

# BEYOND

FALL / WINTER 2024



*Experts* IN PEDIATRIC  
REHABILITATION



# 10

## BROOKS IN ARIZONA



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**BROOKS**  
Rehabilitation

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**#WeAreBrooks**



# Doug Baer

## Inspiring Hope and Healing One Child at a Time

The newest edition of our magazine shines a spotlight on the exceptional pediatric programs at Brooks Rehabilitation. For more than five decades, Brooks has been a beacon of hope, offering specialized care to children and teens in need of physical rehabilitation. By forming new collaborative partnerships with leading pediatric experts in this area, we can ensure we're providing the best care possible.

In this issue, you'll discover inspiring stories from our pediatric patients, which exemplify the resilience and courage that fuel our mission. We also celebrate our Star employees whose dedication and expertise drive the outstanding care we provide. Additionally, we're proud to announce the accreditation of our Transition to Nursing Practice program, a testament to our commitment to excellence in healthcare education.

We're also excited to announce that we will be opening a new inpatient rehabilitation hospital on Mayo Clinic's Phoenix campus in Arizona. This collaboration extends our top-ranked services and brings Brooks' renowned expertise to the West. We are excited about the opportunities this

presents for expanding our impact and continuing our legacy of excellence.

In the arduous path to recovery from life-altering illnesses or injuries, community support, research and innovative rehabilitation programs are vital. We are dedicated to helping our patients reclaim their lives, and we are grateful for the continued support of community leaders, state legislators, physicians, employees and patients who share in this mission.

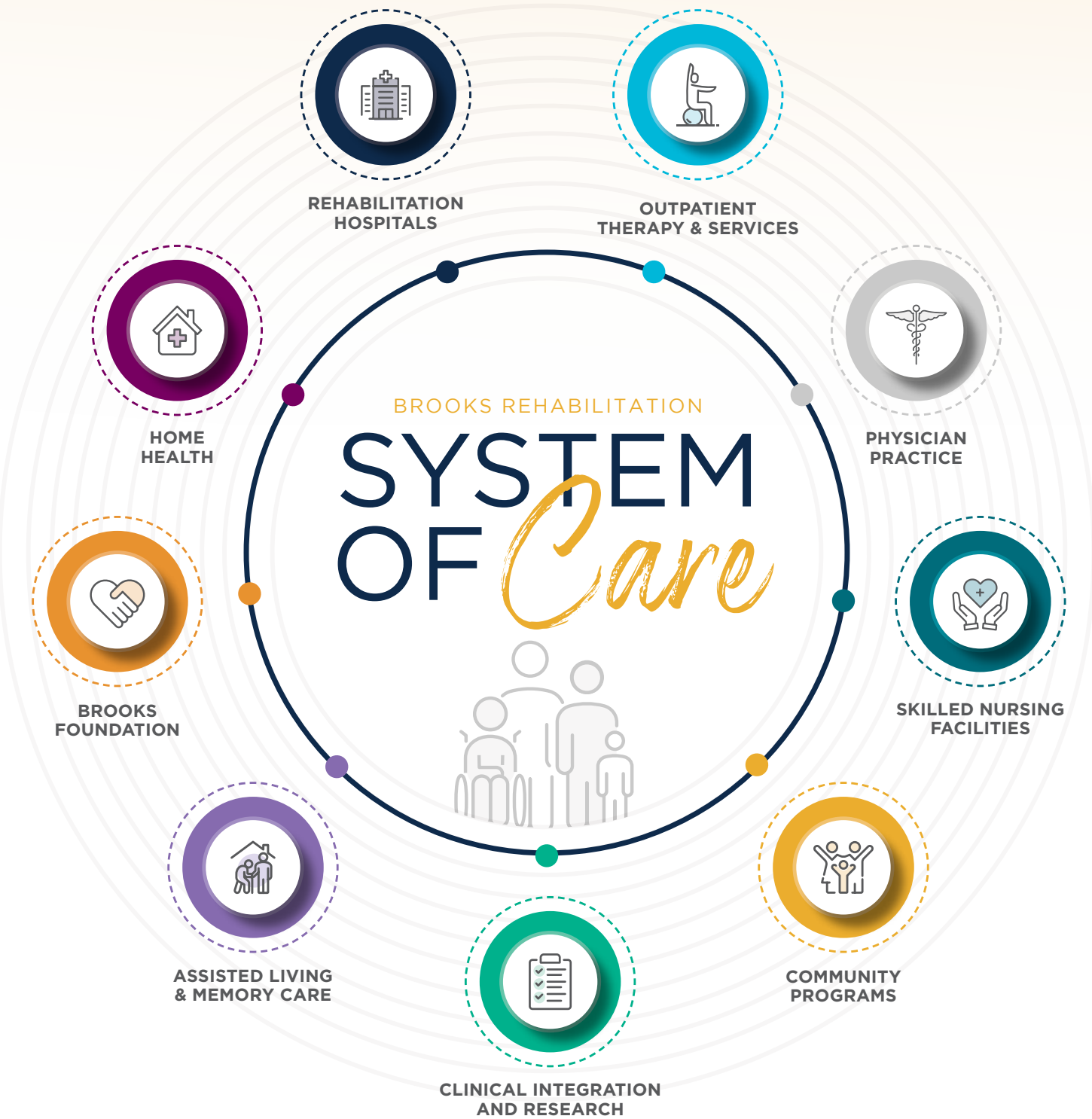
Thank you for taking the time to learn more about our programs and initiatives. Together, we can help patients of any age achieve their fullest potential.



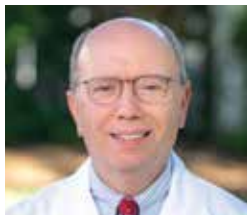
**WATCH MEHAK'S STORY**  
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*Doug Baer shares a laugh with pediatric patient, Mehak Minhas.*



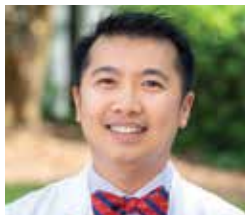
## BROOKS REHABILITATION PHYSICIANS



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**Howard Weiss, DO**  
Medical Director, Orthopedic/Trauma Program and Amputee Program

## Enhancing Lives Now And For The Future

A Conversation with Ann Broudy, Executive Director of the Brooks Foundation

In the journey of recovery from a life-changing illness or injury, the role of community support and innovative rehabilitation programs is critically important to helping patients

*reclaim their lives.*

The Brooks Foundation helps fund these services to ensure that we can continue to provide the highest level of care – and help patients reclaim their life and rediscover their passions, regardless of differing abilities.

Ann Broudy recently joined the Brooks Foundation as Executive Director and is passionate about its mission and future growth.



### HOW DOES THE BROOKS FOUNDATION HELP PATIENTS LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST?

At Brooks Rehabilitation, our commitment goes beyond physical rehabilitation and therapy; it's about helping patients live their fullest lives. The philanthropic support provided by the Brooks Foundation allows for the latest therapeutic technology and equipment, innovative programs, patient support funding, research as well as education. In turn, these areas help all Brooks patients to grow in strength and abilities.

For many patients, their injuries may make it difficult to do things they have always enjoyed. For example, someone with a spinal cord injury may no longer be able to shoot hoops with friends on a neighborhood court. For that person who always enjoyed athletics, they can play on the wheelchair basketball team with special wheelchairs provided by Brooks through the adaptive sports program. The Brooks Foundation supports many Brooks community programs at no cost or very low cost for participants so that they can enjoy activities adapted to their abilities. In addition to camaraderie, exercise and fun competition, programs like these keep patients physically active, connected with community and feeling purposeful.

