

VOLUNTEER news

A Newsletter for the Shepherd Auxiliary & Volunteers

Happy New Year!
January
2015

Neuropsychology at Shepherd Center

One of the perks of volunteering at Shepherd Center is the opportunity to learn about a field of which you may have only limited knowledge. For instance, you may have an understanding of the work a neurologist does, and that of a psychologist, but do you know the role of a neuropsychologist?

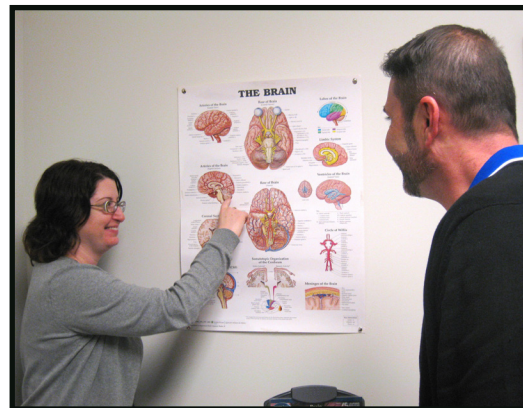
Neuropsychology is the study of relationships between the brain and behavior, and there are five neuropsychologists in Shepherd Center's inpatient and outpatient acquired brain injury (ABI) programs. Each of them have completed a doctorate and a two-year fellowship before becoming a certified clinician.

The neuropsychologists work with each patient multiple times a week from admission to discharge to determine their cognitive status and decision capacity, and work to educate the family along the way. Soon after admission the neuropsychologist makes a basic initial assessment of the patient's condition. The new ABI clients can range from seeming to be in a coma to appearing physically and cognitively functional, and their responses to the clinician's basic questions are very telling. The neuropsychologist's seasoned observation skills coupled with their review of the patient's pre-Shepherd injury medical history helps start the assessment process.

A critical step is getting a thorough history from the family about the patient pre-injury, including educational level, work history, and problems with mood and/or substances, and also educating family on their loved one's brain injury, which includes group classes and one-on-one time with the neuropsychologist. Ongoing assessments of the patient's thinking skills (attention, memory, perception, problem solving) and behavior and emotional functioning are performed by the neuropsychologist. Findings are discussed with the patient's team each week. This team includes a physician, nurse, therapy staff, and case manager. The results of those tests, along with what the neuropsychologist has already discerned from their work with the patient and family, will help determine a working baseline of current functioning for the patient.

As the patient nears discharge, standardized objective testing is completed to determine the level of current functioning (thinking skills, emotional stability, ability to return to work or school, etc). The neuropsychologist meets with the family and the patient to share findings and recommendations about the patient's testing, progress and any current issues they are observing, such as phases of agitation, confusion or depression. If counseling is needed by the family members to adjust through this difficult period, a licensed professional counselor on staff is usually utilized. If the patient graduates from the inpatient program and continues therapy at Shepherd Pathways, they will likely be tested again to track their progress and give recommendations on returning to independence.

As a volunteer you may never come in contact with a neuropsychologist, but you now know more about that profession and how vital their role is in the care and treatment of our population of ABI patients. Their work is important in crafting a treatment plan and measuring success.



Above: Neuropsychologist Megan Holcomb explains a brain injury to a family member.



Above: Volunteers from Accord Services provided free gift wrapping service for patients, families and staff for the holidays.

from the AUXILIARY PRESIDENT

Dear Auxiliary and Peach Corps Members,

The year 2014 is behind us now, and what a year it has been. Thank you for your continued involvement and support of Shepherd Center. My best wishes to each of you for a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

Results from Pecans on Peachtree® are still coming in. We added several new corporate clients this year who placed large orders, and I look forward to sharing final numbers for this annual fundraiser once they have been tallied.

The Sunshine committee gathered before the holidays to deliver Thanksgiving treats and fleece blankets to patients. This wonderful group of volunteers takes a break in January, but will be back in full swing on Saturday, February 7 when it meets to work on a Valentine's Day project. Special thanks to Karen Martin and Jeannie Worlock for their dedication and leadership in chairing this large and active committee.

Pecans on Peachtree® has many friends who step forward each year in support of this project. The Auxiliary expresses its sincere gratitude to these community partners for hosting us at a Pecans holiday party, onsite sale or PoP Shop: The Forum at Peachtree Corners shopping center, Peachtree Battle shopping center, Woo Cosmetics, Coca Cola, Emory Schwall, The Westminster Schools, Canterbury Court and Lenbrook.

So many of you turned out to volunteer for Pecans on Peachtree® in November and December that it's hard to recognize everyone individually. All those who participated had a hand in its success! I would like to highlight and thank the following individuals, each of whom donated their time to work three or more volunteer shifts: Paula Hope, Barbara Kelly, Betsy Cozine, Karen Martin, Mary Kay Howard, Kathy Saul, Barbara McArdle, Betsy Block, Dianne Key, Laura Rawls, Lisa Frooman, Kathy Swinford, Mary Sue Howard and Mitzi Richardson. Several more of you pitched in to help with at least five shifts, and these volunteers are Molly Lanier, Ginny Wolf, Valerie Sikes and Bart Marks. Rounding out

the list, two volunteers, in particular, outdid themselves: Carol Olsen at twelve shifts, or 36.5 hours and Jane Ulicny who worked tirelessly at fifteen volunteer shifts, or 48.5 hours...outstanding!

While each volunteer contribution is important, two others played a critical role in the daily operations and overall success of Pecans on Peachtree®: Alex Seblatnigg, Shepherd Center's director of volunteer services and Elisa Jerrold, Pecans Project Manager. Elisa worked overtime to ensure that orders were filled in a timely and accurate manner, and that our customers were satisfied—even as shipments ran late and supplies ran low. It's hard to imagine what we'd have done without the help of these two amazing partners.

