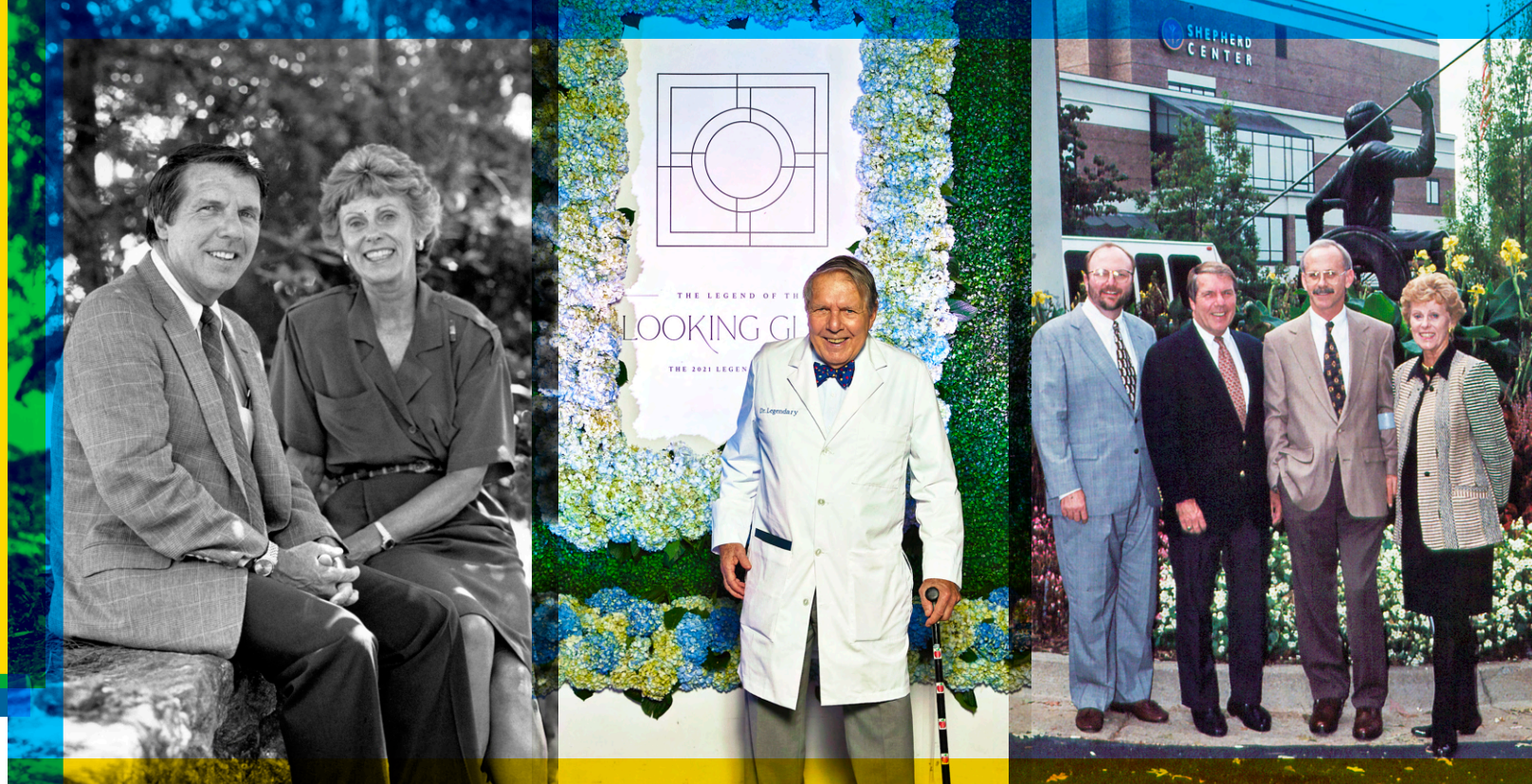
had. Because he certainly believed in research, and he believed in doing the best you could and giving it your all, and also being very relaxed, and eager to be a real person — not a doctor in a white coat that looked at the baseboards and could hardly speak to anyone. He wasn't that kind of a doctor. So, we were really lucky that we had picked him.”

Dr. Apple was Shepherd's first medical director, but he was also much more. As a co-founder of a brand-new hospital, he had to be a cheerleader, a fundraiser, a hiring manager, and a mentor.

Stories from those early years are now cemented in Shepherd Center lore. For example, in 1975, he asked friends to donate to the hospital if he completed the Peachtree Road Race. He made it to the finish line, and a friend named George Johnson gave him a \$100 check, the first donation to Shepherd Center from anyone not involved in the hospital's founding.

He also helped put together the hospital's first staff, bringing in staff members like Tammy King, MSN, ET, CRRN, CCM, who worked at the hospital for 47 years, and Herndon Murray, M.D., who worked here for 50 years. Dr. Apple was able to recruit Dr. Murray even without guaranteed funding for his position, showcasing both physicians' belief in Shepherd's mission.

Staff members and volunteers remember Dr. Apple as down-to-earth, a great listener, and a gentle



clockwise from top: Alana Shepherd and Dr. Apple. The two co-founders worked together to start Shepherd Center in 1975. ► Dr. Apple regularly attended events like The Legendary Party, where he was once honored as “Dr. Legendary.” ► Gary Ulicny, (left) the hospital's first chief executive officer, with hospital co-founders Dr. Apple, James Shepherd, and Alana Shepherd. ► When Dr. Apple couldn't be at the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic due to social distancing, he sent a treat to staff to remind everyone that he was thinking of them. ► Dr. Apple and other members of hospital leadership with Jane Woodruff at the groundbreaking for the Woodruff Family Residences. ► Hospital co-founders Dr. Apple and Alana Shepherd look through a special edition of *Spinal Column*. ► In November 2025, recreation therapists from over the years gathered for a reunion at the hospital. One of Dr. Apple's legacies is creating Shepherd's Recreation Therapy Program, the largest program of its kind in the country.



“ Dr. Apple really took his knowledge and tried to implant it in others, whether it was through the American Spinal Injury Association, research, or one-on-one mentoring. ”

— Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, former chief executive officer of Shepherd Center

leader and teacher whose influence helped shape Shepherd’s culture. He was a beloved mentor for staff, always eager to share his knowledge with them.

“Dr. Apple never asserted that he was the doctor. He was always just someone who would roll up his sleeves with everybody else,” says Jill Koval, Ph.D., ABPP-Rp, rehabilitation psychologist and psychology supervisor who has worked at Shepherd for 36 years. “And one of the most important things that he taught me as a leader was the importance of really listening, and respecting different opinions, but also thinking about the patients that we serve as whole people.”

Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA, former chief executive officer of Shepherd Center, remembers her first impressions of Dr. Apple when she started as a physical therapist in 1984. She says he had total faith in his team.

“When I started working with him, what I saw was he totally trusted the staff,” she recalls. “Some physicians



clockwise from top: Dr. Apple with Shepherd Center team members at The Legendary Party. He helped create Shepherd’s culture of hope, humor, and heart, which defines the hospital’s atmosphere. ▶ Dr. Apple at the groundbreaking for The Arthur M. Blank Family Residences in 2022. ▶ In addition to his work at Shepherd Center, Dr. Apple contributed his talents as a physician to the NBA’s Atlanta Hawks and the 1996 Olympic and Paralympic Games. ▶ Dr. Apple served in the U.S. Air Force after he completed medical school. ▶ Dr. Apple at Derby Day, an annual event that raises money for the Recreation Therapy Program, which he started. ▶ Hospital co-founders Dr. Apple and Harold Shepherd with Shepherd supporters at an event marking the hospital’s 25th anniversary.



would say, ‘Okay, physical therapy, you’re going to do X, Y, and Z three times a day.’ Now, Dr. Apple never did that. He would just say, ‘Hey, evaluate and treat this patient as appropriate.’ He understood the nuances of every position of the team. He just trusted the staff and said, ‘Do what you do best.’”

Shari McDowell, PT, DPT, FASIA, FACHE, the hospital’s current chief operating officer, joined Shepherd as a physical therapist in 1992. She remembers Dr. Apple really listening to staff — an experience she hadn’t had when working with a doctor before.