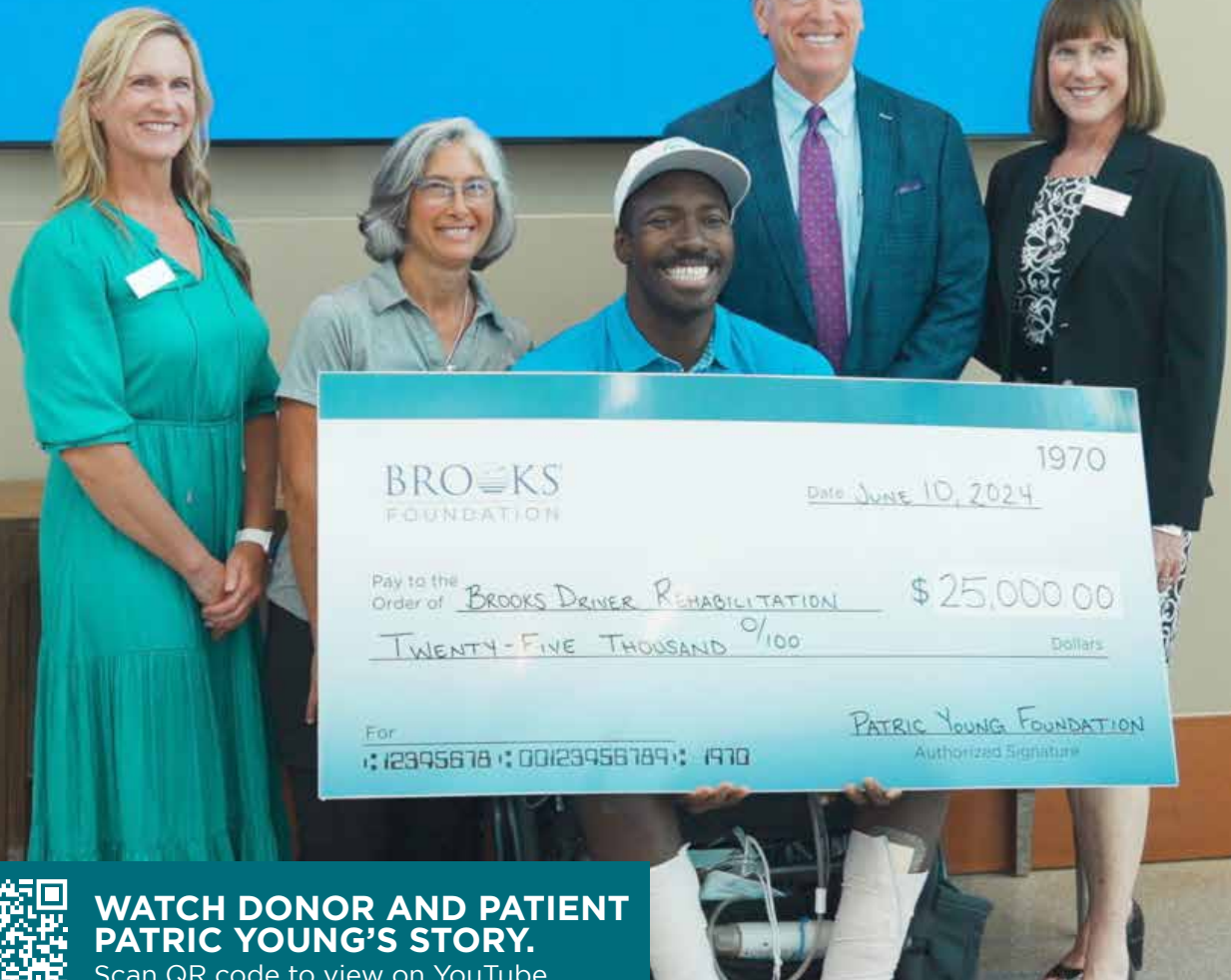
### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE COMMUNITY PROGRAMS OFFERED?

The Brooks Foundation currently supports nine different Brooks community programs with expansion planned for the future. These programs include Adaptive Sports and Recreation, the Brooks Aphasia Center, the Brain Injury Clubhouse, mental health counseling, music therapy, Neuro Recovery Centers, Pediatric Recreation, School Re-Entry and Community Wellness. All of these programs provide essential services and community for those they serve.

### HOW DOES THE BROOKS FOUNDATION PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES?

Brooks recognizes that recovery from an injury affects not just the individual but the entire family unit. To support families during these challenging times, we offer low cost accommodations at Helen's House, a non-profit, short-term hospitality facility located conveniently across from Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital-University Campus in Jacksonville, Florida. This hospitality house, supported by the Brooks Foundation, provides a welcoming space for families

# Rehabilitation



## WATCH DONOR AND PATIENT PATRIC YOUNG'S STORY.

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traveling from afar to access necessary therapies. In addition, patients and their caregivers can use a free shuttle service equipped for wheelchairs, ensuring that transportation is one less stressor during their visit. Scholarships are also available for families who have demonstrated financial need.

### HOW DOES THE BROOKS FOUNDATION PROVIDE FUNDING?

The Brooks Foundation invites personal contributions, tribute gifts, planned gifts and gifts of stock to support the Brooks Rehabilitation programs and services. Through the generous financial support of individual donors, companies and foundations, patients and their families experience transformative rehabilitation. We also invite individuals to become recurring, annual contributors by joining the Brooks Foundation Impact Society. In order to raise awareness, the Brooks Foundation hosts two signature events each year: The Brooks Rehabilitation Golf Classic Tournament in the fall and The Soirée in the spring.

### JOIN US IN OUR MISSION

As we support the important work at Brooks Rehabilitation, we invite grateful patients and families, companies, physicians and everyone in the community to connect with the Brooks Foundation. Working together, we can create a stronger community that embraces and supports individuals with differing abilities. We also depend on our caring volunteers to help us serve more patients through our community programs. In the coming months, we will be expanding our team allowing the Brooks Foundation to have greater outreach and impact. The Brooks Foundation supports critical services and programs provided by Brooks Rehabilitation, serving as a beacon of hope for individuals and families navigating the complexities of recovery and physical disabilities. We are here to help you or your loved one on this journey—because life is meant to be lived to the fullest, regardless of ability. To learn more about how you can support the Brooks Foundation, contact **Brooks.Foundation@BrooksRehab.org** or call **(904) 345-7073**.



## Brooks Rehabilitation Transition to Practice Nursing Program Receives Accreditation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center

Brooks Rehabilitation is proud to announce the Transition to Practice Nursing Program has officially been accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program (PTAP).

Regarded as the global standard of excellence for nurse residency programs, ANCC PTAP's review includes assessments of organizations integration of national competencies, adherence to evidence-based practices and commitment to the support and well-being of newly licensed nurses.

"The overall goal of the Transition to Practice Nursing Program is to support our newly licensed nurses with a six-month transition to practice," said Pamela Lambert, MSN, MBA, RN, CHSE, Brooks Institute of Higher Learning's nursing education and professional development leader. "They're transitioning from an academic setting as a student nurse to a setting where suddenly our patients depend on them. We want to ensure they are as prepared as possible by providing a dynamic, interactive and diverse professional learning experience."

This six-month residency is a structured, immersive learning experience that supports a precepted clinical orientation alongside the support of selected mentors. Each month, high-level experts discuss clinical observations, link scenarios to current practice, present case studies and use simulation to help the newly licensed nurses build clinical knowledge in a dedicated, safe learning environment.