Finally, I must say a humble thanks once again to the Executive committee: Lisa Hardyman, Pat Ahlers, Lynne Elander, Marla Bennett and Heather Flint. Together, this group devoted more than 200 hours to Pecans on Peachtree® in November and December alone, not to mention countless hours throughout last year spent discussing sales analysis, marketing strategies, product assortment, pricing and various tactics to sell more pecans to more people so that we can ALL give back more to the patients of Shepherd Center and their families. Excellent job ladies!

The Auxiliary year is not over yet, and there is much to look forward to in 2015...Happy New Year!

Carol

Carol Adams
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Above: Marla Bennett sells pecans to holiday shoppers at The Forum at Peachtree Corners.

Volunteer Spotlight - Tom Leahy

On rare occasion, Shepherd Center is blessed to have someone come forward to volunteer that has a very long history of perseverance, having successfully conquered the challenges of personal disability for many decades. Tom Leahy is such a man, and he has a big smile, a warm heart, and a lifetime of stories to share for the benefit of patients and their family members facing life after brain injury.

Born in a small town in western New York state, Tom came into this world paralyzed on one side and it took years before clinicians could identify the cause of his paralysis (which then required life threatening experimental brain surgery). While he survived the surgery, his parents were told that at best he would live into his teens. His parents forged ahead and planned home therapy that enabled him to walk to school by age seven. At age 12, his right arm and hand were still not functioning well, so he took drum lessons to improve his strength and coordination and successfully applied his new skill in both high school and college bands.

With a record of tenacity even from his childhood, it shouldn't surprise us that Tom beat earlier survival predictions and went on to graduate from Syracuse University with a degree in marketing and advertising. Following graduation, Tom accepted a temporary position with the Social Security Administration which turned into a 40-year tenure. Tom's longstanding eagerness to improve things was used not only at work but with others. In the '90s, he met with Alana Shepherd to share an idea - why not create a staff position at Shepherd that would help expedite the disability application process with the Social Security Administration? That concept became a successful reality here, and we have Tom to thank for it.

Tom began volunteering at Shepherd in 2005 after retiring, helping us in many ways before he found his perfect match as a Peer Visitor with the Brain Injury Peer Visitor Association. That organization not only supports ABI patients and their family members at Shepherd through regularly held groups led by volunteers, but it is also active at many other hospitals and facilities in metro Atlanta. In addition to coming here regularly to help, Tom serves at Scottish Rite and Emory at Eastside giving his wisdom to patients and families struggling through the hardship that brain injury can bring.

Tom shares that he feels very fortunate in his own life to have come so far after being born with a disability, and he loves to give encouragement as he leads group meetings at Shepherd twice a month. He shares with patients and their families that life is a journey of choices, relating how each person can improve through hard work while gaining patience and perspective. We are very grateful to have Tom Leahy here with us, and know when encouraging words come from someone who overcame a lifelong disability as he has, they mean a great deal indeed!



Above: Tom is all smiles as he offers assistance as a peer support volunteer.

Join us for the Shepherd Center Society

Big Game Bash

**Sunday, February 1, 2015 at 5:30 p.m.
Bobby Jones Golf Club**

Free for members, \$20 for non-members

**To learn more about this event and
Shepherd Center Society, visit www.scs-atl.com**



Holiday Happenings at Shepherd Center



Above: Kindergarten students from The Schenck School decorated perseverance badges as part of the school's Day of Giving.



Above: Members of Girl Scout Troop 15193 created holiday gift bags for family members staying at the Woodruff Family Residence Center.



Center and above: Members of Peachtree Garden Club were busy at Shepherd Center this holiday season. In addition to decorating the Woodruff Family Residence Center, cafeteria and front of the hospital, they assembled 40 gift baskets for patients to enjoy.



Above: A patient shows his holiday pride while decorating a wreath during the holiday art clinic.



Holiday Happenings at Shepherd Center



Above: Music was in the air! The Academe Singers from Academe of the Oaks in Decatur sang carols to patients and families in December.



Above: The Wheaton family delivered new, unwrapped toys for patient families that were collected at an annual holiday party. Pictured are Dr. Lewis Wheaton, his wife Teri, and children Lewis, Jr. (left) and Joshua (center).



Above and right: Bain employees spread holiday cheer by “decking the halls” at Shepherd Center and decorating trees for the Woodruff Family Residence Center.



spotlight



Above (l-r): Debra Adams, Asia Hinds and Elizabeth Johnson from Hampton Inn Buckhead visited with family members Ruvin Varshenboym and Carl Duchin during a recent family brunch sponsored by the hotel.



Above (l-r): Volunteer Manager Kate Barnes was on hand to receive handmade holiday greeting cards donated by Karla Schultz with Bank of America.

Right: Families enjoyed decorating gingerbread houses at an afternoon holiday event hosted by Credit Suisse.



Shepherd Center

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VOLUNTEER news

Scott Sikes, Executive Director, Shepherd Center Foundation
Alex Seblatnigg, Director, Volunteer Services
Kate Barnes, Volunteer Services Manager
Gale Eckstein, Family Support Services Coordinator
Newsletter Co-editors: Kate Barnes and Gale Eckstein

Membership in the Shepherd Center Auxiliary, Peach Corps, SCS, and Junior Committee is open to all volunteers. Members provide ongoing fundraising and volunteer support to Shepherd Center. For more information on becoming a member of one of these groups, contact Alex Seblatnigg at (404) 350-7315 or visit www.shepherd.org.

Shepherd Center's mission is to help people with a temporary or permanent disability caused by injury or disease rebuild their lives with hope, independence, and dignity, advocating for their full inclusion in all aspects of community life while promoting safety and injury prevention.