



Medical Treatment • Research • Rehabilitation

Shepherd

Center Spinal Column®

Parenting with Purpose

Shepherd Center Helps Parents Be
the Best They Can Be

Wrapping up Renovations » **2** Shepherd Alums Find
Hope in Healing » **18** Bringing Warmth to Patients » **26**

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Shepherd Center

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About the Cover

Megan Collins Bordon and her husband, Adrian, give their son Wyatt a helping hand.
Photo by Laurel & Cole Photography

Letter from Jamie Shepherd



Dear Friends,

Many people can point to a parent, or a parental figure, as someone who shaped the person they've become. For those of us with children, parenthood is a defining aspect of our day-to-day lives. Parenthood is central to Shepherd Center's story, too.

When my dad, James Shepherd and grandparents, Harold and Alana Shepherd, were first dreaming of starting their own rehabilitation center, they had insights gained from the experience of my dad's spinal cord injury rehabilitation. They learned the ins and outs of what not only a patient, but a family, needs when recovering from a life-changing injury.

That's why at Shepherd Center, we don't just care for patients. We care for the whole family. We provide logistical support, such as family housing and caregiver training, as well as psychological and spiritual support. And while there's no one-size-fits-all approach to rehabilitation, we give patients and families the ability to chart their own course and return home to rich and rewarding lives.

In this issue of Spinal Column, we celebrate the many kinds of parents who've come through our doors. Starting on page six, you'll meet parents serving as caregivers for their son with a brain injury, a mom navigating multiple sclerosis and caring for her daughter, a father and veteran back to being himself after treatment at the SHARE Military Initiative, and a former patient celebrating and reflecting on her baby's first year of life.

As usual, you'll also find news from around the center, additional patient and staff stories, and updates from our Foundation, which recently concluded Pursuing Possible: The Campaign for Shepherd Center in March. Our focus now is to sustain and grow our recreation therapy program, SHARE Military Initiative, research and innovation efforts, family housing, and the day-to-day operations that support patients and families like those featured in this issue. For information on making a contribution, see the bottom of the opposite page. Thank you for your continued support of our hospital.

Sincerely,

Jamie Shepherd

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

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The Recreation Therapy Program's semiannual Casino Night gives patients the opportunity to practice dexterity, focus, and confidence.



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.



Renovations Enhance Patient Experience, Increase Hospital Capacity

Construction and renovations on Shepherd Center's campus will be complete by the end of September.



Shepherd's ABI leadership team collaborated with Choate Construction on the new unit.

After several years of construction, with the building of the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences and the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, as well as over a year of renovations and enhancements at the main hospital, patients and staff are reaping the benefits, like a centralized check-in for all outpatients, private infusion rooms in the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute, and an enhanced ambulance entrance for patients first arriving to Shepherd, to name a few.

One of the most notable changes is the addition of a new brain injury unit on the hospital's sixth floor. The new unit adds 35 beds to the hospital's Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program, renowned for excellent patient outcomes and for its status as a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Model System. The unit will open on Aug. 4 with 18 staffed beds, and remaining new beds will open in the coming months.

"We are excited to open the new brain injury unit — once the phased opening is complete, we will have a total of 85 private patient rooms dedicated to TBI and stroke patients," says Katie Metzger, OTR, MBA, the director of the Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Rehabilitation Program at Shepherd Center. "Expanding access to the catastrophic care we provide every day is incredibly important. The ABI Program, from inpatient through outpatient Pathways, could not be prouder of this opportunity to further support Shepherd's mission by providing more patients with the highest quality care and best possible outcomes."

In addition to enhancing patient care, renovations have also brought aesthetic changes to the hospital — brightening hallways, adding new, durable terrazzo floors, and updating signage that tells Shepherd Center's story. And while things may look different, the feeling is the same: hope is here.

Want to join our team?

If you've been looking for a workplace rooted in values, recognition, and impact, Shepherd Center may be the right fit for you.

With the new Acquired Brain Injury unit opening in August, Shepherd Center is hiring for a variety of clinical and non-clinical positions across the hospital. Whether you're directly involved in patient care or working behind the scenes, your work is crucial in helping our patients and their families reclaim their lives with renewed hope, independence, and dignity. With a comprehensive range of benefits and career development opportunities, Shepherd Center is committed to supporting you inside and outside the workplace.

Browse open positions by scanning the QR code.



Thank you, Shepherd Volunteers!

Volunteers recognized at annual appreciation dinner

Volunteers are a pillar of Shepherd Center. Their dedication is essential in providing exceptional care and support to our patients and families.

Each year, the Volunteer Services team holds its Volunteer Appreciation Dinner to thank and recognize those who give so much in service to others. This special evening celebrates volunteers, honors their milestones, and acknowledges their impact across our programs.

Volunteer Services staff members Alex Seblatnigg, CAVS, CPXP, Stephany Sancé Hornberger, and Rebecca Shearin recognized volunteers who achieved milestones in the number of hours served. This year, over 40 volunteers were recognized for nearly 43,000 hours of service to patients, families, and visitors to the hospital.

"Our volunteers embody Shepherd's culture. They have humor and compassion in their service and understand our mission. This year's dinner was a blast. I loved seeing everyone mingle and socialize. They deserve to be celebrated," Sancé Hornberger says.



A mix of longtime and new volunteers were recognized for nearly 43,000 hours of service at the dinner.



Injury Prevention Director Receives National Recognition for Seatbelt Project

Emma Harrington, MSPS, Shepherd Center's director of injury prevention, was recognized by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for her Rural Roads Seatbelt Safety Project, taking home the administration's Public Service Award at the 2026 LifeSavers Highway Safety Conference.

Harrington's project uses social norming to increase seatbelt usage in Laurens County, Georgia, and resulted in a 5% increase in seatbelt usage over three years. Now in its third year, the project continues to raise awareness for seatbelt usage through media outreach and community

events. The project receives funding from the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, which most recently awarded Shepherd Center a nearly \$234,000 grant to continue the project.

"We could not have done this work without our partners and the community coalitions in the areas we serve," Harrington says. "I'm excited to continue leading this effort and hope to continue increasing seatbelt usage in our state."

Emma Harrington, MSPS, won the NHTSA's Public Service Award at the 2026 LifeSavers Highway Safety Conference.



Research Partnership with GSU Sociology Recognized with Ignite Award

Award to Provide Funding for Graduate Student Research at Shepherd Center

By Erin Kenney & Ruth Underwood

When Raeda Anderson, Ph.D., was preparing to come to Shepherd Center as a research scientist, her time at the Department of Research and Engagement at Georgia State University (GSU) was coming to a close. But a new chapter was just starting to take shape. When she announced her departure from GSU, Eric Wright, Ph.D., department chair of Sociology, offered her an affiliate faculty role.

"I wanted to be at Shepherd Center for a year before trying to build any bridges between the two institutions," Dr. Anderson says. "So, I gave myself a year, and it was a year and one day when [my former graduate assistant] George Usmanov came over to Shepherd Center."

What started as one graduate student working at Shepherd Center grew into a formal partnership between the two institutions. The GSU department provided funding for two more of Dr. Anderson's former graduate research assistants to come work with her. And Dr. Anderson, along with her former GSU colleagues, Daniel Pasciuti, Ph.D., and Patricia Lawrence, Ph.D., co-founded GSU's Interdisciplinary Community Research on Disability (iCORD) Lab. The lab focuses on actionable research grounded in the belief that people with disabilities should thrive, not just survive, in their communities.

"Shepherd Center and GSU Sociology's partnership has taken off," Dr. Anderson says. "Social scientists are now making a real effect in clinical research. Our highly trained students contribute to publications and excel at turning research into action. It's a wonderful partnership that benefits everyone, most importantly our patients."

Through the partnership, Dr. Anderson and her graduate assistants have conducted studies on topics like telehealth appointment completion and accessibility in Georgia State Parks. They've also partnered with local brain injury day program, Side by Side Brain Injury Clubhouse, to help it prepare for its upcoming expansion. And in a recently published study, "Disabled and left behind: U.S. poor housing through a social determinant of health lens," the team used national data from the U.S. Census Bureau to examine social determinants of health for people with disabilities.

"We never say in science that we were the first ever, but to our knowledge, it is the first publication that has examined this many areas of social determinants of health for people with disabilities," Dr. Anderson says. "So, we intentionally published it as open access, so more people could have access to it."

Research opportunities like these have helped the graduate students see firsthand how sociology is applied in settings like Shepherd Center.

"This experience helped me envision a future as an applied sociologist and showed me that interdisciplinary, collaborative research is

not just possible — it's powerful," says Madelief Tilder, a former GSU graduate research assistant. "The supportive environment fostered through the partnership helped me see that my voice matters, that I bring valuable insight and belong in research spaces."

Through working at Shepherd Center, the graduate assistants have also seen how their work can be used to benefit others.