During the appraisal process, the Transition to Practice Nursing Program was highly regarded for the holistic support our new nurses receive as well as its unique experiential learning components, immersive clinical training and rehabilitation specialty focus. Education activities embedded within the program curriculum include a patient safety escape room, mock trials and visits to Brooks' community programs.

Nearly 50 newly licensed nurses have successfully completed the program since its inception in 2022. Many alumni of the program have been mentored to become preceptors, relief charge nurses and have even earned or been nominated for the distinguished Daisy Award for clinical excellence.

"With the combined expertise, resources and support of our leadership and the Institute of Higher Learning, the program



will continue to evolve and uphold its mission to provide a world-class experience for Brooks' nurses. This program not only aids new nurses in transitioning seamlessly into the field of nursing, but also reaffirms our commitment to nurturing their career aspirations in patient care, education and research," said Joanne Hoertz, RN, MSN, CRRN, chief nursing officer at Brooks Rehabilitation.

### HOW TO APPLY

The Transition to Practice Nursing Residency accepts applicants on a tri-annual basis. To learn more information and to apply, visit [BrooksIHL.org/residencies/transition-to-practice-nursing-program](https://BrooksIHL.org/residencies/transition-to-practice-nursing-program).

INNOVATION  
MEETS  
*Excellence*

BROOKS REHABILITATION  
**Expands to Arizona  
with Mayo Clinic  
Partnership**

Brooks Rehabilitation will open a new inpatient rehabilitation hospital on Mayo Clinic's Phoenix campus. This collaboration extends the footprint of Florida's top-ranked rehabilitation hospital, bringing its renowned services and expertise to the West.



*Rendering of the future Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital - Arizona.*

### LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Brooks has long been a leader in treating patients recovering from life-altering conditions such as brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, strokes and other complex medical conditions. Recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the No. 1 rehabilitation hospital in Florida and among the top 20 in the nation, the new hospital will join Brooks' network of three existing inpatient rehabilitation hospitals in Florida.

Doug Baer, President and CEO of Brooks Rehabilitation, expressed his enthusiasm for the new venture, stating, "Brooks Rehabilitation is honored to join with Mayo Clinic to further expand patient care and services and deliver on Brooks' mission to empower people to achieve their highest level of recovery and participation in life through excellence in rehabilitation."

### THE NEW FACILITY

The new rehabilitation hospital will occupy eight acres adjacent to Mayo Clinic's Phoenix hospital, near the Arizona State University Health Futures Center. The \$70 million project will begin construction in December 2024, with the hospital expected to open in fall 2026. The three-story, 80,000-square-foot facility will feature 60 private patient rooms with the capacity to expand as demand grows. At full maturity, the hospital is anticipated to create over 200 new jobs in the region.



## A SYNERGISTIC RELATIONSHIP

“Our two organizations have aligned missions and values. This is a unique opportunity to bring the best in post-acute care to treat the most complex rehabilitation patients in the Phoenix market,” said Baer.

Richard Gray, MD, CEO of Mayo Clinic in Arizona, emphasized the strength of this collaboration, stating, “At Mayo Clinic, we specialize in treating rare, serious, and complex conditions. After seeing the closely integrated working relationship that the Brooks team shares with our Mayo colleagues in Jacksonville, Florida, we are very pleased to welcome them to Phoenix. They have the proven ability to meet the complex rehabilitation needs of our patients and guide them in returning to their lives and highest functioning after illness or injury.”

Trevor H. Paris, MD, FAAPMR, System Chief Medical Officer of Brooks Rehabilitation, highlighted the depth of Brooks’ expertise, saying, “Physicians and patients at Mayo Clinic in Florida have trusted Brooks to provide expert rehabilitation care for many years. Our physicians are board-certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) to diagnose, treat, and manage conditions that affect movement, function and quality of life.”

Dr. Paris added that Brooks recently partnered with Mayo Clinic in Florida for a Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Residency Program, further increasing access to high-level care, which will now be extended to Arizona.

## BUILDING A STELLAR TEAM

The development team for the new hospital includes Anchor Health Properties as the developer, Kitchell as the general contractor, Hoefler Welker as the architect, and Kimley Horn as the civil engineer.

Additionally, the hospital will enter into a long-term lease agreement for the property with Pan-American Financial Assistance Foundation, with funding arranged and structured by Veyron. Mayo Clinic will maintain a minority interest in this joint venture.

## A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Last year alone, Brooks admitted more than 5,000 patients to its hospitals and cared for over 60,000 individuals throughout its entire system of rehabilitation care. Brooks’ multidisciplinary team, including physicians, nurses, therapists, neuropsychologists and other rehabilitation experts, is recognized for its excellence and innovation. The team employs the latest evidence-based treatments and technology to achieve the highest functional recovery for patients.

The expansion into Arizona represents a significant milestone in Brooks’ growth strategy, which also includes adding beds to its existing hospitals and opening new outpatient service locations throughout Florida.

With this new hospital, Brooks Rehabilitation and Mayo Clinic are set to create a new standard in post-acute rehabilitation care, offering hope and recovery to countless patients in Arizona and beyond.

# Ezra Ng

## Parents Instinct Leads to Life Saving Care



“Ezra loved being able to go back to his friends, his support system, his family, and his bed every single night, while still receiving the same intensity of therapy in the morning.”

- JOHN NG

In life, unexpected challenges can arise at any moment. For the Ng family, what began as a typical day quickly turned into a critical situation that tested their strength and resilience.

John Ng vividly recalls when everything changed for his son, Ezra. “Ezra is a very caring and active kid,” Ng shared. “From early on, he’s always everyone’s friend.” But then, out of nowhere, Ezra complained about a severe headache. “We just asked, ‘Did you fall? Did your brother hit you? Were you doing lightsaber fights?’ He was like, ‘No, I don’t know, but it is hurting really bad.’”

Despite their initial inclination to have Ezra sleep it off, John and his wife sensed something was wrong. Trusting their instincts, they rushed him to Wolfson Children’s Hospital, in Jacksonville, Florida, where they both work as pharmacists. It was there that they received a life-altering diagnosis - Ezra had a malformation in his brain, and he was bleeding internally. Immediate brain surgery was necessary.

“We were in the ICU the next day,” Ng recounts, “and we are just very thankful that it was caught in time and we didn’t send him to bed.”

### THE ROAD TO RECOVERY AT BROOKS REHABILITATION

Following the emergency surgery, Ezra’s path to recovery led him to Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital. “We didn’t know what to expect when we were admitted to Brooks,” said Ng. “We have friends who work here. We have friends who were admitted here. Personally, I work at Wolfson’s, and we just keep hearing that Brooks does magic and patients get better.”

Stephanie Judycki, OTD, OTR/L, a pediatric occupational therapist at Brooks Rehabilitation, shares “When I first met Ezra, he was really shy. He had a lot of weakness on his right side and was scared about where he was and what was happening to him.”

John Ng recalls the warm welcome they received at Brooks. “Everyone’s wearing a big smiley face that really eased our anxiety a lot, especially for Ezra. Everyone is also very goal-oriented. They are strict but very comforting and patient.”

### THE POWER OF PLAY IN REHABILITATION

At Brooks Rehabilitation, the focus is on holistic recovery. For children like Ezra, this means integrating play into their therapy. Judycki explains, “In occupational therapy, we really focused on the occupation of play. Ezra still loves playing



**WATCH EZRA'S STORY**  
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around, and even though certain things changed, he wanted to find ways to still play with his siblings and friends.”