“He was somebody who listened to every single person’s opinion, and valued everything equally,” she says. “It was very unusual — especially then, there was a lot of hierarchy in medicine. I remember thinking, ‘This is an amazing physician. This is going to be an amazing place to work.’”

Dr. Apple took his responsibilities as medical director seriously. But one responsibility — fostering a supportive culture for his patients and staff — often required him to be not-so-serious. Sara Chapman, longtime Shepherd supporter and Board of Directors’ corporate secretary, began volunteering with the hospital when it was still at its original location. She remembers Dr. Apple as doing whatever it took to bring a smile to his patients and staff, even if he was occasionally the butt of the joke.

“He [created] a spirit of fun in our culture,” she says. “He was the one you could always dress up, you could always throw pies at. He was always up for something that added to the spirit of enjoyment and happiness at Shepherd Center.”

Dr. Apple also helped lead the push to move Shepherd to its location on Peachtree Road. While the unit inside West Paces Ferry allowed Shepherd Spinal Center to get its start, Dr. Apple knew they needed more space — the rehabilitation facility had a waitlist almost immediately upon opening. Plus, he felt at odds with the owners of the leasing hospital, a for-profit operation.

“They were interested in profit. We were interested in service,” he once reflected. “That got to be a problem.”

Thanks to the vision of the Shepherd family and Dr. Apple, on May 13, 1982, Shepherd Center moved into its own building — growing to 40 beds and with a therapy gym nearly as big as the entire previous space.

» Pioneering Research & Recreation Therapy

Dr. Apple leaves behind a tremendous mark on Shepherd’s history. But perhaps his most enduring legacies lay in Shepherd Center’s esteemed clinical programs and research initiatives.

Dr. Apple’s clinical expertise allowed Shepherd’s Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program to quickly become renowned nationally, and even globally. With his leadership, Shepherd Center was designated as one of only a handful of Spinal Cord Injury Model Systems (SCIMS) by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, then a program through the U.S. Department of Education. The recognition came with a \$246,000 grant, a boon to a hospital only seven years old, and it cemented Shepherd Center’s status as a leader in SCI research and rehabilitation. The hospital has continued its tenure as an SCIMS ever since, operating as the Southeastern Regional SCIMS Center. The hospital is also now recognized as a Traumatic Brain Injury Model System (TBIMS).

Shepherd Center officially added research to its mission in 1985, and the program has been expanding ever since, with Dr. Apple serving at the helm for years.

“Dr. Apple is such a legend in the SCI research community, and meeting him for the first time as I considered relocating my lab to Shepherd was a tremendous honor,” reflects Edelle Field-Fote, PT, Ph.D., FAPTA, FASIA, director of spinal cord injury research and the Hulse SCI Research Laboratory. “When I arrived, I learned that he had generously given me his own office and moved himself to another space. Because he had a key, I would often arrive back at the office to find a note, a flower, or an apple. These are the kinds of sweet gestures of support that made him so loved by everyone.”

Dr. Apple also saw the value in inpatient services extending beyond the usual clinical setting. He started Shepherd’s Recreation Therapy Program, now the largest program of its kind in the country, by paying the first recreation therapist out of his own pocket. The recreation therapist,

Barb (Leidheiser) Trader, took patients on outings to concerts, Atlanta Braves games, and even Dr. Apple’s property in North Georgia to fish and enjoy the outdoors.

The program has since grown into a 40-plus-person department, coordinating everything from pottery clinics to adaptive hunting trips for inpatients, outpatients, and community members living with disabilities. Last fall, recreation therapists from across the decades at Shepherd made a visit to the hospital as part of 50th anniversary celebrations. Dr. Apple attended the reunion, where current and alumni recreation therapy staffers shared their favorite stories and thanked him for his vision.

“That’s one of Dr. Apple’s great legacies for Shepherd, is his understanding and vision for rec therapy, and how it was such a critical component of our patient care,” says Chapman, who volunteered on recreation therapy outings in the hospital’s early days.

Dr. Apple believed in getting patients beyond the walls of their hospital room, and he practiced what he preached. Rarely found holed up in his office, Dr. Apple was a familiar face in the hallways during his tenure as medical director and beyond. Patients often reflect on seeing him across the center, from him meeting them upon their arrival at the ambulance entrance to taking a front-row seat at events like Project Rollway.

“We talk a lot here ... about culture and what that means,” says Cheryl Linden, MA, LPC/MS, OT/L, who has worked at Shepherd for 30 years. “And Dr. Apple portrayed that in such a way because he lived the culture. And it wasn’t just about patient care and family care. The culture was about care of all. Care of community. Care of each other.”

» A Leader at Shepherd and Beyond

Dr. Apple often encouraged his children and grandchildren to get involved in their community, beyond the responsibilities of their day jobs. And he consistently modeled this for them.

In addition to his work at Shepherd, Dr. Apple brought his medical expertise to the global stage. In 1983, he became president of the American



“ One of Dr. Apple’s great legacies for Shepherd, is his understanding and vision for rec therapy, and how it was such a critical component of our patient care. ”

— Sara Chapman, longtime Shepherd supporter and Board of Directors’ corporate secretary

Spinal Injury Association, a professional organization he helped found. At that time the youngest member ever elected to serve as president, Dr. Apple led the organization’s then 275 physician members. In 1997, he was awarded the organization’s Lifetime Achievement Award.

“He really took his knowledge and tried to implant it in others, whether it was through the American Spinal Injury Association, whether it was through research, or one-on-one mentoring,” Morrison says.

He also served as president of the Atlanta Clinical Society, the Atlanta Orthopedic Society, and the Georgia Orthopedic Society, receiving the F. J. Funk Award for outstanding service to the Society in 2017. For the 1996 Paralympics, he was the chief medical officer. For the ‘96 Olympics, he co-chaired the doping committee. And for 30 years, he was a team physician for the NBA’s Atlanta Hawks.

His history of community involvement has deep roots, reaching even before his time in medical school. Dr. Apple graduated from Highlands High School in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, in 1954 as valedictorian, class president, and an outstanding athlete with varsity letters in basketball, football, and track. While he was an undergraduate at the University of Virginia, studying as a Dupont Honor Scholar, he ran as a protest candidate and became student body president.

He also found ways to give back to the community outside of the medical field. He donated his time to the Lovett School Board of Directors, the

Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, and the Cathedral of Saint Philip, where he was a devoted member for more than 55 years.

“He was very beloved at the cathedral by our clergy,” says Chapman, who also attends St. Philip’s. “Whenever the church called on him, he answered. He was generous, he was present, and he was involved.”

At Shepherd Center, he continued to serve on the board of directors even after his retirement, where he helped with strategic planning for the hospital’s future.

“He was a very highly valued and respected board member whose insight and opinion were always persuasive,” says Jim Thompson, chairman of the board of directors. “When he chose to comment, it became quiet in [the boardroom] as each member listened intently to what Dr. Apple had to say. He was a giant influence to all of us.”

At the core of Dr. Apple’s heart was his love for his family. He met his wife Jane in 1961 when she had a date with his roommate, and they were married one year later. They had four children together and 12 grandchildren.

“Jane was the love of his life, and they had an incredible partnership,” says Jamie Shepherd, who grew up alongside Dr. Apple’s children. “He loved his kids, his grandkids.

Everybody is partial to their grandkids — but he was exceptionally proud of his grandkids and all the great things that they are doing, and he really loved being a grandfather.”

Dr. Apple enjoyed spending as much time as possible with his family, always celebrating each birthday with dinner at a favorite restaurant and attending his children’s and grandchildren’s sporting events. He also always made time for yearly trips with his family.

“[Those trips] are totally my best memories, and definitely our kids’ best memories. And you could just tell that that was what gave him the most joy,” says John Stephenson, Jr., one of Dr. Apple’s sons-in-law and a past member of the Shepherd Center Foundation Board of Trustees. “They would just sit there and look around, smile at everybody, and be happy that everybody was there.”