"The partnership has taught me that rigorous methods are most valuable when they are put in service of the community rather than kept inside the academy," says Melissa Treanor, the current GSU graduate research assistant.

"Through this work, I have learned to ask not only whether a finding is significant, but what it means to the people the research is meant to help."

This spring, Georgia State recognized the partnership with its Ignite Award for Faculty Research Partnership. The partnership was one of three chosen across GSU. Plus, it comes with a cash prize — enough to fund a graduate research assistant for the next year.

"With budget cuts, [GSU is] not able to fund a graduate assistant this upcoming year," Anderson says. "This will fund a student for the entire next academic year, so Shepherd Center will get another great research assistant, and a sociologist will get a full ride work-study position."

To read the full-length version of this story, visit news.shepherd.org.



(center from left) Dr. Raeda Anderson, Dr. Patricia Lawrence, and Dr. Daniel Pasciuti are awarded the Ignite Award for The Faculty Research Partnership. ► (left) iCORD graduates and faculty at Georgia State University's spring 2026 commencement.



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 on the right. To learn more about research and innovation at Shepherd Center, visit shepherd.org/research.



Giving Families a Helping Hand

Rebecca Shearin Helps Families Navigate Life at Shepherd

Interview by Erin Kenney

How do you explain your role as Family Support Services Coordinator to new families?

The first time I introduce myself to a patient's family member, I tell them to think of me as their admin and concierge. For many of them, it's like they've moved to a new city, but they didn't pick it out or choose to come here. Anybody who has moved to a new city knows those struggles — you don't know where things are, you don't feel comfortable going places. I let them know they can ask me about things in the area, from family-friendly places to visit, to good hair or nail salons, to grocery stores and restaurants.

With the admin part, I'm not the person to help them fill out their disability paperwork, but once it is complete, I can scan it, fax it, copy it, notarize it, whatever is needed. I also take care of inpatient mail.

I also help connect families with extended stay hotels and apartments in the area. We provide family housing at the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences for those who live over 50 miles from the hospital, but often extended family or friends will visit during a patient's rehabilitation, and I'm able to help those visitors find lodging nearby.

I also manage the patient and family event calendar, and the family lounge is my home base. I take care of the lounge area and restock anything in there that's needed. I also assist with our Tuesday night family dinners.

What initially drew you to Shepherd Center?

So, I ended up at Shepherd because I was job searching and I had recently graduated from Georgia State [University] as a film major with a minor in art. I was striking out finding work, and I had student loan payments coming, so I thought, "OK, let me pivot. What else do I like to do?" My husband and I really enjoy volunteering, and so I started looking at jobs at nonprofits, and then I applied for some roles at Shepherd.

I heard back from Alex [Seblatnigg, Shepherd's Director of Volunteer Services] right away. When I came in for an in-person interview, people were saying hello to me in the hallways already. I just thought, "These are my people!"

I joked with friends who asked me about my job at Shepherd Center, "Who knew my ability to talk to strangers in grocery stores

would be valued anywhere?" That's pretty much what I do — talk to strangers all day. And I love it. I love the purpose that we have here, and being able to help people.

What are some of the biggest challenges of your role?

The hardest thing is whenever I have to tell somebody no. I don't like telling people no, but occasionally that's the answer. For example, we can't give people rides to and from the airport. We're not too far, but it would be too much for our volunteers to ask them to pick up and drop off people at the airport. Another challenge is helping people get used to our area. A significant number of our patients and families are from rural areas, and they haven't spent an extended amount of time in the city before. That can be intimidating and nerve-racking.

This isn't necessarily a challenge, but another difficult thing I face is seeing how patient family members and caregivers are usually the hardest on themselves. One time, I was helping a woman who was almost in tears because she couldn't remember how to attach something in an email. She kept saying she felt stupid, and I had to say, "You're not stupid, you're tired." I try to help them be kind to themselves because they're sleep deprived, they're stressed out, and they're receiving tons of information. It's not the best example, but it's almost like when you have a baby for the first time. You're learning all this stuff, and you're waking up every few hours. When I say this to parents I'm working with, they go "Oh yeah," because every parent remembers how exhausting that was, and I hope it helps them be a little kinder to themselves in their current circumstances.

What else is unique about your role at Shepherd Center?

I absolutely love what I do. Every now and then, I have a family member or patient who will come say goodbye to me before they leave. I am so honored that they think of me to do that. I just love this place. I



Education

- Studio Arts Major, University of Georgia
- Bachelor of Arts in Film & Media, Studio Arts Minor, Georgia State University

Fun Facts

- Rebecca is very creative, in her words, "a jack of all trades and a master of nothing." She enjoys mediums ranging from crochet to drawing to film editing.
- Rebecca can talk to anyone and usually does. "If I'm talking too much and you need to leave, you better tell me," she jokes.
- She went back to school at 41 years old to finish her bachelor's degree with two kids (a nine-year-old son and seven-month-old baby girl) and a supportive husband at home during COVID-19.

really do. The fact that we even have a role like mine — I think Shepherd is pretty unique in having that. I think it's because we were started by a family who had to travel hundreds of miles for their son's care. They knew what it was like to be far from home. All those little things we provide, I can't help but think they stem from their own personal experience.

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Parenting with Purpose

Shepherd Center Helps Parents Be the Best They Can Be

Parenthood is never without challenges. But parents coming through Shepherd Center are often facing challenges they never imagined – caring for a child with a traumatic injury or navigating a lifelong diagnosis of their own.

At Shepherd, no effort is spared in helping families through recovery. Clinical treatments and therapy programs can help patients make progress medically, but resources like family housing, psychological and chaplaincy services, and community outings can help families adjust to a new lifestyle, build confidence, and prepare for the future together.

By Erin Kenney

Illustrations by Cate Kennedy



'An Honor to Care for Him'

Rebecca and Justin Goldman Support Their Son in the Wake of Injury

When Rebecca and Justin Goldman were at Shepherd Center with their son Graham, a 17-year-old completing rehabilitation for a traumatic brain injury, one feeling buoyed them — joy.

For someone unfamiliar with Shepherd Center, that may read like a typo. It's hard to imagine feeling joyful in the wake of such tragedy.

But for Rebecca and Justin, and hundreds of other patients and caregivers who've experienced recovery at Shepherd Center, joy was just part of the process. Of course, they also experienced grief and anxiety during Graham's four-month hospital stay. But with the support of their family and friends, church community, hospital staff, and the other patients and families on their hall, they were able to delight in the small victories — at first, Graham's small movements and words, at times slurred, but spoken all the same.

The Goldman family, made up of Rebecca, Justin, and their three children — Graham, Jake, and Shelby Kate, lives in Madison, Mississippi. They're an active bunch, enjoying traveling and camping together. Graham is especially active — he competed in tennis, football, track, and

cross-country for his high school. He took up cycling about three years ago.

In cycling, Graham found drive, passion, and a welcoming community. He enjoyed road and gravel races with

his dad — and the sport brought the pair closer together. Justin had coached many of Graham's sports teams as he was growing up, but through cycling, he began to see his son as a peer.

"That's when our relationship really began the transition from more of a traditional father-son to almost more of a friend," he says. "I mean, we got really, really close."

Cycling helped Graham build confidence and endurance, as well as a new support



system. The weekend before he sustained his injury, he completed a 60-mile race. But then on April 28, 2025, he was in a serious biking accident, resulting in a traumatic brain injury.

Right away, Graham's parents knew they wanted to get Graham to Shepherd Center for rehabilitation. A friend from church had been to Shepherd a couple of years prior, and they felt the hospital would provide Graham with the care he needed to succeed, despite being five hours away from Madison.

Rebecca's parents, who are retired, stepped in to care for Jake and Shelby Kate, promising her that "they would be there as long as they were needed," she recalls. After weeks in the ICU, she and Graham made the journey to Atlanta, where Graham began his rehabilitation, and she settled in at the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences. Thanks to a supportive company allowing him to adjust his schedule, Justin was able to travel to Atlanta frequently throughout Graham's recovery.

"That was a really trying time for me because there was no rest," Justin remembers. "I would come back and work hard and try to take care of our other kids, and then I flew [back to Atlanta] weekly because I couldn't afford the time to drive. I had to instantly get in the game and be refreshed and ready to stay in the room with Graham."

When Justin was at Shepherd, he got involved in Graham's therapy sessions. He says that encouraging his son in therapy wasn't much different than cheering him on in sports or cycling — with Graham's athlete mindset, Justin knew he was capable of overcoming hard things. Working alongside Shepherd Center's therapists helped on that front, Justin says.

"[Graham's therapists] were phenomenal ... both on the therapy side as well as the joy and the smiles and the morale champions that they were to keep us uplifted," Justin says.

And while Rebecca gives Justin credit for being Graham's "biggest cheerleader" in therapy, he says his wife played a much larger role in their son's recovery.



Rebecca often spent the night with Graham in his hospital room, learning from his nurses and therapists how to care for him medically.