Through activities like swinging and weight-bearing exercises, Ezra’s right side gradually regained strength. “We really incorporated some weight-bearing so that he’s able to recover on that right side and use it during play and daily activities,” Judycki adds.

### **A TRANSFORMATIVE ENVIRONMENT**

John and Ezra Ng witnessed firsthand the impact of Brooks Rehabilitation’s newly renovated pediatric gym. “We were actually able to see the pediatric gym on the fourth floor before and after the renovation. We feel like it really helped because we have a lot of resources here, and the place is very inviting with beautiful, bright colors. It’s amazing for the kids.”

Judycki echoes this sentiment, “Having this new space and these new resources has opened so many doors for our patients and clinicians. We’re able to provide a higher level of care and service delivery for each of our kiddos.”

### **CONTINUITY OF CARE WITH THE PEDIATRIC DAY PROGRAM**

After his inpatient stay, Ezra transitioned to the Pediatric Day Program at Brooks Rehabilitation. John Ng and his family were initially concerned about the potential reduction in therapy intensity, but their fears were quickly eased.

“We found out that the Pediatric Day Program is actually the same intensity program, but then we actually get to

go home,” Ng explains. “Ezra loved being able to go back to his friends, his support system, his family, and his bed every single night, while still receiving the same intensity of therapy in the morning.”

### **THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY COLLABORATION**

Steve Walczak, PT, DPT, PCS, pediatric program manager at Brooks, emphasizes the importance of community collaboration in Ezra’s recovery. “We are just so excited that we’ve been able to help out Ezra and his family throughout their time here. They’ve really benefited from the services of our entire system. They’re a great example of a family that’s benefited from our community collaboration with Nemours Children’s Health, Jacksonville, Wolfson Children’s Hospital and UF Health Jacksonville.”

### **A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD**

Ezra’s story is a testament to the power of timely medical intervention, dedicated care, and the unwavering support of a community. At Brooks Rehabilitation, Ezra not only found the medical care he needed but also a second family that helped him regain his strength and confidence.

“I want to say to the pediatric therapists, a big thank you because during the process, you guys help so much. Our therapists always wear a smile. They’re always encouraging. They’re also a very supportive piece of the healing, that they’re here with us to walk the path with us, and they’re here as a family,” shared Ng.



PEDIATRICS AT BROOKS

# Revolutionizing Pediatric Rehabilitation:

Coordinated Care and Cutting-Edge Innovations

## For more than 50 years,

Brooks Rehabilitation has served as a source of hope for children and teens in need of physical rehabilitation. By integrating innovative approaches and building collaborative partnerships, Brooks is dedicated to enhancing the rehabilitation journey for children. Through our system of care, we aim to foster an environment where our youngest patients can achieve their fullest potential. By merging cutting-edge technology with customized treatment plans, we ensure the best outcomes for every child.

Brooks has always provided care for children in our inpatient hospital and outpatients clinics. As other programs at Brooks, like stroke, brain injury and spinal cord injury, were growing and adding services to round out their continuum of care, it was time for the pediatric services at Brooks to grow as well.

“Children are resilient, but if their recovery needs are not fully addressed after injury, they can have a growing gap in abilities compared to their peers,” said Steve Walczak, PT, DPT, PCS, program manager for Inpatient Pediatrics and the Pediatric Day Program at Brooks. “We wanted to provide the best options we could for children and their families, so Brooks fully committed to a pediatric program enhancement over the last several years.”

That enhancement included the creation of a pediatric recreation program, a pediatric day treatment program, specialized outpatient services and a new hospital renovation and partnership.

### Inpatient Pediatric Rehabilitation

At Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital – University Campus (BRH), we know the best results occur when rehabilitation is comprehensive—addressing everything from a child’s physical to emotional needs. Research shows that children who get intensive rehabilitation after a traumatic illness or injury have not only the best short-term outcomes, but long-term outcomes as well.

“As a parent, I understand the urgency to return to typical routines after illness and can only imagine that being amplified with a severe injury,” said Walczak. “But children have the most potential to recover immediately after injury and as time progresses that potential decreases. Inpatient rehabilitation offers increased intensity and frequency of services by design than other therapy options. And we want to ensure all patients get the best care and make the best recovery they possibly can.”



### Highly Specialized Environments

Noting a shortage of pediatric beds at Brooks and in the state of Florida, Brooks sought to increase its current offerings. With recent funding from the Florida legislature, Brooks was able to double the number of pediatric beds available at BRH, create a secured pediatric area, develop new pediatric and sensory gyms and expand the state-of-the-art technology available to patients.

Family involvement and support is crucial for successful outcomes. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child throughout their treatment stay so rooms feature a pull-out couch to sleep on. We also provide family education to empower caregivers with the skills necessary to support their child’s progress after discharge. These resources not only enhance the rehabilitation process but also strengthen the family’s role in the child’s road to recovery.



### **A Collaborative Approach**

In an innovative move to enhance pediatric care, Brooks Rehabilitation partnered with Nemours Children’s Health, Jacksonville, Wolfson Children’s Hospital and UF Health Jacksonville. By combining resources and expertise, the new partnership provides for medical care, training and education to ensure children of all ages receive the best that each organization has to offer.

“This partnership marks a significant milestone in our mission to provide unparalleled care to the children of our region,” said Trevor Paris, MD, FAAPM&R, System Chief Medical Officer for Brooks Rehabilitation. “Through our shared commitment, we are ensuring that every child receives the best medical and rehabilitative care possible.”

This integrative approach ensures that children who historically transitioned directly to outpatient services can now receive the intensive and specialized services they need for best long-term outcomes. In 2021, Brooks saw seven pediatric patients from Wolfson Children’s, and this number has increased to more than 40 in 2024, demonstrating the growing need and success of this partnership.



### **Physician Oversight**

Under this new partnership, Nemours Children’s will employ two hospitalists at Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital – University Campus (BRH) to provide 24/7 medical coverage for pediatric patients. These hospitalists will be responsible for managing medical complexities, mitigating potential complications and ensuring patients are medically stable. An additional hospitalist will split time between Brooks and Wolfson Children’s, allowing for seamless integration and continuity of care.

Brooks Rehabilitation and UF Health will hire a physical medicine and rehabilitation physician to oversee the physical care of patients at Brooks’ inpatient and Pediatric Day Program. This physician will work closely with therapists and nursing teams to manage the physical aspects of recovery, like muscle tone and spasticity, ensuring patients are set up for success and smooth transitions back home.

Additionally, patients will have access to a team of Nemours Children’s and University of Florida subspecialists for consultations. This will create an increased network of physician support for patients being served at Brooks.



### **Specialized Training and Education**

As part of the new partnership, Brooks nurses will receive hands-on training at Wolfson’s, including the TAPS course (Transition from Adults to Pediatrics) to ensure they meet



## Caring for Most Pediatric Conditions

Brooks addresses a myriad of conditions throughout our system of care that range from traumatic brain injuries to developmental delays. Here are some of the many conditions we treat:

- Traumatic/acquired brain injury
- Stroke
- Spinal cord injury
- Cerebral palsy
- Amputation
- Spina bifida
- Muscular dystrophy
- Dysphagia
- Neuromotor disorders
- Orthopedic conditions
- Genetic/chromosomal abnormalities
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Sensory processing difficulties
- Feeding disorders
- Toe walking
- Torticollis
- Developmental delay
- Expressive/receptive language delays
- Articulation and fluency issues



“You get some of that magic from kids and teens working together. It makes it a little bit more fun, a little bit more high energy, and we’ve already seen a lot of benefit from that occurring.”