» A Vision for the Future

In a presentation Dr. Apple gave before his retirement in 2005, he outlined what he’d like to see in Shepherd’s future: an enlarged exercise facility, enhanced continuing education opportunities for staff, continued research emphasis, and continued focus on patients and their families.



Over 20 years later, his vision continues to come to life. Renovations at the main hospital have allowed for expanded patient floors and therapy gyms. The NeuroRehabilitation Learning Institute provides educational opportunities for clinicians at Shepherd and around the world. The new Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation is bringing research at Shepherd Center to new heights. The Arthur M. Blank Family Residences allow families to fully participate in their loved ones’ rehab. And during the hospital’s 50th anniversary, celebrations showcased how hospital staff are as dedicated to their patients as ever.

Even after stepping down from formal leadership, Dr. Apple continued to pour his time, talent, and passion into research, advocacy, and supporting Shepherd Center patients and staff. He frequently was at the hospital for Founders Meetings with fellow co-founder Alana Shepherd and hospital leadership. He also regularly attended events hosted by the Shepherd Center Foundation, including Derby Day, The Legendary Party, as well as groundbreaking and ribbon cuttings that coincided with Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center, the hospital’s largest campaign and expansion effort to date.

Dr. Apple accepting the position as Shepherd Center’s first medical director not only defined his medical career but impacted thousands of patients and their families, helping them rebuild their lives. His legacy, and the hospital he helped build, will continue to do so.

“He was not a prideful person — he was quite humble, so he’d probably shudder at the concept of the legacy,” says Stephenson. “But I think he would want his legacy to be that of a man of strong faith, a dedicated husband and loving father and grandfather, and a gracious friend to anybody that he met. We all know that his legacy stretches far beyond that in scope and reach ... he was brave and pioneering in his field. His innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial approach to that work has been a big factor in really changing the entire field around treatment of traumatic spinal injuries and complex neurological conditions worldwide.”



(top, opposite page) Dr. Apple celebrates his 85th birthday
 ▶ clockwise from top:
 Dr. Apple at the 50th anniversary staff luncheon.
 ▶ Dr. Apple and his wife, Jane, were married for 63 years. ▶ Dr. Apple pictured with his grandson, John Kiser, former co-chair of the Shepherd Center Junior Committee. Dr. Apple often encouraged his children and grandchildren to give back to their community. ▶ Dr. Apple and his family in the Apple Family Gym at the ribbon-cutting celebration for the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences. ▶ Dr. Apple, his wife Jane, and their children and grandchildren at the hospital’s 50th anniversary party.



Dance Like Everyone's Watching

The rhythm of belonging and recovery at Shepherd Center

By Chris Walker

Rehabilitation at Shepherd Center doesn't follow a script — it dances to its own rhythm. It doesn't always begin in a hospital bed or end when you leave the building. Healing here is less about checklists and more about moments: the ones that make you laugh unexpectedly, rediscover your passions, and feel truly seen. It's joy in motion. Whether that means dancing through pain, crossing a 5K finish line, or finding community in the most unexpected places.

For Alexi Dodson, that motion began after a life-changing spinal cord injury. She arrived at Shepherd Center with a feeding tube, a tracheostomy, and fears of losing her independence. She left

with renewed strength, confidence, wrist-powered mobility, and a deeper connection to herself and the people around her.

"I talk to my body now," Alexi says. "I thank it for everything it's endured. When I need hope, I remember how far I've come."

Alexi, a former Zumba instructor, found healing in therapy, music, humor, and even dancing. Even on the hardest days, there were reasons to smile. Therapists danced through complex procedures. Nurses made her laugh until the hallways echoed. Peers bonded over inside jokes that only someone on a similar path could understand.

"We learned to laugh until we were crying, instead of just crying," she says. "That's the Shepherd difference."

Shepherd Center's impact reaches far beyond inpatient rooms. Just ask Paris Carter, who was first referred to Shepherd after aging out of pediatric care. What began as a visit for specialized services soon became something more.

"Even during the height of the pandemic, with masks and distancing, the staff created an atmosphere of joy and compassion," Paris says. "That environment truly drew me in, and it kept me coming back."

As an outpatient, Paris found belonging through the driving program, the seating clinic, recreational therapy events, and adaptive sports. She's now part of a basketball team, plays tennis, and dreams of skiing more often after a Shepherd-led trip introduced her to the slopes.

"I'm way more active now than ever," she says. "And I'm excited for what's ahead for me, and what's ahead for Shepherd Center, too."

The sense of camaraderie that defines the Shepherd experience doesn't depend on the length of a patient's stay. It's felt in

the quiet encouragement of a therapist, the laughter shared at rec therapy, and the small moments that stick with you forever.

For Paris, one of those moments came at the finish line of her first post-injury 5K.

"A staff member recognized me and ran over to cheer me on. They remembered me and were so proud. That interaction meant the world to me," she says. "That's the heart of Shepherd. It's not just a place where patients are seen. It's a place where they're celebrated."

And for Alexi, the heart showed up in hundreds of small but powerful ways, from nurses who lifted her spirits to therapists who empowered her voice.

"They helped me believe in my body again," she says. "They didn't just support me; they reminded me who I was."

Whether a patient is recovering from a recent injury or navigating long-term care, Shepherd Center feels less like a hospital and more like a stage. A stage where every person is invited to move, grow, and shine.

"The support I've felt is hard to describe," Paris says. "The staff truly care. They're deeply invested in helping every person become the best version of themselves."

Both Alexi and Paris now serve as powerful reminders that healing isn't linear or solitary. It's something built together with heart.

"Give yourself so much grace," Alexi says. "Forget about the big stuff. Focus on the little things. They'll become your biggest accomplishments." *

Alexi Dodson (second from left) and Paris Carter (center, standing) took part in a special dancing-themed photoshoot for the revamped shepherd.org. They are pictured here with Madison Russell, who frequently attends Shepherd Center recreation therapy outings, as well as Shepherd Center staff members.

“They helped me believe in my body again. They didn’t just support me; they reminded me who I was.”

— Alexi Dodson

CAUTION
MAY
CAUSE
DANCING

(above) Alexi (right) with Jacqueline Rosenthal, M.D., the director of the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute.

Photo by ELEY

Shepherd Alums:

Hope in Healing

By Ruth Underwood and Damjana Alverson

Tristan Thompson

San Antonio, Texas

On July 2, 2025, Tristan Thompson, 19, was on a mountain biking trip in Arkansas going down a significant drop, when he braked too late and was flung over his handlebars, sustaining a C3-C5 spinal cord injury. After 22 days at the Mercy Hospital ICU in Springfield, Missouri, he transferred to Shepherd Center's ICU to receive specialized care, with his mom Jennifer by his side. His level of injury limited his movement from the neck down, and he needed a ventilator and trach to breathe.

"We got to Shepherd, and they immediately had him sitting up, out of bed, and began motivating him," Jennifer explains.

Tristan graduated from the ICU to the inpatient unit on Aug. 6. Tristan's medical team put him to work with many therapies, including electrical stimulation therapy. They showed him how to use a tilt table to regulate his fluctuating blood pressure. They helped him wean off the ventilator. Regardless of his schedule for the day, Tristan appreciated his medical team members.

"I didn't have a problem psychologically at Shepherd because it was so positive there," Tristan recalls. "We would just make fun of each other and laugh – there was never an awkward moment."

Tristan also made two best friends, fellow patients Teana Jackson and Libby Presnell, and the trio would find ways to poke fun at each other at every opportunity.

"I remember we all went to church one day, and I told [Chaplain Ben Rose] that it was Libby's birthday, even though it wasn't. Everyone sang happy birthday to her and kept doing it throughout the day. It was the best. We were crying laughing," Tristan recalls.

While Tristan worked hard toward his goals, Jennifer stayed in the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, housing provided by Shepherd Center for families and patients who live more than 50 miles from the hospital.

"It was only two blocks away, but it was great for me to sleep in a real bed and do things like laundry for Tristan and me," Jennifer says. "It also gave him a little freedom from me being there all the time!"

Tristan returned home in September. He is working with a pulmonologist to get his trach out and fully breathe on his own. He plans to return to his studies at Texas Tech as soon as possible. He's also excited to apply for his own service dog.