"The staff, the nurses, and the therapists were so great to teach us — to empower us to be able to do some of the things so that we were able to help him instead of always having to call a nurse or a therapist for help," Rebecca says. "It was an honor to care for him in the ways that we were."

Now, Graham is back home with his siblings and back to school part-time. He does outpatient therapy each week and continues to improve day by day. Rebecca and Justin aren't sure what the future may hold, but that hasn't stopped Graham from making plans of his own.

"We actually went back to Shepherd in the last week of December, and he saw all of his favorite therapists there that he thinks are all legends, and he loves them dearly," Justin says. "He saw them, and he said, 'I want to be a physical therapist. I want to be a PT, and I want to work at Shepherd.'"

"My wife is very humble and kind. She carried the lion's share, of course," he says. "I thank the Lord for giving us resiliency and energy [to care for Graham during his recovery]. I look back at it now, and I'm like, 'How in the world did I do that? And how in the world did my wife do that, when I wasn't there?' She was carrying that burden by herself."

Rebecca stayed by Graham's side throughout his recovery. Friends from back home often came to Shepherd to visit, sometimes dropping in because they said they were in the area, only for Rebecca and Justin to learn they were visiting Chattanooga or Birmingham. They were willing to drive the extra hours just to support Graham and his family.



‘Lift Yourself Up’

Tachiana Ingram and Her Daughter Learn to Navigate Her Multiple Sclerosis

Tachiana Ingram’s parenthood journey has been intertwined with another important journey in her life — navigating multiple sclerosis (MS).

Her first symptoms appeared when she was pregnant with her daughter in 2006. Her vision would blur, and at times, go dark completely.

“I watched all the episodes of [A Baby Story on TLC], read all the books. I was that person — did all the research, and probably scared myself more than needed,” she reflects on her pregnancy. “So, it completely threw me because going blind was not one of the things that was on my checklist [of pregnancy symptoms].”

She went to a specialist who eased her worries. While rare, vision issues can be a pregnancy complication, he said.

She gave birth to her daughter, Adia Sims, in 2006. But her vision problems and other severe symptoms continued on and off for years, leading her to the emergency

room. Doctors would run MRIs, CT scans, and ultrasounds, but the tests never offered the answers they were looking for.

Eventually, she got a referral to Shepherd Center, where doctors in the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute confirmed that Tachiana had MS. It was October 2015, nearly 10 years after her symptoms appeared.

By that time, her symptoms made her give up many of the things she loved — baking, running, and traveling with her daughter. She used a walker to get around, and in her initial consultation at Shepherd Center, she struggled to walk at all. But that was all about to change.

“Finally, I was somewhere where people actually understand, and they know what’s going on,” she says. “Within my first three or four treatments, my vision started to get better.”

She began intensive physical therapy to rebuild her strength, and the MS staff gave her tools to keep improving at home in between sessions. But even as her symptoms improved, Tachiana had a long journey in front of her, including helping Adia understand her condition.

“I think her biggest [concern] was, ‘There’s no cure, are you going to die?’” Tachiana remembers. “That just broke me hearing her say that.”

Tachiana encouraged Adia to ask questions about her MS, as well as to voice her feelings when she was scared or upset. She made Adia appointments with a therapist so she could freely discuss her feelings. And she made it a point to show Adia some of the realities of living with MS.

“I also had to teach myself to stop hiding my episodes or symptoms when I was feeling bad, so she could get a better understanding and get comfortable with seeing me like that,” she says.

Today, Tachiana and her daughter are back to doing many of the things they love: cooking and baking, going on trips, and living an active lifestyle.

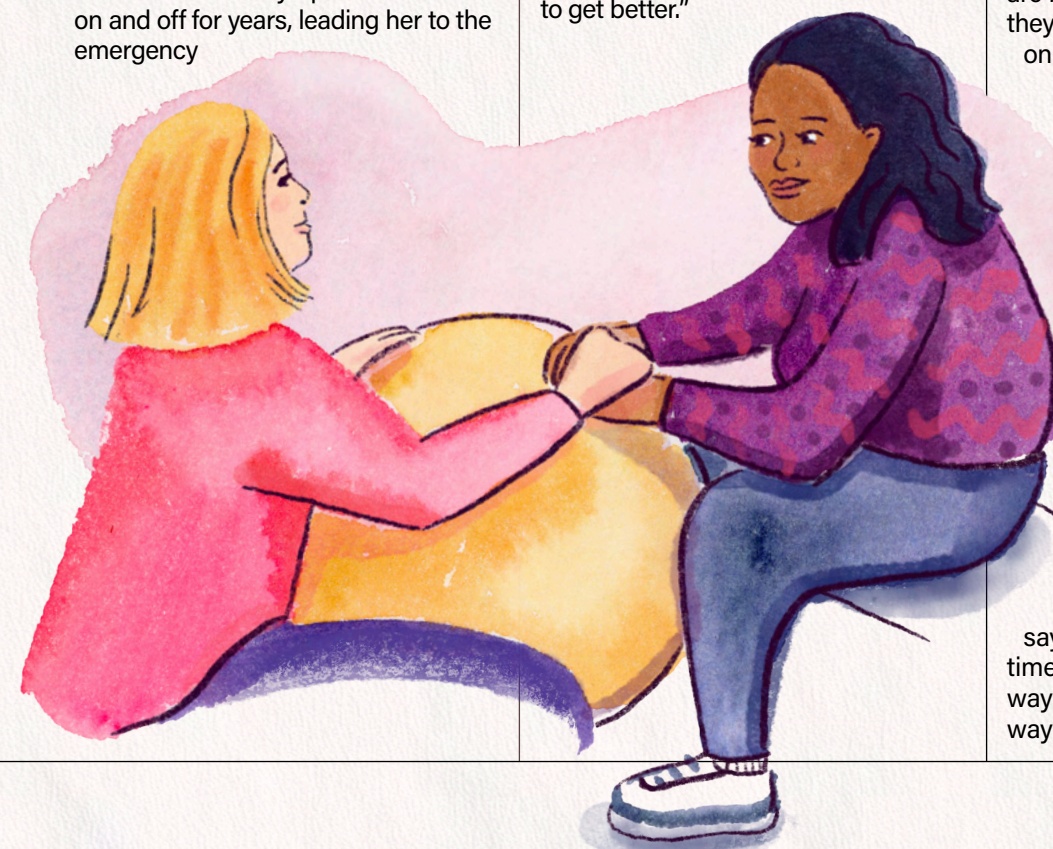
She emphasizes that it’s taken time for them to get to this point, something she encourages other parents with MS to embrace.

“Be patient, give yourself some grace, try to be as positive as you can,” she says. “It’s okay to ask for help ... lift yourself up just as much as you lift your kids.”

And for children with parents who have MS, Adia, now 19, has some advice too.

“It can be hard or confusing to understand, but the best way is to take it slow.

It’s okay to ask questions,” she says. “It’s going to be hard, but over time you’ll get used to it and find ways to help with it and find better ways to cope with it.”



'A New Man'

Marine Mark Koerner Turned to SHARE to Reconnect with his Family

From the outside looking in, everything was going right for Marine 1st Sgt. Mark Koerner.

He'd had an accomplished career in the Marine Corps — he was the most senior member of his unit at Parris Island, South Carolina — and he had a loving wife and two young children.

But not everything was going right.

"A lot of things happened during my 20 years [in the Marines] that led up to me really having a hard time in South Carolina," he remembers. "My symptoms just kept getting worse and worse, quality of life getting worse, and [I didn't] understand what was going on with me. From an outsider's perspective, I appeared

to be so blessed — and I was, and I still am — but why couldn't I be present in that?"

He remembers feeling distracted, gaining weight, experiencing drinking problems, and generally feeling off. He did what he could to change things — scheduling surgeries he'd once pushed off, seeing behavioral health specialists at the Naval Hospital, quitting drinking. But a bad relapse pushed him over the edge.

His first stop was Emerald Coast Behavioral Hospital in Florida, where he got help with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and

substance abuse. Things were already looking up when he got back, and then he caught up with a friend who'd recently been to SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center, a comprehensive rehabilitation program for veterans, service members, and first responders with traumatic brain injuries and mental health concerns. Mark applied to the program and was accepted.

"I wasn't sure what to expect when I was going there, all I knew really

I
NEEDED
MORE
HELP

was what [my friend] had told me about his experience there," Mark says. "It just seemed like the next logical step for me to continue getting help that I needed before I took that giant leap and hung up the uniform."

Mark's time at SHARE was unlike anything he had ever experienced. He was surprised to find that he had a say in his treatment plan, and while some days were difficult, he fully committed to the program. He had made sacrifices to be there — leaving behind his family and

his unit — so he gave it his all. It was worth it.

"It just all worked so well together that I honestly felt like I was a new man when I left there," he says. "I was able to come back and face life, and it's not like any problems disappeared, but my ability to manage them was almost effortless compared to how I felt prior to SHARE."

