

BROOKS[®]
Rehabilitation

BEYOND

SPRING / SUMMER 2025



TRANSFORMING CARE
Through a Learning Health System



08

BREAKING GROUND IN ARIZONA



10

A Rodeo
Champion's Recovery



23

National Nurse
Leader Award



24

Community
Impact Report

TABLE OF contents

- 04** **Letter from the
President & CEO**
Doug Baer
- 05** **About Brooks Rehabilitation**
Our System of Care
- 06** **Meet our Physicians**
Brooks Rehabilitation
Physician Practice
- 07** **Q&A**
Lauren Shapiro, MD, MPH,
FAAPMR
- 12** **Feature Story**
Clinical Integration
and Research
- 20** **Award Highlight**
Aphasia Center
International Award
- 22** **Patient Story**
Jennifer Nguy's
AVM Journey

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#WeAreBrooks



Doug Baer



Doug Baer speaks at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Brooks inpatient hospital on Mayo Clinic's Phoenix campus.

At Brooks Rehabilitation, we are driven by a shared mission to continually advance care, empowering our patients with exceptional programs and unwavering support. We're proud to serve as a bridge between state-of-the-art innovation and compassionate care, always with our patients' well-being at the center of everything we do.

This issue highlights some of the incredible initiatives, achievements and stories that reflect this commitment.

We are thrilled to announce the creation of our new Clinical Integration and Research Division, a significant step in building a robust learning health system. This initiative enhances our ability to integrate cutting-edge research into clinical practice, ensuring that our patients receive the best and most innovative care available.

Our dedication to excellence is reflected in the remarkable recognition earned by members of the Brooks family. Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer, Joanne Hoertz, RN, MSN, CRRN, has been named a 2025 honoree for the prestigious HealthImpact Daisy Nurse Leader Award. This well-deserved honor recognizes her outstanding leadership, tireless advocacy and profound contributions to the field of nursing.

Additionally, our Brooks Rehabilitation Aphasia Center (BRAC) was awarded the inaugural Identity & Impact Award at the 2025 Aphasia Access Leadership Summit. This

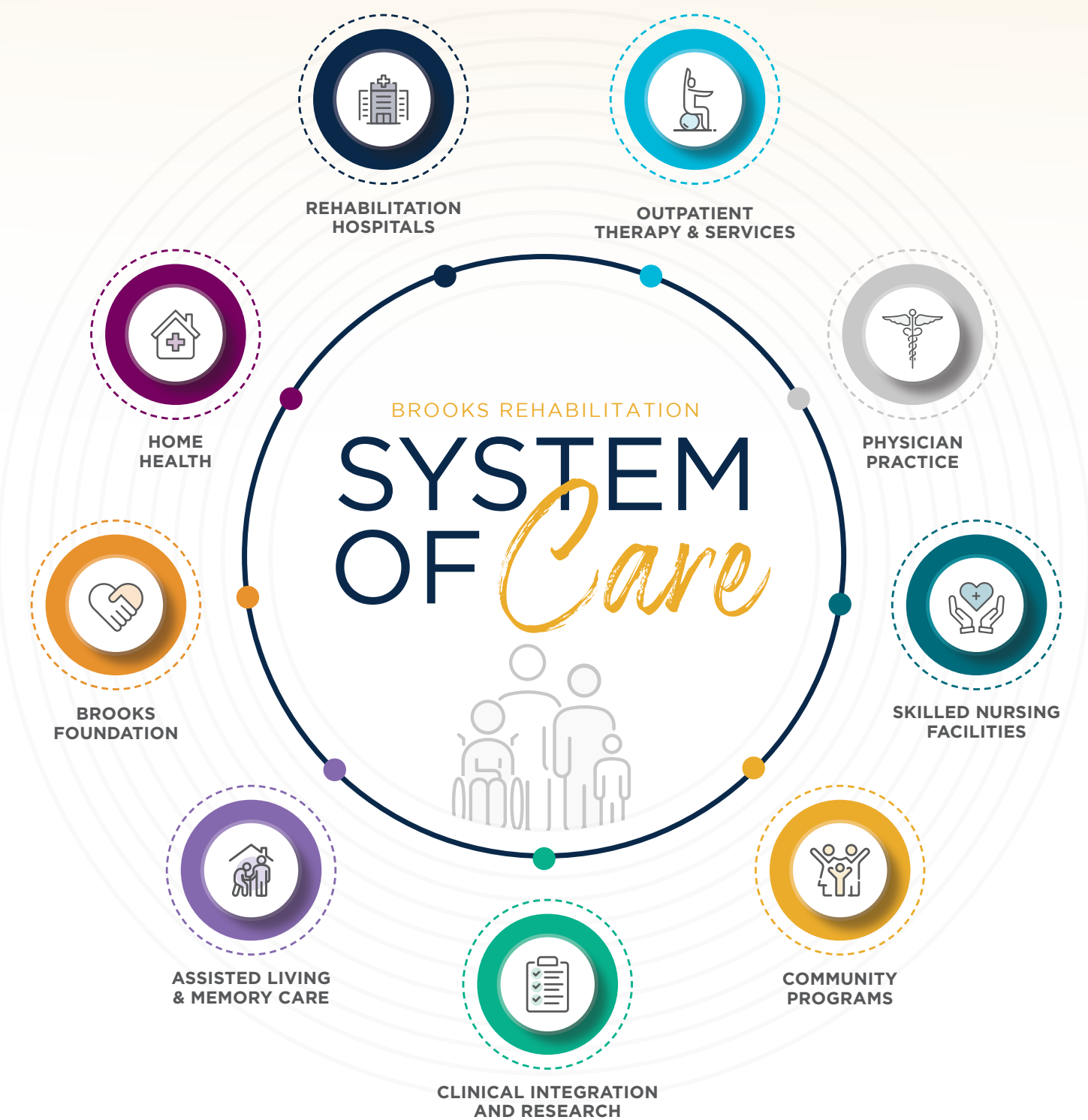
recognition underscores our unwavering support to help individuals living with aphasia rediscover their identity after a stroke or brain injury.