No matter what comes next, he's optimistic about his future, and encourages others to carry the same mindset.

"Wake up and work hard," Tristan says. "Every day is a new day and opportunity to keep the faith and stay positive."



Kevin Sei

Bethesda, Maryland

33-year-old Kevin Sei, M.D., a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps, has a long scar on the back of his head. His patients sometimes ask him about it. It reveals the story that led him to Shepherd Center.

In the spring of 2024, Kevin was serving in the military, completing his residency in internal medicine at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. One morning, he woke up with a horrible headache and realized his hand was numb. A few days later, he was in the hospital. Doctors found dozens of cavernomas — malformed blood vessels — in Kevin's brain. Two were bleeding, causing his symptoms.

The symptoms worsened, resulting in the inability to move his right side, and eventually, his left side too. He had two surgeries, and although he was weaker than before, he began to improve and consider next steps.

"The neurointensivist over in Virginia was like, 'Hey, you're from Atlanta. Shepherd Center is one of the top places to go for rehab for brain injury, spinal cord injury, and stroke,' and that's where she recommended."

Kevin came to the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, where he was immediately impressed with his care team.

"When I was first admitted, the nurses, the techs, and everybody made me feel welcome and like part of the family. And the therapists and the doctors, they took my opinions and what I wanted to get out of the treatment plan, and adapted [my therapy schedule] to me, personally."

Kevin later moved to Shepherd Pathways, an outpatient rehab program for people recovering from brain injury. His mobility and strength improved, and eventually, he began preparing for his medical board exam, gradually rebuilding his stamina for intense studying.

"Pathways helped a lot with cognitive stuff, and it was really helpful with study techniques because before, I was just able to study like the whole day," he recalls. "I had to learn how to cut down and maybe do 10 or 20 minutes at a time ... because mentally it was draining."

Last fall, Kevin learned he passed his boards, and he's back to doing what he loves, now at Dwight D. Eisenhower Army Medical Center in Augusta, Georgia. And for those patients who ask about his scar, he has a story to share.

"I'm just blessed to be doing what I love again, which is taking care of patients and also just being alive and, you know, living life."



Darryl Tillman

Covington, Georgia

Darryl Tillman, 43, describes himself as fun, creative, and athletic. He loves sports, spending time with family, music, and last, but certainly not least, cooking.

In July 2024, Darryl was in a motorcycle crash that resulted in the amputation of his right leg below the knee. After 12 days at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta, nine of those in the ICU, he transferred to Shepherd's Comprehensive Rehabilitation Unit (CRU).

"Before starting rehab, honestly, I didn't know what life was going to be like," he recalls.

Darryl and his care team got right to work, starting with the basics, like practicing transfers to his wheelchair using a slide board, and building skills from there.

As Darryl grew stronger, his occupational therapist, Jena Kelly, OTR/L, asked him about things he did before his injury that he'd like to do again. Cooking was at the top of the list. So, Darryl wheeled his way to the grocery store with Kelly by his side, and shopped for ingredients for chicken alfredo, which he prepared in Shepherd's I Can Studio adaptive kitchen. Darryl's wife was able to join them for the meal.

"That was definitely rewarding because that's like one of my love languages," Darryl says. "When I cook, I like to see the expressions on people's faces. I like to hear people say, 'Oh, man, this is good.'"

Darryl recalls Kelly's response when he expressed doubt about returning to another of his passions, being a DJ.

"She was like, 'You can do everything that you used to do before. It's just going to look a little different.'"

Soon after, Darryl was DJing for the patients in the CRU gym. "Everybody was just having a blast," he recalls.

After discharging from inpatient rehabilitation, Darryl got fitted for a prosthetic leg and returned to Shepherd for outpatient therapy.

He also served as DJ for Kelly's wedding and later for an event at Shepherd Center.

"Now, I just put my leg on, and I walk around the house. I cook, I cut the grass ... I think I heard a mentor say, 'Your condition is not your conclusion.' So you have to give yourself grace and just continue to work hard, and every day it's going to get better, but it all starts in the mind."

To hear Darryl's story in his own words, check out his video in the "Stories of Hope" video series at shepherd.org/outcomes/stories-of-hope or by scanning the QR code.



Jodi Arminio

Johns Creek, Georgia

In 2011, Jodi Arminio, 70, was diagnosed with neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorder (NMOSD) after experiencing sudden weakness and numbness, followed by severe loss of vision in her left eye.

NMOSD is an autoimmune disease that causes inflammation of the spinal cord and optic nerves. It presents similarly to multiple sclerosis (MS) as it attacks the body's nervous system.

"At one point, NMOSD was thought to be a variant of MS before they discovered the antibody in NMOSD. It mimics MS, and a lot of NMOSD patients were first diagnosed as having MS and treated with MS drugs that they didn't respond to. Now, there are four FDA-approved treatments for NMOSD," Jodi says.

In late 2012, her neurologist Yazan Houssami, M.D. referred Jodi to receive specialized treatment at Shepherd Center's Andrew C. Carlos MS Institute, under the guidance of Ben Thrower, M.D.

"Dr. Thrower is amazing. He was able to explain everything about my condition in terms I could understand," Jodi says. "The entire team has been very helpful, including the infusion nurses. Not one of them there isn't an angel."

While severity of NMOSD symptoms vary greatly from person to person, Jodi describes her NMOSD as an invisible disease. While she occasionally uses a cane for stability, has loss of peripheral vision in her left eye, and experiences pain and fatigue, she says that her symptoms are managed now. It took the right treatment and hard work to get to this point, and she wanted to pay it forward.

In 2014, Jodi decided to begin a support group hosted at Shepherd Center. Co-run with her right-hand person, Travis Edwards, the group has one primary focus.

"We want to help [others with neuroimmune diseases] recognize that they are not alone," Jodi says. "Inviting anyone with a rare neuroimmune disorder, we gather monthly to welcome folks new to the disease, listen to members with questions or issues, celebrate milestones, and keep in touch with those experiencing setbacks or new attacks."

Jodi is optimistic that someday, there will be a cure for NMOSD. She contributes to research by participating in a study at Shepherd to determine the long-term cognitive and physical effects of the disease.

"I can't thank Shepherd enough," Jodi says. "They've been wonderful about providing accessible space for our support group to meet. And as a patient, I really appreciate the comprehensive care I receive and friendships I've made."



Fly Fishing, Fireworks, and Mountain Views

Soque Slam Has Delighted Community Members and Former Patients for Three Years



By Erin Kenney

Gavin Cloy is an avid angler.

He's a full-time fishing guide on Lake Lanier. But even with his plethora of fishing knowledge, fly fishing remained something he didn't have much experience with, yet. That is, until this year's Soque Slam.

Gavin took part in the third annual Soque Slam fishing rodeo benefitting Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program. In the three years since its inception, Soque Slam has gained devoted supporters, drawing people to the North Georgia mountains to spend a day outdoors for a good cause.

Traditionally, the tournament consists of several teams, with each group made up of one or two fishing guides, six anglers, and one former Shepherd Center patient. But this year, to protect fish populations during a drought, the tournament was split into two days: the patient participants competed on Oct. 25, 2025, while the

non-patient participants competed on Jan. 31, 2026.

When Gavin visited the river in October, it marked the first time he'd gone fly fishing in over 30 years.

"It's so cool that Shepherd Center gives opportunities to people with disabilities, you know, to go out and enjoy the outdoors or, in my case, play basketball," says Gavin, a long-time member of the Shepherd Stealers wheelchair basketball team.

Including both Shepherd Center patients and community members was a priority for Shaler Alias, longtime Shepherd supporter and the creator of the Soque Slam. The idea came from his own love of fly fishing.

"I was standing in the river one day on a Saturday, and had to leave to drive home to Atlanta, take a shower, and put on a tuxedo and go to a fundraising gala," he remembers. "And I thought to myself, 'We could

just have a fishing tournament here, and we could raise some money, and I wouldn't have to leave.'"

He called his friend, John Haynes, about creating a fundraising fishing tournament for Shepherd Center, made complete by including former patients and hosting an energetic afterparty.