He doesn't point to one specific kind of therapy as the tool that gave him his life back. Instead, it was the combination of everything — memory exercises, recreation therapy outings, Wednesday night cookouts, staying in the apartments with his peers, and the genuine kindness from the program staff.

When he returned to his unit after his time at SHARE, he was transparent with them about where he had been and why.

"It was a little hard to go back after being gone for so long, I'm sure [there were] a lot of rumors, a lot of younger Marines saying, 'Hey, where did the First Sergeant go?'"

"I told them exactly where I lived, where I was. I didn't expect it to happen, but after I was so transparent with them, I had a lot of Marines wanting to talk to me because they were going through things that were very similar to what I was going through, and I was able to help them through a lot of it and pointed them to resources and just gave them my experience and my advice."

Mark retired from the Marines in 2024, after 20 years of service and seven deployments across the country and the world. He's now a first-year apprentice in the International Union of Operating Engineers in Ohio, where his family has a home, his wife Abby has a job, and their boys are in school.

"When I'm home, I can be present with the boys. I'm not wrestling with all the distractions, many of them self-made, that I once was," he says. "I'm able to wake up every day and be grateful for all the blessings in my life."

"There's always problems in life, and nothing ever works out perfectly. I continue to run across them, but it's nothing that's insurmountable, and home life is very much improved."



‘Everything I’ve Wanted’

Megan Collins Bordon’s Motherhood Journey Post-Spinal Cord Injury

Megan Collins Bordon, like many moms, is no stranger to multitasking.

One January morning, when reached by phone for an interview, she worked away on a to-do list while her 11-month-old, Wyatt, was down for a nap. Thirty minutes later, she’d gotten him up and out of his crib, getting ready to nurse him.

“Everything I’ve wanted from [the experience of being a mom], we’ve been able to do,” she says. “I feel really blessed about that.”

Megan and her husband, Adrian Bordon, welcomed Wyatt in February 2025, seven years after she sustained a spinal cord injury (SCI) after running off the road in her car. After two months in the ICU, she came to Shepherd Center for the SCI rehabilitation program. She moved from the inpatient program to the SCI Day Program to outpatient therapy, before ultimately moving from Tennessee to Atlanta to stay close to her new Shepherd community.

She found an apartment, enrolled in graduate school, and started a full-time office position at Shepherd Center — milestones she credits to her rehab at Shepherd.

“Shepherd from the start gave me the tools to adapt in any kind of environment,” she says. “Because of the wheelchair skills and social skills and confidence that I’d built at Shepherd, I felt like I could navigate any situation.”

Megan points to recreation therapy and peer support as crucial

components of her recovery. The programs taught her how to navigate life post-injury, including the Atlanta dating scene. Less than two years after her injury, she met her husband, Adrian.

The two married and moved to Charleston, South Carolina, where they began a new chapter in their life. Megan got pregnant in 2024 and began calling different OB-GYN practices to find a doctor who had experience with SCI patients. Luckily, she did.

During her relatively smooth, though still considered high-risk pregnancy, she hoped to have an unmedicated, natural birth. But she



ultimately ended up delivering via a C-section (due to standard labor complications, not as a result of her SCI).

“My support system, asking the right questions, being well educated about my diagnosis and my care, all of that really contributed to a good [pregnancy and delivery] experience for me,” she says.

Since bringing Wyatt home, Megan has adapted to every challenge with help from a dedicated support system. Sarah Dubois, PT, DPT, one of her physical therapists from Shepherd, had her first baby just four months before Megan, making her uniquely suited to offer advice and support.

Megan also met two other Charleston-based mothers who use wheelchairs through her OB-GYN. Her friends and family round out her support network, helping with everything from Costco trips to replying to late-night texts.

As Wyatt neared his first birthday in February, Megan reflected on his first year.

“Especially in the beginning, I was so scared about what everything would look like. Once I got into it, I would be fine,” she says. “When he started crawling, I was terrified, but after two days of crawling, I was like, ‘Oh okay, this is the same thing, but harder.’”

She sometimes gets asked how she’ll keep up with Wyatt once he’s walking and running, but her answer is simple: the same way any mother would.

“[I’ll] follow him around. Wyatt is just going to have to learn that mommy can’t [always] chase after him, and he needs to be safe and be careful and listen,” she says. “A lot of that is just going to be up to me and Adrian as parents to teach him.”



While each new phase presents its own challenges, she especially looks forward to some milestones, like their first flight as a family of three, hearing Wyatt form his first full sentences, and navigating the beach for the first time. But in the meantime, she is savoring every moment. *

For more information on resources for patients and families, visit shepherd.org/admissions/patient-experience. And to hear more from these featured parents, visit their profiles on page 37.

Making the Most of a 'Difficult Detour'

After having a stroke, Denell Davis worked hard to regain her independence and pursue her passions.

By Ruth Underwood

Denell Davis describes herself as curious and goal-driven — someone who enjoys exploring, traveling, and learning new things. She spent a decade in marketing, a career she says never felt like a job because she loves it. Then, five years ago, at age 34, Denell had a stroke. She calls it a “difficult detour” in life, but not the end of the road.

After her stroke, Denell, who lives in Atlanta, had brain surgery at Wellstar Kennestone Regional Medical Center in Marietta, Georgia. Then she transferred to Shepherd Center's inpatient Stroke Rehabilitation Program. In addition to cognitive challenges, she had difficulty swallowing, weakness in her left arm, and had to re-learn how to stand, walk, and dress herself.

“My left arm was totally contracted and could not move at all. And I remember being in the bed, just staring at my arm like, ‘Come on, come on,’” she says. “I was nervous because there was a big question mark. I didn't really quite understand what happened or what was going on.”

Shepherd staff helped put her at ease, though.

“The environment here at Shepherd was very warm. The first nurse that I met, I'm still in contact with her to this day. Everyone was very compassionate. It's like their heart goes out

“Recognizing how much things had changed [was challenging], I thought that if I could work really hard, I could just push past the barrier and, you know, once your brain is damaged, your brain is damaged — there's no pushing past certain things — you could work around things, but ... some things are the way they are, and so that was a bit tricky.”

She recalls her first outing — a trip to a Chick-fil-A just down the street from the hospital.

“I remember being extremely emotional because I was deeply insecure about how the stroke had changed me,” she says. “[My recreation therapist] taught me how to cross the street and how to feel confident in my own body as I was out in the community as my new self. And so it was a small outing, but it meant a lot to me.”

In therapy, Denell worked on moving from sitting to standing position, walking, and learning to compensate for her visual-spatial challenges.

After graduating from inpatient rehabilitation, Denell went to Shepherd Pathways, Shepherd's outpatient brain injury rehabilitation program, to continue therapy.

She says Shepherd prepared her well for life after discharge, giving her the tools she needed for success.

While at Shepherd Pathways, Denell learned about Side by Side Brain Injury Clubhouse, a day program for people who have sustained a brain injury. Her therapists urged her to give it a try.

“I'm so glad they recommended that to me because I find a lot of personal fulfillment at Side by Side,” she says.

Denell visits Side by Side twice a week, where she spends much of her time working in their business unit, which allows her to flex her marketing skills. She has also helped organize group gatherings — getting people together is another passion. And she returns to Shepherd in a peer support role for Side by

Side's game days at the hospital, playing board games with current patients with brain injuries.

“It's really important for me to share my experience with others because I feel like I was able to keep my voice for a reason,” she explains.

She has moved back into the home she lived in before her stroke. Now, her brother's family lives with her, which means she gets lots of time with her baby nephew.

“He is just a joy. He's a ball of sunshine,” she says.

Denell is hoping to take a trip to Mexico City for her 40th birthday, a trip she had planned to take when she turned 35.

“My plan was to be in Mexico City with a group of girlfriends and family to celebrate my 35th birthday. And I ended up celebrating that birthday at Shepherd Center, as I'd had my stroke a few weeks prior to my birthday,” she explains. “I

was a bit disappointed not to be in Mexico City, but I was happy to be having a birthday. And so, when I turn 40, that will be my redemption trip in Mexico City. And I'll be eating all the delicious elote that my heart could desire.”

To hear Denell's story in her own words, check out her Stories of Hope video interview at shepherd.org/stories-of-hope.



Denell during rehabilitation at Shepherd (left) and working at Side by Side (right).

“It's really important for me to share my experience with others because I feel like I was able to keep my voice for a reason.”

— Denell Davis

to you because they know you've been through this devastating, life-altering thing. It's not that they pity you, but they love you.

They didn't just treat me like a person with a brain injury. They treated me like an intelligent person with something to say,” she explains. “I appreciated that because a lot of times with a brain injury, people treat you like you're dumb, and I'm not dumb, and I don't want to be treated that way.”

And that support was important as she came to terms with her injury.

Denell speaks at a Side By Side Brain Injury Clubhouse event.