- STEVEN WALCZAK

the highest safety and quality standards of both Brooks and Wolfson Children’s pediatric care. After course work, they will complete multiple phases of direct patient course shadowing at Wolfson Children’s, beginning with respiratory care, as part of this comprehensive training program.

Brooks is also known for their Institute of Higher Learning (IHL). One of many residency programs offered is the Pediatric Physical Therapy Residency. The residency is a one-year program that incorporates vigorous class study, clinical mentoring and supervision and other directed learning activities. The program prepares residents to successfully become board-certified in Pediatrics. This education ensures therapists are trained to the highest level in the profession.



**WATCH CHLOE’S STORY**  
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### **An Integrated Team Commitment to Pediatric Excellence**

In addition to our physician team, the pediatric program has a full complement of disciplines including:

- Nursing
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Speech-language pathology
- Recreational therapy
- Psychology/Neuropsychology
- Case management
- Dietary
- Respiratory

All members are skilled in assessing and treating the special needs of children and young adults.

## Pediatric Day Treatment Program

The Pediatric Day Treatment Program is designed to meet the diverse needs of children and teens aged 8-18. Whether living with lifelong disabilities or requiring intensive rehabilitation services to maximize recovery, this program offers individualized, multi-disciplinary therapy to boost their participation in life.

This program provides a structured, comprehensive approach that balances medical needs with therapeutic and developmental goals. Children in the program benefit from a collaborative team of specialists, including physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists, all working together to create a tailored treatment plan. Additionally, the program will have physician and nursing support available as needed, along with case management services and neuropsychology support.

“We know that kids have a variety of different needs, whether it’s based on their age, their diagnosis or just their preferences. We designed this program to meet a specific need and fill a gap in the community, and it’s done exactly what we hoped it would do,” said Walczak. “We wanted to make sure that we’re working with patients as they’re transitioning either from acute care or some sort of transition or change in medical status, and we’re able to help them reintegrate back into the community through meaningful participation.”

Each day, children engage in a range of therapeutic activities that support physical, cognitive and social development. Participants must be able to tolerate three hours of therapy and require treatment from at least two therapy disciplines to be an eligible candidate for the program. The program offers two half-day sessions, mornings and afternoons, every weekday.

Each three-hour session consists of:

- One-on-one individualized therapy services (physical, occupational or speech therapy)
- Group participation-based activities
- Community outings
- Functional skills training
- Educational content
- Caregiver empowerment
- Recreational Therapy
- Music Therapy
- Connection to Brooks Community Programs:
  - School Re-entry Program

- Pediatric Recreation Program
- Adaptive Sports and Recreation

Age-appropriate activities and equipment are available for young children and teens along with access to advanced technology in the Brooks Neuro Recovery Center (NRC). Caregivers are also an integral part of the process, being involved in regular meetings to discuss progress, adjust treatment plans, and equip families with strategies to implement at home.

This program supports most primary insurances including both commercial and government payers. If payment is a barrier, our case management team works with families to identify another support source to open up access to the program. We have been very successful to this point in preventing payment from being a barrier.

“It offers a little bit more than what you typically see in traditional outpatient therapy because you get some of that magic from kids and teens working together. By creating a community treatment atmosphere, it makes it a little bit more fun, a little bit more high energy, and we’ve already seen a lot of benefit from that occurring,” said Walczak.



## School Re-Entry Program

The Brooks School Re-entry Program provides a continuum of school transition and support services for children and adolescents at Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital and Brooks' outpatient clinics. It is specifically tailored to support children and adolescents transitioning back to school following an injury or illness. The program focuses on preparing students, educators and families for a successful return to the educational environment. By providing tailored academic recommendations and support, the program ensures that each student's unique school needs are addressed.

"The child's eventual return to school is an integral part of their rehabilitation journey and we strive to make it a positive experience for the child and family," said Alli Stephenson, MA, School Re-entry Coordinator. "For our outpatients, School Re-entry works in partnership with the family, medical team and the school to ensure needed educational services and

supports are provided. For those in our hospital, a School Re-entry specialist will meet with the child to assess his or her educational needs. We will then work closely with the child, the family, the child's school and our medical team to coordinate school services throughout the hospital stay and following discharge. Our goal is to minimize academic loss and to maximize the child's safe and successful transition back to school."

To achieve this, our dedicated team of Brooks School Re-entry specialists serve as liaisons between families, schools, related agencies and medical professionals.

Continuous communication with schools is paramount, and the Brooks team works closely with school personnel to ensure accommodations are effectively implemented. This collaborative approach not only aids the student's return but also fosters a supportive school environment conducive to their ongoing progress and success. Through this comprehensive framework, the School Re-entry Program aims to empower students, providing them with the confidence and skills necessary to thrive academically and socially upon their return to school.

School Re-entry services are customized to meet the unique needs of each individual. Services offered may include, but are not limited to:

- Serving as a liaison between families, school personnel, related agencies and medical professionals
- Attendance at school meetings (in person, virtual or by phone conference)
- Attendance at medical conferences and family conferences during Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital admission
- Meeting with classmates to discuss expectations for a child's return to school
- Verbal and printed information on relevant topics for families and schools
- Follow-up and monitoring of each child once he or she transitions back to school
- Ongoing communication with medical staff regarding school concerns/needs
- Assistance with referrals for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) or 504 Plans
- Guiding and empowering parents
- Assistance with early intervention referrals for babies/toddlers
- Assistance with college recommendations and accommodations for young adults



*With help from the School Re-entry program, Aden Williams graduated high school as the class salutatorian less than a year after having a cryptogenic stroke.*



“Transitioning back to school can be challenging for any child recovering from an illness or injury,” said Stephenson. “The Brooks School Re-entry Program is here to help, and our services are free and forever. We follow a child through their entire academic career.”

For more information, call **(904) 345-7218** or email [Schoolreentry@BrooksRehab.org](mailto:Schoolreentry@BrooksRehab.org).

## Outpatient Pediatric Rehabilitation

Brooks Rehabilitation’s outpatient pediatric rehabilitation services offer individualized therapy plans to children of all ages and address a wide range of conditions, from developmental delays and neurological disorders to post-surgical rehabilitation and orthopedic concerns. With 12 locations from the greater Jacksonville area to Daytona Beach, children can receive occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech-language pathology from specialized experts.

“One of my favorite things about working at Brooks is that we have so many resources at our fingertips, so we can treat the whole child and help them truly thrive,” said Louise O’Donnell, OTR/L, outpatient pediatric program coordinator at Brooks. “Our pediatric teams work with families to comprehensively assess a child’s abilities, identify functional goals and maximize participation in all environments.”

### Pediatric Physical Therapy

Pediatric physical therapists (PTs) focus on enhancing children’s mobility, strength, flexibility, balance, coordination and movement. The primary objective is to improve the child’s capacity to carry out daily activities and participate in their home, school and community environments.

### Pediatric Occupational Therapy

Pediatric occupational therapists (OTs) work to optimize a child’s functional independence in activities of daily living including self-care, education and play. OTs address sensory processing, fine motor and visual motor skills to help children participate in the activities they want and need to participate in.

### Pediatric Speech-Language Pathology

Pediatric speech-language pathologists (SLPs) assess, diagnose, and treat disorders of language, articulation,

motor speech, voice, fluency and social and play skills. SLPs also assist in feeding disorders or dysphagia.