Alias and Haynes partner with local businesses and organizations, many of them with Shepherd Center ties, to make



Photos by William Twitty



each year a success. Trackchairs for participants who use wheelchairs are generously provided by Jacob Beisecker, a former Shepherd patient who started a nonprofit, Waymaker Offroad Wheelchairs, to loan trackchairs to people with mobility challenges at no cost. Drinks are provided by Republic National Distributing Company, owned by the Carlos family, longtime Shepherd Center supporters. Food is sourced and prepared by volunteers from Andee's Army, which supports Shepherd Center's Adolescent Program.

Andee Poulos, whose extended family and friends began Andee's Army to support her and her family after she sustained a brain injury 15 years ago, was a first-time Soque Slam participant this year. Her dad has volunteered with the event since its first year, but this was the first time she made the trip alongside him.

For Andee, fly fishing offered something priceless in this day and age — peace and quiet.

"I really enjoyed it," says Andee. "Being out there and having to be quiet so you can do your fishing, that was really nice. You're kind of solo — you don't have a whole lot of distractions around you — which is nice too."

Something for Everyone

Shepherd Center's social and fundraising calendar is lined with events throughout the year, with headliners Derby Day in the spring and The Legendary Party in the fall. But event organizers hope the Soque Slam will continue to offer more from other fundraising events. While it is primarily a fishing tournament, the event offers something for non-anglers, too — a laid-back day enjoying cool weather and autumn foliage in the mountains, on and off the river.

October's event included the most off-river entertainment yet, with helicopter rides over the Amicalola Gorge and an evening afterparty, meticulously planned by

Alias' wife, Patty Alias, and Bradley Sosebee.

"We had the fishing portion in the morning, and then around 1 or 2 p.m., we went back to our cabin and changed for the nighttime event, which was the concert and the dinner that my dad and his team prepared," Andee remembers. "And then Shaler [Alias] surprised everyone at the end with a fireworks show."

The concert featured The Grateful Dads, the Castellows, and Futurebirds, who delighted attendees with a mix of old favorites and original music.

three teams, led by Daniel MacMorrow, Towers Wilen, and Alias, braved seven inches of snow for their day on the river. The Wilen team took home both prizes — \$5,000 for the most fish, and \$7,500 for the largest trout. The team graciously donated their winnings to Shepherd Center. The Budnick Family, who've supported the Soque Slam since its first year, matched the donation, raising it to \$25,000 total. All in all, this year's festivities raised over \$531,000, a new record for the tournament.

The 2026 tournament is scheduled for Oct. 24, during the peak for colorful foliage (and, Alias notes, the bye week for Georgia Football!). For inquiries about participating or leading a team, contact Alias at shaler@aliasfamilyoffice.com. *



The evening also included a short presentation recognizing the tournament winners from the weekend. Duane Morrow took home the prize for the most fish, while Gavin won the prize for the largest brown trout.

"All of [Shepherd Center's events] are amazing, but certainly with this one, I'll be back — until they ask me to stop coming," Gavin says with a laugh. "The river was gorgeous, the people were awesome, it was just an amazing day."

Non-patient participants from this year's tournament reconvened in January for their portion of the competition. The

(Clockwise from opposite page) Gavin Cloy (center) is an avid angler, taking home this year's prize for the largest brown trout. ▶ Former Shepherd Center patient Andee Poulos (left) attended the event for the first time this year. ▶ Due to low water levels in the fall, non-patient attendees competed in a separate tournament in January, braving seven inches of snow! ▶ Shaler Alias surprised attendees with a fireworks display following the concert. ▶ (from left) Shaler Alias, John Poulos, and John Haynes at the event. Alias and Haynes are the event's lead organizers, while Poulos provides dinner for the attendees alongside volunteers from Andee's Army. ▶ At the end of the day, attendees enjoyed live music from The Grateful Dads, the Castellows, and Futurebirds.

An Enchanting Evening

2025 Legendary Party Celebrates 50 Years of Shepherd Center



(Clockwise from top) With the theme, "The Enchantment of Fifty," this year's event was loosely garden inspired, made complete by lots of flowers and colorful decorations. ▶ Alana Shepherd and Shanna Bradley at this year's event. Shanna says one of her first experiences with Shepherd Center was on a tour led by Alana. ▶ Shepherd Chaplain Dave Wethington spoke about his experiences as both a patient and staff member. ▶ Andrew Louw, Julie Shepherd, CCM, LMSW, CLCP, Director of Founding Family Relations & Canine Therapy Program Lead, Eunice Chay, M.D. and Wes Chay, M.D., Shepherd Center physiatrist. ▶ Attendees entered the event through a large gold and turquoise arch, surrounded by floral décor and oversized blue and yellow blooms. ▶ Shanna and Bill Bradley, this year's event chairs, with Jim and Linda Balkcom, the chairs for the 2026 event.



This year's Legendary Party was legendary in its own right, boasting the event's largest turnout to date.

The evening's theme, "The Enchantment of Fifty" commemorated Shepherd Center's five decades of changing lives, and guests were eager to celebrate.

"I felt like it was easy to come up with a theme. This is a big year, and I really wanted to make it about [the 50th anniversary]," says Shanna Bradley, who chaired this year's event alongside her husband, Bill Bradley.

This year, the annual black-tie gala raised money for the construction of a new acquired brain injury (ABI) unit. Dave Wethington, MA, BCC, one of Shepherd Center's chaplains, spoke about his experiences with the hospital's Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, both as a patient himself and as a staff member. Chris Rollins, whose family was recognized as the night's honorees, also spoke about his experience as a former brain injury patient. Now a member of the Shepherd Impact Council, Chris shared how the new unit will impact countless patients and their families.

Scheduled to open as soon as August, the new unit will have 35 beds, increasing the number of patients with brain injuries that Shepherd Center can treat. All in all, this year's gala raised \$6.9 million for the new unit.

"I don't think I'll ever be able to compare [hosting Legendary to benefit the ABI unit] to anything else I do in my life," Shanna says. "When we were there for the tour, we saw a mom and dad with a son who was in the brain injury program ... they were walking with him down the hall, and they were just beaming and taking pictures and videos of him. To be a part of being able to help families feel that way is pretty incredible."

Not only did the event support a great cause — it was a great party. Shanna credits Shepherd Center Foundation staff and Legendary Events for pulling together everything she imagined: beautiful



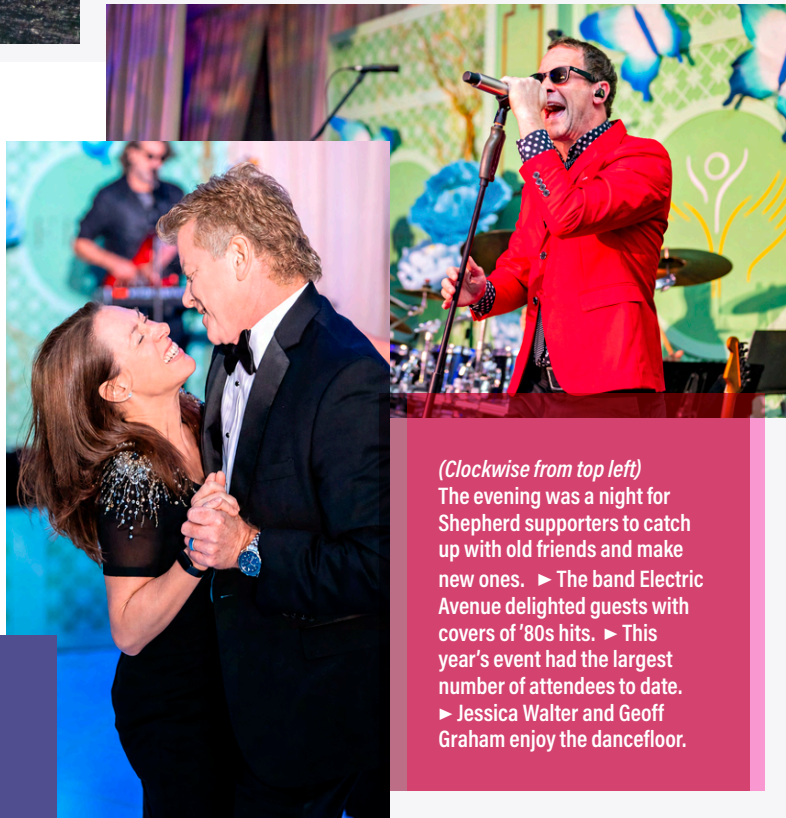


decorations, delicious food and drink (including bread service replaced by truffle fries served with ketchup!), and lively entertainment.