Shepherd Alums:

Hope in Healing

By Sara Baxter and Damjana Alverson

Christy Cogley | Fayetteville, Georgia
Patient, Complex Concussion Clinic



Christy Cogley sustained a concussion – her tenth – on June 25, 2025, after a fall. Past concussions had been caused mainly by sports injuries and she usually recovered quickly. But this one was different. Her symptoms lingered and worsened. Her headaches were more severe. She found herself stuttering, forgetting names and general information, and experiencing vision problems. After two trips to the emergency department, she was diagnosed with a severe concussion. With no relief, Christy was beginning to feel despair. Completing everyday tasks was a challenge. Then, her primary care doctor recommended

Shepherd Center's Complex

Concussion Clinic. In July 2025, she

met with Russell Gore, M.D., the clinic's medical director. That meeting changed everything. She felt heard, and no one minimized her symptoms. After working with Dr. Gore and the therapists at the Complex Concussion Clinic, Christy's symptoms have improved dramatically. Her headaches are less frequent, and her balance and vision have improved. She continues to visit the clinic to work with an occupational therapist.

“Dr. Gore spent 45 minutes just listening and educating me on the science of concussions. He saw me as a whole person, not just somebody with a concussion. He was so patient, so kind, and gave me science-based information. I left there feeling so much better.”

Josh Russo | Charlottesville, Virginia
Graduate, SHARE Military Initiative



“SHARE allowed me to step back and understand what was happening and identify clear pathways to navigate through it. I had never experienced that level of care and client-focused continuity of care that I experienced there. It's a world-class program.”

When **Josh Russo** was preparing to retire from the military in 2024, he was struggling. Neuropathy in his right leg was so debilitating and painful that he had required a wheelchair, and he was experiencing depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideations. After 21 years in the Army, most of it spent in special operations, he knew he needed help. A nurse case manager recommended the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center, a comprehensive rehabilitation program for service members, veterans, and first responders. He spent eight weeks working on pain management, physical mobility, and learning how to regulate his emotions. By the end of the program, Josh felt physically and mentally stronger and ready for his next chapter: retirement from the military and a new job in consulting, which has opened the door to entrepreneurial opportunities.

“[My family] all came away with a better understanding of my symptoms and ways we could work as a team in managing everything.”

Keylan Watkins | Chattanooga, Tennessee
Graduate, Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program

Keylan Watkins, 15, is a freshman in high school. He loves hanging out with friends and his job running the scoreboard for basketball games in the Chattanooga Parks and Recreation Department, where his mom LaToya also works. But three years ago, their lives were turned upside down after Keylan sustained a traumatic brain injury in an all-terrain vehicle accident. After being in the

“[The adolescent program] was fun and took my mind off of what I was going through.”
— Keylan Watkins



pediatric intensive care unit at Erlanger Hospital for 35 days, he and his mom arrived at Shepherd Center. Doctors initially were unsure of Keylan's prognosis, but at Shepherd, the Watkins found hope. The Adolescent Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program gave Keylan the tools he needed to come off his feeding tube and walk, talk, and eat again, and eventually return to his home and school.

“I loved everything about Shepherd Center. It was such a family atmosphere. I tell everyone it is an amazing place and they create miracles.”

— LaToya Watkins

Teona Osbourne | Dallas, Georgia
Client, Community-Based Programs



Thanksgiving 2020 started like normal for **Teona Osbourne**, 36, a teacher at a daycare. But when she was getting ready to start cooking, she couldn't move her legs. After months of testing didn't reveal the cause of her paralysis, Teona decided to move forward the best she could, at first with physical therapy at Emory University Hospital. Her team referred her to Shepherd for more specialized care, and since, she's participated in several of the hospital's community-based programs: the Driving Evaluation and Rehabilitation Program, exercising in the ProMotion Fitness Center, and recreation therapy clinics. With support from Shepherd Center, Teona was able to get back to her routine as a busy mom and even go back to school to finish her degree.

“I feel stronger and way more independent. The Shepherd team, and especially my main therapist, Drew Oswald, worked around my school schedule. They wanted me to graduate. I'd be working out, and my therapist would help with my homework. They saw the whole me, not just the patient me.”

“I'm strong-minded. I tell my students, if Ms. T didn't give up, you can't either! Now I say that to everybody. Keep pushin'.”

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

Local Service Group Brings Warmth to Patients with Handmade Blankets



By Erin Kenney

For Joanne Newman, community service coordinator for the Vinings Village Women's Club (VVWC), summertime is the perfect time to stock up on a staple for her community service projects: fleece.

She buys yards of fleece — solid, patterned, colorful — while it's on sale in the warmer months. Come winter, she'll get together with volunteers from VVWC and cut it into rectangles with slits down the sides, before bringing the fabric to Teasley Elementary School, where fifth graders tie the fringe together, the last step in creating lap blankets VVWC then donates to Shepherd Center patients.

Leading up to the blanket-making, Joanne explains Shepherd Center's mission to the students, giving them some context about the patients they are helping. She also occasionally drops off Spinal Column magazines for the students to peruse.

"[One edition] happened to have pictures of the [facility] dogs. So, I encouraged them to draw pictures of the dogs helping the patients," Joanne says. "I feel like I am opening their eyes to something they don't know much about

at that age. We as adults are very proud that we have Shepherd Center in Atlanta, but I think most of the kids don't know that."

After the kids finish the blankets, volunteers from VVWC carefully prepare each blanket for Shepherd Center. They wash and fold them, add them to an extra large Ziploc bag with a Valentine's Day card (also handmade by the students) and a permanent marker — each blanket has a blank name tag, so the recipient can personalize it with the marker if they choose.

Joanne calls the blanket making project, which VVWC has been doing in partnership with Shepherd Center for four years, "a win-win." It benefits Shepherd Center patients, while also getting kids involved in community service.

"One of our club philosophies is that we want to bring community service projects into the elementary schools," she says. "We always write [the students] a thank you note afterwards, and hope that they realize they did something very nice that day. I always tell them, 'Try to do something good every day.'"

► (Clockwise from left) Stephany Sancé Hornberger, Shepherd's volunteer coordinator, receives the blanket donation at Shepherd Center. ► Two VVWC volunteers finish up some blankets. ► In addition to working on blankets, students make Valentine's Day cards for Shepherd Center patients. ► Members of Vinings Village Women's Club pose with finished blankets.



Photos Courtesy of VVWC

The blankets have benefitted patients across treatment programs, from those in inpatient rehabilitation to those receiving outpatient care in the Andrew C. Carlos Multiple Sclerosis Institute. The blankets are specially designed to be narrower, to reduce the risk of getting caught in wheelchair mechanisms, and they bring a bright spot to patients during dreary Georgia winters. Joanne, who's been involved with VVWC for 44 years, credits her team of volunteers and her assistant, Margaret Hathaway, with helping her with the project year after year.

"These projects would not happen without the number of wonderful volunteers in this organization," she says. "I mean it's all volunteers, and all I have to say is, 'We've got a project for Shepherd Center,' and I have more volunteers than I need." *

Food & Wine Event Benefits Shepherd Center



Members of Cuvée Society, which runs the Cuvée Cares event each year.

2026 Cuvée Cares Benefit Raises \$35,000 for Hospital

Cuvée Cares' annual three-day food and wine benefit offers attendees all of the perks of an exclusive food and wine festival: chances to meet and mingle with vintners and exclusive buying opportunities for fine wines, a five-course ladies luncheon, a wine tasting event at Chastain Horse Park, and curated dinners at iconic Atlanta destinations.

And this year, Shepherd Center was honored to be one of the event's beneficiaries.

Cuvée Cares is a non-profit dedicated to providing toast-worthy events that raise funds and awareness for Atlanta-based charities and foundations. Born out of Cuvée Society, Cuvée Cares is the wine group's way to give back to the community.

The three-day celebration of food and drink began on Thursday, March

19, with the Tête de Cuvée Dinners. Restaurants, Chops and Mission+Market, and private clubs, The Perlant and Warhorse/Seahorse, each hosted two to three vintners along with event attendees. Attendees also had unique buying opportunities from the featured vintners, who represented wines made in California, Italy, Spain, and France.

On Friday, the Ladies Luncheon celebrated women in the food and wine industry. Convening at KR SteakBar, 80 attendees enjoyed a five-course meal prepared by five female chefs, with five featured female vintners providing wine pairings. Festivities continued into an after-party and dinner.

The event concluded Saturday with Cuvée Cares' annual tasting event at Chastain Horse Park.

Representatives from nearly 30 wineries were onsite to share offerings with guests, which were complemented by hors d'oeuvres from Avenue Catering. The wineries offered exclusive, direct availability, with local retailers on hand for additional purchase opportunities.

The funds raised for Shepherd Center will go toward the Recreation Therapy Program. The largest program of its kind in the country, the program creates opportunities for Shepherd Center patients and community members to rediscover their passions and purpose after injury or illness. The donor-funded program coordinates outings for patients in inpatient rehabilitation programs and beyond, helping people reach their goals and create new experiences.