February also marked an exciting milestone as we broke ground on an 80,000-square-foot inpatient rehabilitation hospital on Mayo Clinic's Phoenix campus. This state-of-the-art facility will expand our reach to the West coast, bringing world-class rehabilitation services to more patients and communities in need.

But the most powerful reflections of our work come from our patients themselves. Take, for example, Jennifer Nguy, who suffered a stroke 25 years ago. She continues to thrive through our community programs, exemplifying our promise to care for patients through their entire journey to recovery. Or Walker Smith, a professional bull rider who regained his independence and strength after two collapsed lungs and a series of strokes. Their perseverance and determination fuel our commitment.

At Brooks, we believe that every step forward is a team effort. Thank you for allowing us to share our stories, accomplishments and vision with you. We are honored to have the trust of our patients, colleagues and partners in making a lasting difference in the lives we touch.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Doug H. Baer".



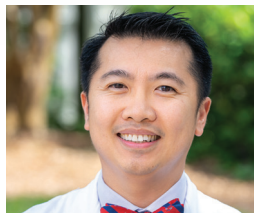
BROOKS REHABILITATION PHYSICIANS



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System Chief Medical Officer



Kerry Maher, PT, MD
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Community Education | Interim
Medical Director, Brooks Rehabilitation
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Brain Injury Day Treatment Program



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with Brooks Rehabilitation



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Bianca A. Tribuzio, DO
Staff Physiatrist



Howard Weiss, DO
Medical Director, Amputee Program

Q & A

LAUREN T. SHAPIRO

MD, MPH, FAAPMR



Lauren T. Shapiro, MD, MPH, FAAPMR, is medical director of Brooks' Stroke Rehabilitation Program, as well as associate program director of the Brooks/Mayo PM&R Residency Program. She is board-certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) and brain injury medicine, with a medical practice spanning more than 20 years.

Dr. Shapiro received her medical degree from the State University of New York (SUNY) Stony Brook School of Medicine, Stony Brook, New York. She completed a residency in PM&R at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine program at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, where she served as chief resident. She also earned a master's degree in public health from Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland. Throughout her career, Dr. Shapiro has served extensively as a professor and educator.

What first interested you in becoming a physician?

I loved science, and particularly how it could be used to solve problems and help others. I also developed a strong interest in health care policy and advocacy. So, medicine seemed like a great fit. I also considered becoming a veterinarian, because I love animals, but I thought dealing with just one species might be easier.

How did you decide on physical medicine & rehabilitation?

While on my rotations, I asked each of the attending physicians if they were to start all over again, which specialty they would have chosen. Many of them said "PM&R." It was amazing to see how people who survived really catastrophic diseases and injuries improved their functions and quality of life. I loved the interdisciplinary nature of the field; I found I was always learning from other members of the team.

How did you learn about Brooks?

I was working in Miami, and I found myself in situations where patients had to seek rehabilitation care elsewhere.

Many of them wound up at Brooks, and I was very impressed with the care they received. Brooks' programs like the Neuro Recovery Center, the Brain Injury Clubhouse and the Aphasia Center are rare and very much needed.

With your background in education, your role as the Associate Director for the PM&R Residency Program is a perfect fit. What are some of your top goals for the program?