This year, Electric Avenue, an '80s music cover band, delighted attendees with covers of R.E.M., Duran Duran, and Prince. And for those not keen on showing off their dance moves, college football games and the final game of the World Series were on televisions throughout the venue.

A portion of the funds raised came from the gala's after-party, *Legendary Late Night*. Run by Shepherd Center Junior Committee, a group of young professionals who fundraise and organize events for patients and families, *Late Night* extended the celebration, giving guests extra time to enjoy the event's beautiful decorations, live music, food and drink, and of course, each other's company.

"I remember thinking, 'Well, this is the way I would want my daughter's wedding to be,'" Shanna recalls. "It was the most perfect night. It was just a celebration." *



(Clockwise from top left)
The evening was a night for Shepherd supporters to catch up with old friends and make new ones. ▶ The band Electric Avenue delighted guests with covers of '80s hits. ▶ This year's event had the largest number of attendees to date. ▶ Jessica Walter and Geoff Graham enjoy the dancefloor.

Legendary Party Chairs

Shanna and Bill Bradley, Co-chairmen
Linda and Jim Balkcom, Chairmen-elect

Host Committee

Mr. and Mrs. David P. Abney
Mr. and Mrs. William B. Ansley III
Mr. and Mrs. Paul J. Bain
Ms. Susan Been
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Bernhardt
Mr. and Dr. Chris Bosworth
Mr. and Mrs. David K. Dabbiere
Ms. Suzanne E. Mott Dansby
Mr. and Mrs. Zach Ducey
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Epstein
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Photos by Atta Junior and Ben Rose

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A Gift of Better Sleep

Choate Construction donates brand new mattresses to Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative



By Sara Baxter

On a Friday afternoon last November, about a dozen employees from Choate Construction descended upon the residences for Shepherd Center's SHARE Military Initiative and replaced old mattresses, bed frames, and box springs with brand-new ones, paving the way for better sleep for SHARE clients. The company donated a total of 32 mattresses and 17 frames and box springs. They also hauled away the old ones.

Shepherd Center and Choate have a long partnership that goes back more than 22 years and involves dozens of projects – big and small – including the new Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, the Irene and George Woodruff Family Residence Center and parking deck, and the ongoing renovations in the main hospital.

"Shepherd is one of our most valued clients," says Kevin Baynard, senior project manager for Choate. "They enrich so many lives and make a real difference. It's an encouraging environment to work in."

The Choate team has also completed extensive construction on buildings related to the SHARE Military Initiative. SHARE is a comprehensive rehabilitation program for



(above) Kevin Baynard (fifth person from the right), a senior project manager for Choate, says giving back to initiatives like SHARE is integral to the company's culture. ► Volunteers from Choate Construction assisted with installing new mattresses and box springs at the SHARE Military Initiative.

provided everything and organized a group of volunteers to help install over 30 mattresses.

"For SHARE clients who are working hard in rehabilitation, these mattresses will be an essential tool for reducing pain and promoting a good night's sleep," says Jackie Breitenstein, MS CTRS, CCM, SHARE program manager.

Baynard says giving back to the community is an integral part of the company's culture.

"Choate's philosophy is to always leave a place better than we found it, whether that's renovating an existing space or tearing a building down and starting over," Baynard says. "We like to do the same in the community. If there's a need we can fill and a way we can enrich the community where we work, that's what we do." *

service members, veterans, and first responders living with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns, provided at no cost to clients thanks to donor support. Because an employee completed the program, the Choate team has seen firsthand how it helps military veterans.

In response, Choate has made financial contributions to the program and also sponsors the Shepherd's Men Clay Shoot, an annual event raising money for SHARE.

When Choate's Building Up Committee – an employee-led group that guides the company's philanthropic endeavors – heard that SHARE needed mattresses, they sprang into action. The company



clockwise from top: David Landis, Hays Mershon, Anna Mershon, and Alana Shepherd (from left to right) with the sculpture at the dedication ceremony. ► Anna Mershon attended the sculpture installation and helped with the reveal, removing protective coverings from the sculpture. ► Members of Shepherd's facilities team assisted David Landis and his assistant, Alyssa Smith, with the installation. (from left, back row) Steven Webb, Alyssa Smith, Eric Barrow, David Landis, (from left, front row) William Davidson, Benny Benson, Joe Nowicki.



Generosity Brings SOLACE to Family Garden

David Landis' sculptures, often monumental, metallic depictions of nature, such as leaves, birds, and other wildlife, appear throughout Atlanta and nationwide. From the Atlanta Beltline, to Piedmont Atlanta Hospital, to the Atlanta Botanical Garden, his works prompt curiosity, reflection, and peacefulness. And now, thanks to a generous donation from longtime Shepherd Center supporters Anna and Hays Mershon, Shepherd Center has a piece from Landis to call its own.

Located in the Hazel Family Garden at the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences, SOLACE is a larger-than-life flower in bloom. With a mirror stainless steel, the sculpture reflects its environment – blue skies, the new family residence building, and the passersby who stop to gaze at the sculpture.

"My goal with this piece, SOLACE, was to create something beautiful and captivating that would offer a moment of calm respite for the visitors of Shepherd Center," Landis says.

The design and construction of the sculpture took five months and culminated on the installation day in October. With help from the Shepherd Center facilities team, the sculpture was carefully installed in the garden.

Later that week, the Mershons, Landis, and Shepherd staff and board members gathered in the garden for an intimate dedication ceremony, where Landis discussed his approach and presented the Mershons with a small gift – a model version of the sculpture they generously donated.

The sculpture isn't the only way the Mershons have left their mark on Shepherd Center. At the hospital's annual Angel Luncheon in 2014, it was announced that the Secret Garden, located discretely between the hospital building and Peachtree Road, would be renamed the Anna and Hays Mershon Secret Garden to recognize their generous and committed support to the hospital.



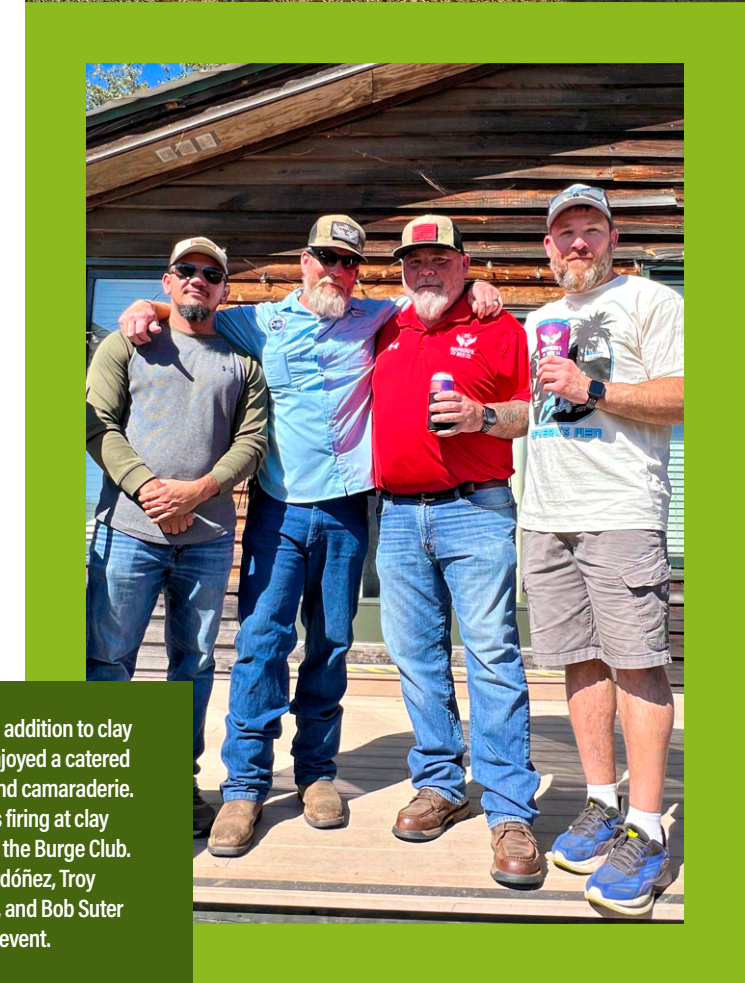
"We have long been inspired by experiencing how Shepherd Center has restored the lives of patients and their families, and we know how instrumental Shepherd's gardens have been to the care provided," the Mershons shared. "As garden lovers ourselves, we are honored to support two of these gardens, the Secret Garden and the new Hazel Family Garden. We know that David Landis' brilliant work will, indeed, bring SOLACE to generations of Shepherd patients and their families."