A Salute to Valor

Legendary Kickoff Party Introduces SHARE Military Initiative as 2026 Fundraising Recipient

Every year, The Legendary Party, Shepherd Center's iconic end-of-year fundraising gala, raises money and awareness for Shepherd Center programming. At this year's Kickoff Party on March 17, gala chairs Jim and Linda Balkcom announced the beneficiary for this year's event: the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center. The Balkcoms have been long-time supporters of Shepherd Center — Jim as a two-term Trustee of the Foundation Board and Linda as a member of Women Shaping Shepherd. Jim was a United States Military Academy West Point graduate and is a US Army Ranger veteran, so SHARE is especially meaningful to the Balkcoms.

SHARE is a comprehensive rehabilitation program for service members, veterans, and first responders with brain injuries and mental health concerns. Program staff provide services at no cost to clients, using grants and donated funds to offer life-changing care. All proceeds from this year's Legendary Party will support these efforts.

To familiarize event attendees with the program, Russell Gore, M.D., medical director of SHARE Military Initiative, spoke about the program's offerings and impacts on clients. Aaron Blevins, a SHARE graduate, also shared his personal experiences with the program and its transition support program, which provides guidance and support for one year after SHARE.

The event also introduced this year's honoree, The Home Depot Foundation. It will be recognized this November for its commitment to helping SHARE clients. In addition to contributing over \$4.5 million to Shepherd Center programs over the past 18 years, the foundation has volunteered with SHARE clients and provided return-to-work opportunities to program graduates.

The Legendary Party, A Salute to Valor, will be held Nov. 7 at Flourish Atlanta. For sponsorship or ticketing information, email Saylor Petrie at saylor.petrie@shepherd.org.



(above) SHARE graduate Aaron Blevins spoke to the crowd about his personal experiences with the program.

► (below) This year's ball chairs, Jim and Linda Balkcom, announced the theme for the gala.



Photo by Atta Junior

Junior Committee Increases Annual Fundraising Goal

Shepherd Center Junior Committee Back for Its 2026 Fundraising Year

On March 5, Shepherd Center's Junior Committee (SCJC) held its first event of the year at Buckhead Art & Company's new location. The event welcomed new members to the organization and introduced the new executive committee, with many members serving in leadership roles for the first time this year. Jennifer Pierson, granddaughter of late hospital co-founder Dr. David Apple, now serves at the helm with co-president Lily Chubb.

"It's easy to get folks excited about such a great cause because the results of the program speak for themselves — patients really do leave recreation therapy empowered and enabled to jump right back into doing the things they love," Chubb says. "Jennifer and I are honored to get to lead such a great committee, and we look forward to the year ahead."

Guests enjoyed food, drinks, music, and art on display at the gallery, as well as hearing from guest speakers Stephanie and Greg Payne. Stephanie has a rare disease called X-linked myotubular myopathy, which causes muscle weakness and balance problems. When a fall resulted in her shattering her L-1 vertebrae, she came to Shepherd Center for the Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Rehabilitation Program.

Stephanie eventually transitioned into Beyond Therapy®, which she credits with giving her compensatory strategies to offset her balance issues and build strength. Stephanie and Greg also shared how, thanks in particular to recreation therapy, they've been able to continue doing the things they love most, like traveling together.

"I think it was good for new Junior Committee members to hear how with help from Shepherd Center, Stephanie and Greg are still able to travel," says Saylor Petrie, special event associate in the Shepherd Foundation. "Travel is such a big component of life that can make you feel independent and free. Stephanie and Greg shared how they still get to live this wonderful, kind of luxurious life, traveling and even going on a safari. People who aren't familiar with Shepherd Center may not even realize that is possible."

SCJC is a passionate group of young professionals dedicated to helping people with disabilities rebuild their lives with hope and dignity through fundraising, patient support, and community events. This year, they increased their fundraising goal to \$75,000, with all of the funds going to support Shepherd Center's Recreation Therapy Program, which helps

patients heal and grow through fun, adaptive activities and outings.

The group has a full slate of programming to help them meet their goal.

"We are excited for the year ahead with a full schedule of volunteer and patient engagement opportunities, member meetings on campus, member socials around Atlanta, and our marquee fundraising event in September, Shepherd Social," Chubb says. "This will be the second year that we run Shepherd Social, a Saturday afternoon band party where we'll have a raffle, silent auction, live music, food, and speakers to get folks excited about the amazing things recreation therapy is doing for Shepherd patients and families."

Shepherd Social is scheduled for Sept. 19 at Sweetwater Brewing Company. For more information, visit foundation.shepherd.org. And to learn more about guest speaker Stephanie's story, visit news.shepherd.org. **beyond-therapy-delivers-motivation-and-support. ***

clockwise from top: This year, the group welcomes new co-presidents, Lily Chubb and Jennifer Pierson. ► Shepherd Center Junior Committee held its annual kickoff at Buckhead Art & Company's new location. ► Stephanie and Greg Payne spoke at the event about their experiences at Shepherd Center, with a focus on recreation therapy.

Photo by Jennifer Pierson



Shepherd's Men Concert Series Welcomes

Country Star Trace Adkins



(From left) Shepherd's Men co-founder, Travis Ellis with Shepherd's Men members Carlos Ordoñez, Kelly Ezell, and Justin Ezell (USMC SGT MAJ, retired) ► Kelly and Toby Regal graciously hosted the event at their home in Atlanta. ► Trace Adkins with Shepherd Center co-founder Alana Shepherd, who was recognized at the event.

By April Wright, 524 Creative

On April 22, Shepherd's Men members and friends gathered under the stars for an unforgettable evening with Trace Adkins, coming together to raise awareness and critical support for the SHARE Military Initiative at Shepherd Center.

SHARE's mission is to honor clients' trust every day as it helps them go beyond traumatic brain injury, address mental health concerns, and find renewed purpose. SHARE helps veterans, service members, and first responders embrace the challenge, commit, and follow through, and live each day with purpose.

One of the most powerful moments of the night came as Adkins shared the story behind the song "Arlington" and then performed it. Hearing those words, written from the perspective of a fallen soldier laid to rest, brought a stillness over the evening. It was a powerful reminder of the cost of service, and of the responsibility we carry to those who have given the last full measure of devotion. During the concert, Adkins spoke about SHARE graduates and what they've endured, and he was brought to tears as he reflected on their experiences.

Attendees were also honored to hear from Moises Ortega, a SHARE graduate and United States Marine Corps veteran, who shared his story with honesty and courage. Ortega spoke about the injuries he carried home, the point where he nearly lost everything, and how SHARE changed the course of his life. Because of SHARE, he returned home to his family, not just physically, but as a father, a husband, and a man who found his way forward. His story is a reminder that this work at SHARE is lifesaving.

Attendees also recognized Shepherd Center co-founder, Alana Shepherd, whose vision and unwavering commitment created Shepherd Center, a place where healing for veterans and service members is possible. A special thank you to Donnie Reis for his moving rendition of the National Anthem on the fiddle, and to the 4th Combat Readiness Regiment, USMC, for the Presentation of Colors. These moments grounded the

evening in honor and respect for those who have served.

This event, alongside The Charlie Daniels Journey Home Project, continues to shine a light on the invisible wounds of war — traumatic brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental health concerns — and the critical role SHARE plays in helping those who have served heal.

A special thank you to David Corlew and his crew from the Journey Home Project, as well as the generous hospitality of Kelly and Toby Regal for hosting.

Photos by William Twitty

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 **Jan. 1, 2026 through March 31, 2026.**



In April, Shepherd Center celebrated its over 50 full-time occupational therapists, plus additional part-time staff, as part of Occupational Therapy Month. Thank you, OTs, for all you do!

Laura and Karl Anschutz
Ms. Esther L. Abisamra
Ms. Hope Abisamra
Mr. and Mrs. Greg Gersch

Florence Ansley
Mrs. Harrison W. Jones II

Mr. William Bonneau Ansley, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Thomas L. Bradbury
Mr. and Mrs. Keith W. Mason
Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. John D. Stephens

Dr. David "Dave" F. Apple, Jr.
Mrs. Meredith Lambe
Mr. and Mrs. Andrew K. Liggon
Mr. and Mrs. Jim McElroy
Mr. and Mrs. Dean Melcher
Ms. Alex R. Seblatnigg

Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd
Mr. and Mrs. Dell B. Sikes

Kevin Arthur
Mr. John Bodnar
Ms. Susan Cromie
Ms. Ellen Harrington
Ms. Mary C. Kubicz
Mrs. Dayna Nota
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Ms. Cynthia Wallentin

Allan Baer
Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Gibson

Dr. Bill Martin Bailey
Mr. and Mrs. Alan R. Yates

Melinda Baldwin
Mr. and Mrs. David Barry
Mr. Lewis Crenshaw

Claire Bartlett
Mr. Travis Ellis

Helen Batts
Mr. and Mrs. Alan Hunn

Duncan Beard
Mr. and Mrs. John W. Griffin
Mr. and Mrs. Richard F. Maddox, Jr.

