

# VOLUNTEER news

A newsletter for Shepherd Center Auxiliary & Volunteers

January 2024



## Volunteer Highlight - Nick Kelhofer

Nick Kelhofer has volunteered at Shepherd Center as a gym runner in our spinal cord injury (SCI) therapy gyms for more than a year. He even learned to sew at Shepherd, allowing him to make stretching loops for patients. He also added breakfast feeding to his schedule this summer and has enjoyed all these tasks.

Nick grew up in Johns Creek, Georgia, with parents who value compassion and education. His father is a pharmaceutical representative, and his mother is a homemaker. They taught him to have empathy for others and to serve his community. Although he has no siblings, he lived next door to five of his cousins — three boys and two girls. When it snowed one year, he remembers that they gathered all the snow they could to make a sled-worthy ramp. He also recalls staying with his grandparents in North Georgia during the summers. While he was with them, he enjoyed hiking and camping in the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Nick has always been interested in science and enjoys reading, so his father would buy him books on scientific subjects to support this passion. As a student, he was focused academically while also participating in sports, including football, lacrosse, and cross country. He shares, "I liked cross country because while you are racing against others, it's really a competition against your own past times, which makes everyone very supportive of one another." He enjoyed evaluating his performance and found satisfaction in his measurable improvements. Although he's not on a cross-country team now, he still likes making time for a run.

Nick's first experience with volunteering was in middle school. He got connected with a charity centered on helping local veterans. After serving for a few years, he recruited other students from his school to join him, and together, they worked on several projects, including building bookshelves for a military facility. They then stocked these shelves with books they collected. This project was his clear favorite as he created a space for veterans to enjoy the hobby he loves.

At Georgia Tech, Nick is studying chemical and biomolecular engineering, focused on his goal of working in pharmaceutical research and development. He has interned at Vero-Biotech and Janssen Pharmaceuticals. At Vero-Biotech, he worked on a medical device used to treat COVID-19, and at Janssen Pharmaceuticals, his work was used to develop



improved cancer treatments. He was thrilled to work on projects that would directly help patients. While interning at Vero, he met a respiratory therapist. Learning about that role made him consider pursuing a medical degree. After connecting with doctors and learning more, he decided to switch paths.

With his new career path to become a physician and an interest in neuroscience, Nick was eager to better understand treatments for those who have survived a spinal cord injury. He first heard about Shepherd Center through a family member who knows a former patient. He also heard about Shepherd from another Georgia Tech student. They shared that volunteering at our hospital allowed them to see patients progress over a longer period. Nick's motivation to continue the hard work of getting into medical school is boosted by meeting and connecting with Shepherd patients. They remind him why he is pouring time and effort into his studies. He reflects on the past year and agrees that several patients have changed him. He shares, "Seeing the strength and optimism these patients demonstrated in the face of their difficult circumstances is truly impactful."

We are so pleased Nick heard about Shepherd Center and decided to volunteer with us! His aid in our therapy gyms and patient floors has undoubtedly helped staff and patients alike.

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## Shepherd Center CEO Announces 2024 Retirement



[Sarah Morrison, PT, MBA, MHA](#), CEO of [Shepherd Center](#), has announced she will retire September 20, 2024, after a 40-year career at Shepherd Center.

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

Shepherd Center has flourished during Morrison's tenure as CEO. With Morrison's leadership, Shepherd Center's outcomes have regularly exceeded national averages, and the neurorehabilitation hospital became one of an elite group of hospitals recognized as both Spinal Cord Injury and Traumatic Brain Injury Model Systems. She also has led efforts to increase patient access and improve patient and family experience through Shepherd Center's [Pursuing Possible](#) campaign.

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

Morrison also announced that upon her retirement, Shepherd Center's current president and chief operating officer, [Jamie Shepherd, MBA, MHA](#), will become CEO.

"Jamie Shepherd is an immensely talented leader who is well-positioned to usher Shepherd Center into its next 50 years," Morrison said. "He knows our culture, business, and community inside and out, and I look forward to serving alongside him over the next 10 months as he transitions to serving as CEO."

During his tenure as president and chief operating officer, Shepherd has provided the administrative direction of clinical operations. He works to implement the proper processes and resources to optimize the hospital's clinical operations, ensuring financial strength and operating efficiency. In the past two years, Shepherd has overseen the construction of Shepherd Center's new buildings, the Arthur M. Blank Family Residences and the Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation, which will open in 2024 and 2025.

Shepherd will become CEO on September 21, 2024.

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In December housing partner BCA Furnished Apartments provided a delicious brunch for our patients and family members.



Residence Inn Buckhead and SpringHill Suites Buckhead hosted a Holiday Treat Party.



# Pursuing Possible

The Campaign for Shepherd Center





Last month, Shepherd staff and members of the Choate Construction Company team celebrated the beginning of construction of “The James H. Shepherd, Jr. Bridge From I Can’t to I Can.” The bridge will connect the current Marcus-Woodruff building to the new Marcus Center for Advanced Rehabilitation.

The bridge was made possible through the generosity of donors and Shepherd employees and will feature a memorable quote from Shepherd Center co-founder, the late James H. Shepherd, Jr., that reads, “Shepherd Center is the bridge between ‘I Can’t’ and ‘I Can.’” The design includes a symbolic representation of the 33 vertebrae in the spine. Staff and friends were invited to sign a beam that will be part of the bridge to commemorate this occasion. #PursuingPossible

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