A special thank you to the Mershons, for their ongoing support of patients and their families, and to Landis, for designing the beautiful sculpture. *

Photos Courtesy of Choate Construction

Taking Aim

Clay Shoot builds camaraderie, raises money for SHARE



For veterans Bob Suter and Carlos Ordóñez, the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center was a lifeline. SHARE, a comprehensive rehabilitation program for veterans, service members, and first responders experiencing the impacts of traumatic brain injuries and post-traumatic stress disorder, helped both men become whole again. Before their time in SHARE, they experienced challenges like emotional dysregulation, dizziness, and vision problems. Now, they both are on the other side — and giving back to SHARE through Shepherd's Men.

Shepherd's Men is a group of veterans, service members, and civilian supporters who raise funds and awareness for SHARE. On Oct. 24, 2025, the group gathered for the 9th annual Shepherd's Men Clay Shoot and a day of camaraderie. In addition to hearing Bob and Carlos share their SHARE stories, the attendees competed in the clay shoot, took part in a silent auction, and enjoyed a catered lunch, with the rolling hills of the Burge Club in Mansfield, Georgia, serving as a backdrop for the festivities.

The sold-out event raised over \$139,000 for SHARE, which recently brought on a third team of clinicians in order to serve more veterans. For more information about SHARE, or to read more about Bob and Carlos, visit news.shepherd.org. For information about Shepherd's Men and their events and volunteer activities, please visit shepherdsmen.com.

(clockwise from left) In addition to clay shooting, attendees enjoyed a catered lunch, silent auction, and camaraderie.
 ▶ Attendees took turns firing at clay targets on the range at the Burge Club.
 ▶ (From left) Carlos Ordóñez, Troy Campbell, Gary Herber, and Bob Suter pose for a photo at the event.

Shepherd's Men Clay Shoot Planning Committee

- Lindsay Miller
- Amanda Slappey
- Travis Ellis
- Mitch Rhoden
- Katie Huffner
- Scott and April Wright

Photo by 524 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 **Oct. 1, 2025 through Dec. 31, 2025.**



During winter weather, staff members arrived early or stayed late to continue providing top-notch care for patients in the Shepherd's inpatient programs. Thank you to all our "winter warriors" for your dedication to our patients!

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Travis Ellis — Atlanta to Washington Run
Anonymous

Dr. Carl Fackler
Mr. William F. Hardin

Claire & Edwin Foulke
Mr. Edwin Foulke, Jr.

Lee Frazer
Ms. Julie Jones

Margaret Frazer
Ms. Julie Jones

Jane Frith
Mr. and Mrs. Weslee Knapp

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

Mellony Gaston
Ms. Jessica Williams

Adrienne Gattas
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas A. Miller

Richard Geiger
Stepping into the Bible

Matthew P. Godwin's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. Milton Godwin, Jr.

Bernie Goldstein's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. Joel K. Isenberg

Sophie Goldwasser
Mrs. Joseph Goldwasser

Scott Gordon, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Scott Gordon

Rusty Gore and his Team
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Epstein

Connor Gow
Andrew and Cynthia Gow Charitable Fund

Ann Gressette
Mr. John Gressette

Amy Paulk Grist
Mr. and Mrs. Marion Roberts

Chole Gruensfelder Graduating Nursing School
Mr. and Mrs. Joel K. Isenberg

Donna and Warren Hall's Birthday
Mrs. Frank Troutman, Jr.

Greg and Ann Hampton
Mrs. Kathryn H. Kapnek

Claire S Harper
Mr. M. Lamar Oglesby

Maddox Harrison
Mrs. Kayci Blake

Connie Hart
Mr. and Mrs. Luther Kelley

Carol Hatfield Happy Holidays
Dr. Edward Hatfield

Susan Hawkins Happy Holidays
Ms. Renee Keith

Caroline Hazel
Ms. Jordan M. Hinkebein
Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. McDaniel

Cheryl and Dick Hazel
Ms. Caroline G. Hazel

Mr. and Mrs. William Hazelrig
Mr. Walter E. Shackelford

Patrick Higgins Happy Holidays
Ms. Ellen Allen

Keith & Paula Hinton
Ms. Tonya Harbison

JJ Hodge
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Wheeler

Elizabeth Homer
Mr. and Mrs. Roger W. Moister, Jr.

Nicolas Horne
Mr. Dameon Horne

Sarah Howell
Ms. Lisa Pharr

William Hoyt
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Banner

Derek and Heather Hutchison Happy Holidays
Lynn and Mary Ditty
Ms. Martha Glenn

Jerry Jordan
Anonymous

Taylor Keating
Mrs. Beverly D. Keating

Mrs. Donna Kehoe
Major General and Mrs. David R. Bockel, Sr.

Emily Kendrick Happy Holidays
Mr. Michael B. Thomas

Corey Kennebrew
Ms. Tynae Tipton

Clinton B. Kennedy
Ms. Marsha P. Moorer



Ryan Clements and Mallori Ammerman tied the knot at Shepherd Center on Jan. 27, their dating anniversary, after having to reschedule their fall wedding when Ryan sustained a brain injury. Ryan's care team worked diligently to create a special ceremony, complete with decorations and refreshments, and to give the couple an unforgettable memory. To read more, visit Shepherd Center's page on Facebook.

Elana Kennedy
Ms. Lucia Schoelwer

Richard and Gloria Kerns
Richard Kerns Truck Parts

Earl Klugh
Ms. Kathryn Mardo

Jacob Klebar
Mrs. Jenene Klebar

Cathy Selig and family
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Friedman

Marie Landis
Dr. and Mrs. Barry M. Liff

Jen Lane
Ms. Mary F. Taylor

Matthew Lee
Ms. Pamela B. Jackson

Dr. Don Leslie
Ms. Ruthie T. Watts

Crystal Lethcoe
Ms. and Mr. Glenda J. Brown

Ryan Levins
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Levins

Linda Levy
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Banner
Ms. Ilene R. Baylinson

Greg Lewis and Family
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Friedman

Michael and Melissa Link
Mr. and Mrs. Mark A.
Crabtree

Hannah Lindsay
Mr. Marc Stevens

Ben Lippincott Happy Holidays
Ms. Kate Lippincott

Steve and Kay Lore
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Myers

Tatum Love
Ms. Cynthia Bright

Josh Mackey
Sticky Ops Co.

Anita Marino
The George Stern & Sara
Stern Foundation

Maisie Marsau
Mr. and Mrs. Frank M. Hamlin
Ms. Sharrel Shepard

Bonnie and David Martin
Anonymous
Renée Gattis
Mr. and Mrs. Brent Hodgson
Ms. Mary Williams

Mrs. Darla McBurney
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur
Richert, Jr.