Herschel Bloom
Mr. Fred V. Alias

Benjamin Bornstein
Mr. and Mrs. Chase Matthews
Ms. Linda Terrell
Treasured Memories Fine Portraiture

Colonel James S. Branch
Anonymous

Edgar Breda, Sr.
Mr. and Mrs. Bob Bushek
Ms. Kendra Carson
Ms. Cheryl Schaefer

Ralph Brooks
Anonymous
Ms. Emily Brewer
Mr. and Mrs. Danny Brown
Shepherd Center Board of Directors

Robert "Bobby" Brown
Anonymous
Ms. Gayle S. Barron
The Goddard Foundation
Mr. and Mrs. James W. Hamilton, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Horne
Mr. and Mrs. Brian Lesesne
Ms. Erin Pepus
Mr. Lee Rivas
Mr. and Mrs. Jeff Schneider
Mr. Gary Shell
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Mr. and Mrs. Winn Tutterow



For Earth Day, patients and staff went out on the Atlanta Beltline, picking up litter and enjoying the spring weather.

- Jim Bruce**
Mr. David Conrad
- Andrew Buehl**
Dr. Ramin Saghafi
- Jane Bullard**
Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.
- Kenneth Cabarle**
Mrs. Elizabeth Cabarle
Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Gesualdi
- Eula Carlos**
Mr. and Mrs. Omer W. Franklin
- Carolyn Caswell**
Mrs. Carter Smith, Jr.
- Marty Church**
Mrs. Martha J. Church
Mr. Leonard J. Oddo
- Henri Talmadge Dobbs III**
Mrs. Alana S. Shepherd
- Susan Ebersbach**
Mr. Randy J. Ebersbach
- David Ellis**
Mr. and Mrs. Jeremy A. Ellis
- Sandy Ergas**
Mr. and Mrs. Bill Casey

- Timothy "Tim" Evatt**
Ms. Catherine L. Bowie
Mr. Bob Cathey
Ms. Misti Fuentes
Ms. Mary Goodwin
Mr. and Mrs. Dan Randall
Mr. and Mrs. John R. Rankin III
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Mr. and Mrs. John B. Skinner
South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation
- James "Jim" Fitts**
Mr. and Mrs. John Traendly
- Matthew "Matt" Gonzales**
Ms. Sylvie Robillard
- Stephen Goot**
Mr. and Mrs. Michael N. Dresdner
- Scott Guinn**
Mrs. Maureen Gallagher
- George T. Gunnell**
Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) and Mrs. Victor Macias
- Dorothy "Randy" Hamil**
Mr. and Mrs. Keith W. Mason

- Sam Hendrickson**
Mrs. Connie L. Upton
- Mark Hodges**
Mrs. Patricia R. Hodges
Mr. Christopher L. Phillips
Mr. Frank A. Phillips
Mr. and Mrs. Joe M. Phillips
Ms. Savannah Phillips



Twenty-year-old Maggie Snyder poses with a piece she made during a pottery session at Shepherd Center.

- Janet & Joey James**
Mr. and Mrs. Doug Rainey
- Bert Jones**
Mrs. Gail B. Jones
- Dot Jones**
Mr. C. Calhoun Peterson
- Gleaton Jones**
Mrs. Cindy Mitchell
- Harrison Jones II**
Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Wilson II
- Oliver Jones**
Mr. and Mrs. Jim Hoskins
- Robert Lee Jones**
Mrs. Frances Jones
- Ann Kauffmann**
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Veeder
- Keith LeClaire**
Mr. Gerald LeClair
- Benjamin Lively**
Mr. Jerry Hendrix
- Yahaira Lopez Bauza**
Mr. Bruno Byer
- Lori Manuel**
Dr. Deborah H. Backus and Mr. Gerald L. Backus
Ms. Kathleen Benjamin
Mr. and Mrs. Norman Huggins
Ms. Jennifer Iddings
Ms. Kathy Kreger
Mr. and Mrs. David Lee
- Hedy M. Maus**
Ms. Claire Maddox
- Roddy Ken McGee**
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Ms. Carmen Alexis
Mr. Jack Collins
Mr. Eric Curry
Ms. Brenda DeRamus
Mr. F. Leon Hunter
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
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Anonymous
Mr. Benjamin Brock
Ms. Gloria Cobb
Mr. Jimmy Godwin
Ms. Rachael Hall

- Ms. Coreen Marks
Ms. Merrie McGrath
Scott Murray
Ms. Kathy Ruse
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Mr. and Mrs. Jim Moye
- Bartie and Oscar Plunket, Jr.**
Ms. Jane Plunket
- Thomas "Tom" Port**
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Massey
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
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Anonymous
- Lamar Polly**
Ms. Patricia Hewitt
- Robert Proctor**
Mr. and Mrs. Cal Ratcliff
- Shams Ramji**
Mr. Aleem Ramji
- Charles Risch**
Shepherd Center Board of Directors
Ms. Chelsea Welter
- Jack Rooker**
Mrs. William Dent Acree
Mr. Fred V. Alias
Anonymous
Buckhead Lions Club
Mr. Randolph Cardoza
Mr. and Mrs. Carlile M. Chambers
Dr. and Mrs. James Davis

- The Goddard Foundation
The Hodgson Charitable Trust
Mrs. Henrietta P. Jordan
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Mr. Fred Morton
Mrs. William M. Robertson
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Robinson Foundation
The Selig Foundation
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Mr. and Mrs. James M. Shepherd, Jr.
Mrs. Laura Smith Spearman
Mr. Clarence H. Taylor, Jr.
- Thomas "Tom" Scott**
Ms. Naomi Barnes
Mr. and Mrs. William C. Bell
Ms. Heather Boggess

Help Us Improve Spinal Column Magazine

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.





For Jacquayle “Joc” Butler, one goal after injury was to play at the park with his five-year-old daughter. On a spring recreation therapy outing, he made it happen.

Ms. Debbie DuBose
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Ms. Matilda Keiffer
Ms. Sara Knox
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Ms. Sharon Hiner-Franklin

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Ms. Julie H. Shepherd and
Mr. Andrew Louw

Mary Taylor
Ms. Maria Allen
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Mr. and Mrs. David K. Cassell, Sr.
Frito-Lay Site Perry, GA
Mr. and Mrs. Mark Johnson
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Arrow Exterminators, Inc.

Morgan Grace Wetherbee
Ms. Melody Wetherbee

Cliff Whitley
Ms. Jennifer Austin
Ms. Jennifer Brill
Ms. Stephanie Brooks
Corridor Church of Christ

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Ms. Corinne McKeown
Mr. Mike Register
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Nonie Youmans
Mr. and Mrs. Billy T. Kennedy

John Zarzycki
Ms. Diane Dooley
Mr. Brian Roper
Shepherd Center Board of Directors



The annual Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program Spring Fling was a success, with patients getting a chance to enjoy games and arts and crafts.

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 **Jan. 1, 2026 through March 31, 2026.**



The annual employee Field Day is more than fun and games – it lets team members let loose, recharge, and bond on another level.

Wesley Allen
Mr. James W. Varda

Marie Alexander
Ms. Ann Julien

David Andersen
Mr. and Mrs. Donald R. Andersen

Hunter Anderson
Mr. and Mrs. Andy Anderson

Apple Family
Mr. Gilmer G. Weston, Jr.

Cyndae Arrendale
Mr. and Mrs. Lige K. Sims

Keith Barnes
Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Townsend

Helen Bartelsmeyer
Mr. and Mrs. Price P. Woodward

Eric Bernath
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Kulbersh

Angela Blank
Ms. Martha C. Parrish

Brayden Blomquist
Ms. Gayle Rader
Mr. Robert L. Rader

Alex Bornstein
Ms. Rachelle Beaudoin

Peter Bourque
Mr. Rick Daly

Nell Bradbury's Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. Anthony K. Isbell

Pierre St. Brice
Mr. and Mrs. David R. Carten

Jenny Chambers' Birthday
Ms. Lisa Pickelsimer
Mr. and Mrs. James Stephens
Ms. Diane Williams

Jonathan Childree
Ms. Rene Childree

Samuel Colon
Lopez Family Foundation

Dr. Jon and Julie Commander
Ms. Susanne E. Shepherd

Michael Costanzo
Anonymous

Joyce Cox
Mr. and Mrs. Clayton Dyson

Robert Cunningham
Mr. and Mrs. James D. Marsteller
Mr. and Mrs. Wesley M. Marsteller

James Curtis
Mr. and Mrs. Brad Courts

Allan DaPore
Mr. Kevin Fitzgerald
Ms. Maria Holland-Law

Jerry Devores' 85th Birthday
Mr. and Mrs. Jay M. Davis

Joseph Dixon
Mr. and Mrs. Kyle Taylor



Atlanta Fire Station 38 surprised Jay Lankford, a patient and firefighter from Tennessee, with a visit at the hospital.