Our outpatient clinics are equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including adaptive equipment, sensory integration resources, and specialized exercise equipment to cater to the diverse needs of pediatric patients. Designated pediatric areas are designed to be engaging and motivating for children, making therapy a positive and rewarding experience.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to be actively involved in the therapy sessions, learning techniques and strategies to support their child’s development at home. This emphasis on caregiver education and involvement ensures that therapeutic gains are reinforced and maintained outside of scheduled appointments.

### Specialized Expertise

Our clinicians have specific expertise in the following areas:

#### Developmental disabilities

Brooks provides comprehensive pediatric services to support early identification and treatment of developmental disabilities. Areas of development we address include gross motor skills, fine motor skills, communication, visual integration skills, feeding, processing/adaptation, self-care skills and social pragmatics. Environmental modifications, accommodations, equipment recommendations and family training may also be part of the plan of care.

Developmental diagnoses commonly referred for therapy:

- Autism spectrum disorder
- Down syndrome
- Failure to thrive
- Prematurity
- Cerebral palsy
- Spina bifida
- Tourette syndrome
- Fetal alcohol syndrome
- Intellectual disability
- Vision loss/low vision
- Fragile X



“Through the CPE, we pair new therapists with experienced mentors to enhance their skills, teach evidence-based strategies and techniques along with the latest technology, It truly does help us provide the best care for our littlest patients.”

- LOUISE O'DONNELL



## Pediatric Feeding and Swallowing Services

The feeding services at Brooks take a supportive, comprehensive approach that incorporates the child's developmental needs while addressing behavioral and oral-motor feeding issues as well as family education and training. This comprehensive team may include the child's physician/pediatrician along with occupational, physical and speech therapists from Brooks. Listed below are common signs and symptoms that may indicate a child would benefit from feeding therapy:

- Not transitioning appropriately from bottle to cup, or from purees to solid foods
- Has difficulty holding bottle or cup
- Turns head or cries during adult directed feeding (when caregiver presents food on spoon)
- Eats very quickly, "overstuffs" or "pockets" foods
- Prefers to eat with his/her hands, has difficulty with utensils or refuses to use utensils
- Is resistant to touching foods or does not like to get hands "messy"
- Refuses new brands or foods or chooses food based on color, shape or packaging
- Feeding time exceeds 30 minutes

## Clinical Excellence

To ensure our patients are getting the best care possible, all new Brooks therapists participate in an innovative, competency-based Clinical Practice Enhancement (CPE) Program. The CPE Program includes approximately 40 hours of content delivered over a six-month period, carved out of a therapist's normal workday.

"Through the CPE, we pair new therapists with experienced mentors to enhance their skills, teach evidence-based strategies and techniques along with the latest technology," said O'Donnell. "It truly does help us provide the best care for our littlest patients."

To schedule an outpatient appointment, please contact our Patient Access Center: P: **(904) 345-7277** | F: **(904) 345-7280** Email: [Referrals@BrooksRehab.org](mailto:Referrals@BrooksRehab.org) | Web: [BrooksRehab.org/outpatient](https://BrooksRehab.org/outpatient)

## Pediatric Recreation

The Brooks Pediatric Recreation Program provides youth with disabilities meaningful and accessible recreation opportunities that offer social connection, family empowerment and community integration. The goal is to enhance quality of life for children with differing abilities.

The Brooks Pediatric Recreation Program serves any child, from birth to 17 years old, with any type of limitation/disability (physical, developmental, cognitive, sensory and social). We offer both sport and recreation programs year-round through weekly classes, monthly activities, family-friendly special events. Weekly classes include:

- Adapted Aquatics
- Dance
- Art
- Gardening
- Cooking

Monthly and special events include activities such as bowling, horseback riding, fishing, music, kayaking, golfing and art. The program also has two competitive sports teams - the Brooks Bullsharks junior wheelchair basketball team and the Brooks Icebreakers sled hockey team. We partner with local organizations, colleges and universities to offer programming in inclusive environments.

Recreational activities play a crucial role in the comprehensive rehabilitation process for pediatric patients. These activities not only support physical recovery but also contribute significantly to emotional and social well-being. Engaging in play and recreational pursuits allows children to express themselves creatively, build self-esteem, and develop essential social skills by interacting with their peers. Each activity can be specifically adapted to meet the child's unique needs and abilities, ensuring inclusivity and participation regardless of physical limitations.

The Brooks Pediatric Recreation Program relies heavily on volunteer support to provide a supportive, safe and fun environment. Volunteers help us maintain a group setting with optimal ratio of adults/participants. Volunteer opportunities are available for all our classes, sports and special events.

Beyond medical care, Brooks is committed to providing community programs for anyone in the community living with a differing ability. As a community program, Brooks provides all equipment and classes free of charge for participants and families.

- **In Jacksonville**, call **(904) 345-7501** or email [PediatricRecreation@BrooksRehab.org](mailto:PediatricRecreation@BrooksRehab.org).
- **In Daytona**, call **(386) 281-7105** or email [PediatricRecreationDaytona@BrooksRehab.org](mailto:PediatricRecreationDaytona@BrooksRehab.org).

# Silas Turner

## Silas Turner's Inspiring Recovery Journey



### A DAY THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING

On March 12, 2024, the Turner family's lives took an unexpected turn. Silas Turner, their lively and energetic 17-year-old son, complained of a pounding headache and started vomiting. Within minutes, he became unresponsive to instructions. His father called 911, and Silas was rushed to Wolfson Children's Hospital via ambulance.

A CT scan revealed that Silas had blood on his brain, leading doctors to suspect an arteriovenous malformation (AVM). He was intubated, placed in a medically induced coma and underwent an embolization procedure to address the AVM. Drains were also inserted to relieve the pressure caused by the blood. Silas remained in a coma for ten days before being extubated and closely monitored. In addition to the AVM, it was discovered that he had suffered two aneurysms and a hemorrhagic stroke.

"The care Silas received in the PICU at Wolfson's was extraordinary," recalls Lori Turner, Silas' mom. "The medical staff were kind and attentive, the doctors involved us in daily and nightly rounds and the hospital allowed us to spend every night in Silas' room."

Silas' parents were understandably apprehensive about his transition to Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital on April 15. However, they soon discovered the amazing experience Brooks had to offer.

### A NEW CHAPTER AT BROOKS REHABILITATION HOSPITAL

Upon admission to Brooks, Silas was assigned to a beautiful, colorful room with space for his parents to sleep overnight. Despite his severe condition and frequent vomiting, the inpatient nurses and therapists were kind and patient. Connie Prudencio, MD, pediatric medical director, prescribed, Silas a Scopolamine patch, typically used for seasickness, which significantly reduced his vomiting episodes.

"Silas started building greater stamina with standing and taking steps," Lori shares. "He was able to participate in his three three - four intensive therapy sessions each day with compassionate but determined therapists."

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) challenged his memory and reasoning daily, while also providing valuable information about brain injuries. Occupational therapists focused on everyday skills such as walking, brushing his teeth, showering, catching a ball and playing games. Physical therapists gave him intense workouts, using a harness to practice walking, riding an adult tricycle and shooting baskets.

"The therapists collectively helped Silas improve his communication and physical stamina," Lori remembers. "We were slightly saddened on May 9 when Silas exited the inpatient program with a heartwarming bell-ringing



ceremony. However, we did not realize what an incredible experience awaited Silas in outpatient therapy.”

### THRIVING IN THE PEDIATRIC DAY PROGRAM

Following his inpatient success, Silas transitioned to Brooks Pediatric Day Program, starting with an outing at Top Golf. This fun day allowed Silas to meet the therapists and students he would interact with throughout his outpatient therapy.