Matthew McDade
Ms. Rebecca Brooks

Shirley McFarlane Wishes Happy Holidays to:
Becky and Van Aggelakos
Barbara Barton
Joyce and Ron Bernie
Dion and Liz Condrey
Terry and Chuck Dale
Cathy and Joe Frank
Mont and Laurie Hartman
Tom Hartman and
Wm Landeros
Barbara Condrey McClintock
Jim and Karen Vournakis
Mr. and Mrs. Peter J. West

Kane McGukin
Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Thomas

Daniel Miller
Mr. and Mrs. D. Wayne Miller

Dr. Leigh Ann Miller
Mr. and Mrs. D. Wayne Miller

Caroline Moore Brodmann
Mr. and Mrs. Charles Moore

Woody Morgan, M.D.
Mr. Phillip Stice

George Mori
Mr. and Mrs. Randall H.
Street

Meghan Morin
Mr. Paul Zahner

Ragan Morris
Mr. Bret T. Smith

Lori Morton
Ms. Julie Soud

Sean Murphy
Ms. Cynthia Sokolic

My Family
Mr. Kenneth Fort

Ryan Narramore
Anonymous

Mrs. Margaret Naugle Happy Holidays
Mr. and Mrs. James T. Gandy

Don Nelson
Kendall Nelson

Sally Nunnally
Mr. and Mrs. Richard J. Pope

Lania "Dawn" Ogletree
Ms. Kanani Briggs

Juli Owens
Mr. David Rafeedie

Todd Parrish
Mr. and Mrs. Larry Parrish

Elizabeth Pearce
Mr. and Mrs. Eugene L.
Pearce III

Babette Perry Happy Holidays
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Roop

James Peterson
Kateri Peterson

Carson Pierce
Ms. Deborah Cobb

Lindsey Piland
Mr. and Mrs. William E.
Peace

Carolyn Pittman
Ms. Jennifer P. Cantrell

Mrs. Judy Poppell
Major General and Mrs.
David R. Bockel, Sr.

Roger Prock
Mr. and Mrs. Granville B.
Prock

Margaret Proctor
Mr. and Mrs. Raymond A.
Jones III

Toby Regal
Ms. Sharon Regal

Corey Reitz
Mr. Scott Jacobson

Jamie Reynolds III
Mrs. Frances R. Strickland

Jake Rogers
Anonymous
Mr. Steve Rogers

Nick Rokos
Pentair

Bobby Rosenbleeth
Ms. Sarah H. Wood

Deen Day Sanders
Governor and Mrs. Joe F.
Harris

Robert A. Sansbury Happy Holidays
Ms. Margaret Davis

Eric Schelling
The Home Depot
Foundation

Save the Date

Upcoming Shepherd Events

Project Rollway
June 26, 2026
Shepherd Center
Atlanta, Georgia

Soque Slam Fishing Invitational
Oct. 24, 2026
Clarkesville, Georgia

Northside Hospital Peachtree Road Race
July 4, 2026
Atlanta, Georgia

Shepherd Center Cup Golf Tournament
Nov. 2, 2026
Cherokee Town & Country Club
Atlanta, Georgia

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

The Legendary Party
Nov. 7, 2026
Atlanta, Georgia

Taylor Schonberg
Currie & Co. Travels
Unlimited

Shapiro Capital Management Co.
Our Friends and Colleagues

Julian Sheats
Mr. Joseph B. Robb

Alana Shepherd
Governor and Mrs. Joe F.
Harris
Dr. Juliet R. Asher and Mr.
Michael D. Golden
Mr. and Mrs. Larry M.
Cowman
Mr. and Mrs. George W.
Darden
Mrs. Mynel Yates DuBose
Ms. Cynthia McLain
Mr. and Mrs. William C.
Fowler
Mrs. Catherine T. Ottley

Shepherd Family
Mr. and Mrs. Mark W.
Slonaker

Shepherd Center 50th Anniversary
Craig Hospital
David & Jennifer Kahn
Family Foundation

Jamie and Sarah Shepherd
Mrs. Mynel Yates DuBose

Julie Shepherd
Mrs. Mynel Yates DuBose
Mr. Harrison Porter

Mrs. Wynne P. Stevenson Wishes Happy Holidays to:
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Amos
Mr. and Mrs. Frank Foley

Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner Garrard
Mr. and Mrs. Mason Lampton
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Ogie
Mr. and Mrs. Mat Swift
Mr. and Mrs. Richard Waddell
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Woolfolk

Landon Simpson
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Black

Nick Smith
Mr. Matthew Smith

Marty, Shannon, Ron, & Maddy Spiegelman
Dr. and Mrs. Bruce M.
Beeber

Marcia Standen
Mr. and Mrs. Craig Standen

John D. Stephens
Hodges, Harbin, Newberry
and Tribble, Inc.

Jim and Donna Stephenson
Mr. and Mrs. William E.
Dorris

Hamp Stevens Happy Holidays
Mr. John Eastman

Rebecca Stoots
Anonymous

David Stroup
Ms. Penelope Stoup

Austin Stuck
Ms. Barbara Boniface
Ms. Lora Boniface
Mr. and Mrs. David Stuck

Brendan Sullivan
Mrs. Margaret E. Curtin

Alan Sussman's 10th Anniversary and 70th Birthday
Dr. and Mrs. Neil Negrin



Tex and Beta (and other facility dogs not pictured) brought Valentine's Day cheer to patients around the hospital.

Shepherd Center Needs Your Feedback!

We would like your feedback on your experience with Shepherd Center. Please scan the QR code with the camera on your phone to participate in a quick survey. Thank you! For a paper survey, contact QOM@shepherd.org.



Wayne Sweezy
Ms. Cynthia McLain

Brigid Sykes
Mr. Mike Carter

Jo Tapper
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Banner

Dr. Ben Thrower
Ms. Frances Mohr

David Tillem
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Tillem
Mr. David Tillem

Tee Turley
Allison and Anderson Harp

Susan Turner
Mr. and Mrs. Stan Barnes

Brittany Varnum
Mr. and Mrs. Chris C. Stovall

The Vinson Family Happy Holidays
Mrs. Judith Belcher

Debra Walker
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey L. Walker

Paul Webber
Anonymous

Jeffrey Werner
Mr. and Mrs. Marc Werner

Jeffrey Werner's Team
Mr. Robert I. Werner

Hanson Williams Happy Holidays
O. Wilson
Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.

Charles Zook
Mr. Jack Zook

Voices of Remembrance

In the days following Dr. Apple's passing, friends, colleagues, patients, and loved ones shared their favorite memories and what Dr. Apple meant to them. Each reflection is a testament to his compassion, leadership, and unwavering belief that every life and every recovery matters.

To read more, visit shepherd.org/david-apple-tribute or Shepherd's social media pages.

“How to describe in words what this man meant to me personally and professionally is almost impossible. He was a cheerleader to all. He humbly served others without seeking recognition. I am so blessed to have known him. My heart has an empty spot with his passing, but I will use that to serve others as he would.”

– Cathy Kramer, former Shepherd Center employee

“Dr. Apple will be deeply missed. During the time he worked near my office in the research suite, he learned that I was studying to become an American citizen. He followed my progress with genuine interest, and when I passed my test, he celebrated with me in a way I will never forget – by making a donation to Shepherd in my honor. His joy for me was sincere, and his kindness left a lasting impression.”

– Elizabeth Gonzalez, CCRP, clinical research coordinator at Shepherd Center

“Dr. Apple was a truly good man. He was the epitome of what a physician should be and has left the world a far better place by being in it. Until we see you again.”

– Ben Thrower, M.D., neurologist, Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute

“Recreational therapy was what gave me purpose again after I broke my neck. Thank you for that and so much more. Truly a man that changed the world for the better. He will be missed.”

– Talbot Kennedy, former Shepherd Center patient

“He lived his passion every day and showed up to every event to support Shepherd's mission. We will miss you, Dr. Apple. Thank you for all you did for my son and countless others who benefited from your compassion and generosity.”

– Mariellen Jacobs, mom to former patient and former Shepherd Center employee

“My second day of work at Shepherd, Dr. Apple made time to have lunch with me. SO many employees and patients stopped by our table to say hello that he never even got a bite to eat! I have never seen anyone so loved, respected, and adored. It's a day I won't forget.”

– Marie Landis, gift officer for the Shepherd Center Foundation

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**“You can do
rehab in a barn
if you have the
right people.”**

– David Apple, M.D.



David Apple, M.D., with Alana Shepherd in spring 2025. Dr. Apple helped Alana, Harold, and James Shepherd start Shepherd Center in 1975.