- John S. Dryman**
Mr. Tal Dryman III
- Emily Duke**
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Herndon
- Tricia Edwards**
Solomon Builders Inc.
- Travis Ellis**
Mr. William D. Hoyt
- Mary Epperson's Marriage**
Mr. and Mrs. Earl R. Epperson
- Will and Dana Ferniany**
Ms. Susanne E. Shepherd
- Edward Foulke**
Anonymous
- Kiley Gardner**
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Dilley
Mr. and Mrs. Todd Starks
- Read Gignilliat**
Anonymous
Mr. and Mrs. Price P. Woodward
- Rusty Gore and Team**
Ms. Nina Nakayama
- Adam Hewko**
Mrs. Anita K. Scarola
- Gary Herber**
Mr. and Mrs. Clay Prickett
- Audrey Grace Holder**
Mr. and Mrs. Byron Holder
- Justin Jones**
Mr. and Mrs. James D. Marsteller
Mr. and Mrs. Wesley M. Marsteller

- Carlyn Kappy**
Dr. Kathleen Lundquist
- Sarah Kelly**
Ms. Sherry Kelly
- Nathan Klein**
Dr. Carol L. Klein and Mr. Michael Larter
- Katie Kimball**
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen G. Waite
- Justin Maddox**
Mr. Rusty Maddox
- David Martin's Birthday**
Ms. Leander Gattis
Ms. Kathryn King
- David Martin**
Ms. Leander Gattis
Ms. Cynthia Smith
Ms. Nancy Marvin
- Rose McRae**
Ms. Paula Lockhart
- William "Will" Meadows**
Mr. and Mrs. Richard H. Meadows
- Kate Mitchell**
Mr. Joseph DelMedico
- George Mori**
Mr. and Mrs. John S. Mori
- Jean Morris**
Mr. and Mrs. Deane Morris
- Herndon and Wendy Murray**
Mr. and Mrs. Joseph V. Quarles

- Ryan Narramore**
Anonymous
- Janice and JB Nix**
Mr. and Mrs. Kent P. Smith
- Josh Ozley**
Mrs. Kim Ozley
- Stephanie Surbaugh Payne**
Mr. and Mrs. John G. Sample, Jr.
Mr. and Mrs. Jarrod Zurcher
- Dennis Prager**
Ms. Elaine Swobe and Mr. Jeffrey Hopper

- Jake Rogers**
Anonymous
Tayler Adams
Ms. Sarah Butters
Ms. Claire Coe
Ms. Angie Cosper
Ms. Tammy Cotton
Ms. Karen Davis
Ms. Karen Dearden
Ms. Susanne Dudley
Ms. Julie Anna Godwin
Ms. Sara Gonzalez
Ms. Camille Johnson
Ms. Susan Johnson
Ms. Natalie Kirbo



In March, Shepherd Center celebrated National Nutrition Month. Employees like Maddy Gonzalez make sure patients get healthy meals to support rehabilitation.

Save the Date

Upcoming Shepherd Events

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| RPM 9/11 5K
Sept. 12, 2026
<i>American Legion Post 140</i>
<i>Atlanta, Georgia</i> | Shepherd Social
Sept. 19, 2026
<i>Sweetwater Brewing Company</i>
<i>Atlanta, Georgia</i> | Soque Slam Fishing Invitational
Oct. 24, 2026
<i>Clarksville, Georgia</i> |
| Shepherd's Men Clay Shoot
Oct. 26, 2026
<i>The Burge Club</i>
<i>Mansfield, Georgia</i> | Shepherd Center Cup Golf Tournament
Nov. 2, 2026
<i>Cherokee Town & Country Club</i>
<i>Atlanta, Georgia</i> | The Legendary Party & Legendary Late Night
Nov. 7, 2026
<i>Flourish</i>
<i>Atlanta, Georgia</i> |

- Ms. Kristen Kirk
Ms. Jennifer Marvel
Kelly Meyer
Ms. Cindy Muir
Ms. Nan Nagy
Mr. Andrew Perrin
Ms. Pamela Perrin
Ms. Tanya Riggio
Mrs. Rachel Rogers and Mr. Brian Hughes
Ms. Lori Rosenberg
Ms. Amy Sanford
Unger Family Fund
Ms. Debra Wilson

- Dr. Bobby Smith**
Mr. and Mrs. George Gerakitis
- Elizabeth Smith**
Mr. and Mrs. James D. Marsteller
Mr. and Mrs. Wesley M. Marsteller
- Mary Taylor**
Mr. Jose Ayala
- Phillip Thrash**
Ms. Therese Sprinkle

- Gavin Tincher**
Mrs. Shelly Tincher
- Mark Vomund**
Ms. Jaquelin Crew
- Anne Vitkus's 100th Birthday**
Anonymous
Mr. James Vitkus
- Richard Ward**
Mr. and Mrs. H. Thomas Fuller

- Erin Whitty**
C & S Wholesale Grocery Co.
- Krissy Williams' Birthday**
Anonymous
- Tammy and Price Woodward**
Ms. Lee Bradway
- Elizabeth Zweigel**
Mr. and Mrs. Steven L. Zweigel

- John Rooker**
Mr. and Mrs. James D. Marsteller
Mr. and Mrs. Wesley M. Marsteller

- Grant Roth**
Judith A. Gettig

- Charles Schupp**
Mr. and Mrs. Michael Schupp

- Ashford Schwall**
Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Peterson, Jr.

- Alana Shepherd**
Mr. and Mrs. Donald W. Gillis, Esq.
Ms. Betsy Primm
Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Taylor IV

- Jamie Shepherd**
Mr. Ronald W. Boatright

- Bob Sidney**
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Sidney

- Paul Singh**
Mr. Scott Lange



SHARE Military Initiative clients Collin Tubbs, Corey Hickman, and Joe Merritt, along with volunteer Bruce Warren, join Thomas Miller for a music group at SHARE this spring.

Welcoming New Trustees

Shepherd Center welcomes five new members to its Foundation Board of Trustees

Members of the Foundation Board of Trustees offer invaluable support for Shepherd Center through their business expertise, civic engagement, and dedication to the hospital's patients and families. This year, the board welcomes five new members who will assist in setting development policies for Shepherd Center Foundation, the hospital's primary fundraising entity. Each new member has a history of involvement with Shepherd Center and a commitment to supporting its mission.

- » **Patricia Alias, Civic Volunteer**
- » **Robert Buck, Retired CEO, Beacon Roofing Supply**
- » **Catherine Humann Callaway, Advisor & Trustee, The Humann Family Foundation**
- » **Cory Jackson, Market President, Synovus**
- » **Ashley Shepherd, Civic Volunteer**

A special thank you to Foundation Board of Trustees members whose terms ended this year: Fred Henritze, Larry Kelly, Shane O'Kelly, Ron Stewart, and Mark West.

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 Callaway, 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

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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.

Parenting with Purpose

These parents, featured in the story starting on page 6, turned to Shepherd Center for the help they needed.

Mark Koerner, Dad and SHARE

Military Initiative Graduate



Northwest Ohio

"I was sad [when it was time to leave SHARE], but I was excited that I was feeling better. I was excited to be back with my family every day. And I was excited to carry forward the habits, and take the tips and the techniques, and continue to apply them and see where it was able to take me."



Rebecca and Justin Goldman,

Parents and Caregivers of Graham,

Brain Injury Program Graduate

Madison, Mississippi

"We were just always by [Graham's] side, and we felt included and were encouraged by the staff to come to all of his therapy sessions, which was nice. When you're in a situation like this, it's brand new to you ... [we loved] that the staff included [me and Justin]."

Tachiana Ingram, Mom and Patient in Multiple Sclerosis Institute



Warner Robbins, Georgia

"It was a journey of [my daughter and I] working through [my diagnosis]. We learned together. It most definitely made her stronger, made me stronger. And she's done phenomenal, a lot better than I probably would have at her age. But it most definitely made our relationship stronger."



Megan Collins

Bordon, Mom

and Spinal Cord

Injury Program

Graduate

Charleston, South Carolina

"The skills that I gained at Shepherd led me to feel like I could be a mother, and be a stay-at-home mother. I'm his primary caregiver day in and day out until my husband gets home from work, and there's not been anything that I cannot do with him."



Shepherd Center

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**“The skills that I
gained at Shepherd
led me to feel like I
could be a mother.”**

– Megan Collins Bordon

Megan Collins Bordon credits her time at Shepherd Center with giving her the skills she needs to navigate life with a spinal cord injury, from graduate school, to the Atlanta dating scene, to marriage and welcoming her first child.

Read more about how Shepherd Center supports parents and families beginning on **page 6**.