The next week, Silas began his intensive therapy schedule, attending sessions five days a week from 1 - 4 p.m. His adult sister, Sydney, accompanied him to every appointment, providing essential support and bonding with the therapists, having recently graduated with her degree in speech-language pathology.

Silas’ therapy routine was rigorous and focused on improving his physical strength and executive function. He worked on various exercises to address his “left neglect” and left-side weakness, gradually progressing from walking to climbing stairs and even running. Advanced equipment, such as weights and a treadmill with colored lights, helped him rebuild his strength and coordination.

Speech therapy involved numerous memory and problem-solving exercises, including multi-step tasks like planning a trip to the movies and making Play-Doh. Kickball games between teams of therapists and students became a regular part of his routine, adding an element of fun to his recovery.

One of the most impactful activities was reintroducing Silas to playing the trumpet. “The SLP had Silas memorize music for marching band and practice coordination while marching around the courtyard. This prepared him to rejoin the marching band at Paxon, a significant milestone in his recovery,” said Mrs. Turner.

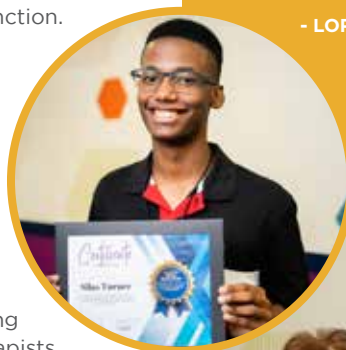
Throughout the Pediatric Day Program, Silas was not only healing physically but also building meaningful relationships with his therapists, who became like family. His progress was remarkable, and while we were ecstatic about his achievements, it was bittersweet to see him graduate from the program on July 25.

### A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

Today, Silas is happily back in school, thriving academically and socially. However, he fondly remembers his time at Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital and often expresses a desire to see his Pediatric Day Program care team.

“Silas’ recovery has been nothing short of miraculous, and we owe it all to the incredible medical professionals who supported us every step of the way.”

- LORI TURNER



Silas Turner’s recovery journey is a testament to the power of expert medical care, dedicated therapists, and a supportive family. His story serves as an inspiration to all who face similar challenges, reminding us that with determination and the right support, incredible recovery is possible.

“Silas’ recovery has been nothing short of miraculous, and we owe it all to the incredible medical professionals who supported us every step of the way,” said Mrs. Turner.

# Congratulations

## 2024 REHAB CHAMPION

Each year, we accept nominations from our employees for a person who has met the challenges of physical rehabilitation and whose courage and tenacity has been a source of inspiration to others. This person is determined never to give up despite their challenges and supports others who may be facing similar trials along the way. Madison Schemitz was an obvious choice to be named this year's Rehab Champion.



## Madison Schemitz: Triumph Over Tragedy

Madison Schemitz has always been a vibrant, outgoing young woman. Active, loving and deeply committed to softball, her friends and family, Madison was known for her boundless generosity and infectious smile. Unfortunately, according to the One Love Foundation, more than one in three women experience relationship abuse in their lifetime. And that almost cost Madison her life.

### A NORMAL DAY TURNED TRAGIC

On Saturday, June 3, 2023, Madison and her mother, Jaclyn Rogé, met up with friends for lunch at a restaurant in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. Madison's ex-boyfriend walked in moments later. They quickly left, but he followed them to the parking lot and stabbed them both multiple times. A good Samaritan, Kennedy Armstrong, heard the screams and tackled him to the ground. Madison credits both her mother and Kennedy for saving her life that afternoon.

"My mom and Kennedy jumped in without hesitation. They are the reason why I'm alive," Schemitz said. Scared and bleeding, Madison realized she couldn't feel her legs, Jacki reassured her saying, "It's okay. Don't worry about it. Everything's going to be fine."

### LIFE-SAVING SURGERY

Unfortunately, everything was not initially fine. Madison was airlifted to HCA Florida Memorial Hospital (HCA) and spent more than two weeks in the intensive care unit. The stabbing left her with two collapsed lungs and a spinal

cord injury, causing her to be paralyzed from the chest down. She underwent lifesaving surgery to stabilize her spine and relieve pressure from the trauma.

Jacki too suffered injuries, including deep cuts on her hands and arm. Despite the physical and emotional trauma, her immediate focus was on Madison. But Madison's sole focus was walking again. Once she was stable, doctors from HCA recommended she continue her recovery next door at Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital - University Campus.

### THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Madison's recovery was nothing short of miraculous. Initially upon admission to Brooks, there was hardly any muscle signal going to her legs.

"Every patient that comes to the hospital with a traumatic spinal cord injury goes through an assessment called the American Spinal Cord Injury Association Impairment Scale (ASIA), which is an international exam that determines what kind of damage is in the spinal cord. When we did the ASIA examination, she was not getting much muscle signals down past the level of injury, meaning her legs," stated Sydney Dalton, PT, DPT, NCS, Madison's physical therapist.

After days of focusing on strength and balance with little movement, one morning Sydney encouraged Madison to try wiggling her foot. Feeling doubtful, Madison agreed. To everyone's surprise, Madison's foot began to move.



*Madison's care team tried to make rehabilitation as fun as possible.*

"I was already upset because nothing was happening. I remember staring at the ceiling and tried moving my foot and felt a very small movement. Sydney and I looked at each other and freaked out. That was a pivotal moment in my recovery," recalls Schemitz.

From that day forward, Madison was more determined than ever to walk again. As her intense physical and occupational therapy sessions continued, she regained strength and movement in her legs.

When Madison no longer required a hospital level of care, she transitioned to the Brooks Pediatric Day Treatment Program. There she was able to receive one-on-one individualized therapy services with group participation-based activities, five days a week.

"I'm watching her encourage these other kids and they are looking up to her and she's mentoring them. And it's just natural for her," said Rogé.

Madison also worked extensively in the Brooks Neuro Recovery Center on specialized equipment to improve her walking skills and stamina. "One of the therapists, Robbie, used to play baseball in college and he would play catch with me so I could get back on the field and throw out the first pitch of my final high school season," said Schemitz.

While walking was always her main goal, she specifically hoped to walk across the stage at her high school graduation. On May 17, 2024, almost a full year after the attack, Madison walked unaided across the stage at Ponte Vedra High School to receive her diploma, receiving a standing ovation from the audience and her peers. It was a moment she will never forget.



*Madison at Ponte Vedra High School's One Love event with St. Johns County deputies.*

## ADVOCACY AND FUTURE PLANS

Turning her personal tragedy into a greater cause, Madison partnered with One Love Foundation, a national nonprofit organization focused on ending relationship abuse. Together, they have hosted several back-to-school events to educate young people about the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships to prevent tragedies like hers. She also started a chapter at her former high school.

With support from her family, her friends and her team at Brooks, Madison's future is bright. She began her freshman year of college in August and is looking forward to continuing advocacy with One Love.

"Life right now is pretty good," Schemitz says. "I'm excited about what the future holds, and I know there's only up from here."

CELEBRATE  
**THE STARS  
& TEAMS**



**Mallory Behenna**

Outpatient, San Pablo  
Physical Therapist  
Ortho Program Coordinator



**Suzy Blalock**

Community Programs  
Adaptive Sports and Recreation  
Program Assistant



**Sharlene Campbell**

Aging Services, Bartram Lakes  
LPN, Lead Nurse



**Tracy Davis**

Corporate, Marketing Specialist  
Photographer and Videographer



**Amy Gibbes**

Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital  
Bartram Campus  
Physical Therapist



**Karen Kirkland**

Aging Services, Bartram Crossing  
CNA



**Jovie Tomlinson**

Halifax Health | Brooks Rehabilitation  
Center for Inpatient Rehabilitation  
RN, Charge Nurse



**Carolyn Tremblay**

Outpatient, Osceola  
Center Manager



**Maryann White**

Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital  
University Campus  
LPN



**Cynthia Wilcox**

Home Health  
Scheduler

Each year, Brooks honors select staff members and teams of colleagues for exceptional performance above and beyond job requirements. These stars truly exemplify the Brooks Values in all they do, exceeding the expectations of coworkers, patients and families.

### HOME HEALTH CENTRAL INTAKE

While the Central Intake Home Health team is not directly involved in patient care, they are always focused on the patient and how they can make a positive impact. This team wears many hats – as they are crucial in coordinating with clinical teams, schedulers, billing, account executives and others to ensure patients receive comprehensive case knowledge for their home health care.

They handle numerous daily inquiries about insurance, patient discharges and other needed services. Each team member demonstrates accountability through their superb performance, integrity in their communication with other departments, compassion for caregivers and patients, and teamwork to tackle all the extra responsibilities they take on every day. Their expertise, organization and strong commitment to excellence are vital to Brooks' success.

### HR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Learning & Development (L&D) team has significantly impacted the organization by advancing the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees and leaders. Their responsibilities range from onboarding and facilitating new hire orientations, moderating trainings sessions, managing numerous career and development programs, monitoring employee satisfaction surveys and constantly seeking new ways to enhance Brooks' culture.

This team of three is small but powerful, driving results that include a spike in overall employee satisfaction numbers since 2022. The team's commitment to providing exceptional service is evident in their efforts to create memorable "wow" moments. Their communication skills, outgoing personalities and top-notch professionalism have left a lasting impression on staff.

### INPATIENT TIERING AND DOCUMENTATION

The Inpatient Tiering and Documentation team embodies innovation, teamwork and continuous learning. Responsible for establishing more efficient processes that improve

documentation, coding and reimbursement at our inpatient facilities, this team works tirelessly to ensure our daily operations run as smoothly as possible.

Over the past year, this task force has improved our Patient Assessment Instrument CareTool scoring, improved Impairment Group Code primary diagnosis coding and tiering coding of comorbid conditions and increased patient intakes and reimbursement numbers. Their attention to detail is top-notch and their dedication to excellence can be seen through their results.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**  
**INNOVATION**  
**SERVICE**  
*Compassion*  
**TEAMWORK**  
**INTEGRITY**  
**CONTINUOUS**  
**LEARNING**

## Incorporating Mindfulness into Physical Therapy Practice

NIH-funded study tests the feasibility for patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain and long-term opioid use



“There’s a form of meditation, a mindfulness meditation, and that really helps people accept the here and now.”

- DR. BENECIUK

Chronic musculoskeletal pain is a leading cause of disability worldwide. Of the individuals experiencing chronic pain, up to a third use prescription opioids to manage it according to some reports. Researchers at Brooks Rehabilitation and the University of Utah believe mindfulness training could be an alternative and an important addition to physical therapy practice. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) determined it was worthy of investigation and awarded a \$1.6 million R01 grant to fund a multi-year feasibility study on the integration of mindfulness-based interventions in physical therapy practice.

“Physical therapists, particularly in our Brooks outpatient settings, treat a large number of patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain,” said Jason Beneciuk, PT, DPT, PhD, MPH, Director of Musculoskeletal Research and Clinical Research Scientist of the Brooks/UF-PHHP Research Collaboration. “This study is exciting as it may provide further opportunities to optimize the effectiveness of physical therapists in managing patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain and long-term opioid treatment. However, to achieve this goal, we first need to evaluate the feasibility of integrating mindfulness with evidence-based physical therapy treatment in outpatient physical therapy settings.”

University of Utah Research Associate Professor Jake Magel, PT, PhD, DSc, FAAOMPT, is leading the study in collaboration with Dr. Beneciuk, who is the Site Principal Investigator at Brooks Rehabilitation.

“There’s evidence that mindfulness-based interventions are effective in reducing chronic pain and opioid use in some patients,” Magel said. “But to our knowledge, it’s never been implemented or studied before in the physical therapy (PT) setting.”

The first phase of this study involved getting feedback from patients and physical therapists around the country. They were asked their thoughts on mindfulness in general and their thoughts on a draft of a mindfulness manual.

So what are mindfulness interventions? The study defines those as behavioral based interventions. They incorporate skills such as meditation. “There’s a form of meditation, a mindfulness meditation, and that really helps people accept the here and now. I think a lot of times for individuals with chronic musculoskeletal pain, it’s a real challenge to accept

the here and now. They want an answer. They want to resolve this, they want to get back to what they were doing beforehand,” said Beneciuk.

Mindfulness interventions also incorporate something called reappraisal - a technique to help regulate somebody’s negative emotions and helps promote active coping. Instead of catastrophizing pain as the worst-case scenario, clinicians are teaching the patients different ways of looking at a situation.

And then the final piece of this is called savoring. Savoring promotes focus on positive daily experiences. One of the goals is to boost motivation and positivity. “We ask patients what they savor. It could be something in the clinic. Some patients like moist heat, some patients like massage. Some patients like cold modalities. If they can’t think of anything in the clinic, they could think of something outside of the clinic. I savor the time that I’m with my grandchild, or I savor the smell of flowers or taste of chocolates. Everyone savors something so we focus on that to reinforce those positive daily experiences.”

Overall, the two organizations have enrolled 33 physical therapists to participate- 18 from Brooks and 15 from University of Utah. Each therapist is asked to enroll two patients.

Mindfulness training and mindfulness-based interventions aren’t something that is typically provided in entry-level PT education. Once the 33 PTs were identified, they were randomized into three different groups. One group received no mindfulness training at all. Another group received a mindfulness manual, essentially a resource describing what mindfulness is and how to deliver it during PT sessions for patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain. A third, “high intensity” training group received the manual in addition to seven hours of virtual mindfulness training.

The two groups who received some type of training were then put through competency testing to assess their professional skills in delivering mindfulness based interventions with professional actors posing as patients.

Study investigators Beneciuk and Magel are blinded to know which therapists are in which group. However, research coordinators routinely communicate with them on a weekly basis. Those communications started as emails letting PTs know about enrollment numbers. As they now begin to enroll patients, the emails include scripts of conversation starters on the best ways to introduce the study to a patient that might be eligible and even on the best ways to ask a patient about opioid usage. To be eligible for participation in this study, patients need to have chronic musculoskeletal pain and they have to be using opioids.



*Photo by UF Health Creative Services (Nathan Guidry)*

In addition to the mindfulness-based interventions themselves, part of a feasibility study is determining how the study is being rolled out. The feasibility of recruiting patients is one of the feasibility outcomes, which is being explored now. PTs are determining if there are barriers with recruiting and enrolling patients. For example, are patients comfortable sharing information about their current opioid use and are PTs comfortable and confident in asking those types of questions?

“I think this is another great example of the role that physical therapists can play in terms of not just helping patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain, but also helping patients with chronic musculoskeletal pain that are also using opioids,” said Beneciuk. Results from the study will support future projects, including testing the effectiveness of integrating mindfulness in the physical therapy setting.

Patients interested in participating in this study should ask their physical therapist if they are an active participant in this study to receive additional information.

# BROOKS<sup>®</sup> Rehabilitation

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## BROOKS REHABILITATION TO OPEN New Rehabilitation Hospital on Mayo Clinic Campus in Arizona

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