My primary goal is to ensure our graduates are well-prepared to provide the best possible care to people living with disabilities, regardless of their diagnosis or the setting in which they are seeking care. I want them all to be successful in whatever clinical, educational and/or research endeavors they choose to pursue.

As stroke medical director, what differentiates Brooks from other health systems?

Stroke recovery takes time, and Brooks offers outstanding rehabilitation services across the entire continuum of care. Our three inpatient rehabilitation programs are all excellent and we offer equally strong home health services and outpatient therapies. The community programs are also second to none.

Brooks is also at the forefront of stroke recovery research and in education. We are participating in a number of multi-center trials investigating devices and techniques to improve outcomes. We're training the next generation of physicians, therapists and nurses to become leaders in the field.

While we're very dedicated to meeting the individualized needs of stroke survivors of all ages, our program also cares for a large number of younger stroke survivors. Our team works tirelessly to help them return to work, school and parenting roles, which is vitally important as the incidence of stroke in the younger population is rising.

Brooks Rehabilitation Breaks Ground on New Physical Rehabilitation Hospital in Arizona



Brooks Rehabilitation held a groundbreaking ceremony on Feb. 25, 2025, for their **new cutting-edge, 80,000-square-foot inpatient rehabilitation hospital** on Mayo Clinic's Phoenix campus.

Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as the No. 1 rehabilitation hospital in Florida and among the top 20 nationwide, the new hospital will join Brooks' network of three existing inpatient rehabilitation hospitals in Florida. Located adjacent to Mayo Clinic's Phoenix hospital and near the Arizona State University Health Futures Center, the new state-of-the-art facility will include 60 private rooms and specialize in caring for patients recovering from strokes, organ transplantation, advanced cancer care and other complex conditions.

SHARED COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Erin Mann, board chairman for Brooks Rehabilitation, kicked off the groundbreaking ceremony by welcoming City of Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, city officials, Brooks board members, development partners and members of the Mayo Clinic and Brooks leadership teams.

Mayor Gallego spoke about the importance of excellent healthcare in Phoenix and their commitment to recruiting top healthcare organizations. "I'm so excited to welcome Brooks to this beautiful part of our incredible city. Mayo has saved so many lives and improved so many lives in the city of Phoenix and this collaboration will only take this success rate to the next level," she shared.

Brooks Rehabilitation President and Chief Executive Officer, Doug Baer, thanked city officials, board members and the Mayo Clinic and Brooks teams for their support. "Having worked with Mayo Clinic Florida over the last 20 years, our missions and values are closely aligned, with both organizations focusing on high quality clinical care, treating the most complex patients in a coordinated system, researching new treatments and technologies and advancing education for our clinicians. We're proud Mayo Clinic sought Brooks out when they needed a rehabilitation partner, and we've experienced firsthand the wonderful care Mayo provides and why they are ranked as the No. 1 health system in the world."

Chief Executive Officer of Mayo Clinic in Arizona, Richard Gray, MD, recognized the teams at Mayo Clinic and Brooks who helped achieve the significant milestone of a groundbreaking by living out the shared values of teamwork and excellence. "This moment really is about laying the foundation for a new era in rehabilitation care in this region, one that will elevate the level of care that patients receive throughout their recovery journey." Sharing Mayo Clinic's strategy to ensure they are supporting patients in the best way possible, he continued, "Together we look forward to proving world-class care that is integrated, collaborative

and above all else, patient-centered. We at Mayo Clinic will transition patients to this new rehabilitation hospital confident that they will receive the cutting-edge therapies they need to make a successful return to their lives.”

Bryan K. Ganter, MD, chairperson of the Mayo Clinic physical medicine and rehabilitation department, shared the history of rehabilitation at Mayo Clinic beginning back in 1915. Brooks Rehabilitation System Chief Medical Officer, Trevor H. Paris, MD, FAAPMR, closed out the event by discussing the foundation of working with dedicated clinical teams at Mayo Clinic in Florida to care for shared patients, working through challenges and helping them to achieve their highest functional outcomes.

LEADERSHIP ROOTED IN CULTURE

Brooks also introduced key leadership appointments for the new location. Bryan Murphy, CRRN, MHA, MRMC, will serve as president and VP of Operations. Murphy’s career at Brooks began in 2009 and has since taken on positions of increasing authority. In his current role as the VP of Operations at the Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital – Bartram, he’s demonstrated exceptional leadership in patient care, quality and operational growth.

Kerry A. Maher, PT, MD, is named interim medical director. With dual training in physical therapy and physical medicine and rehabilitation, Dr. Maher brings a wealth of clinical and operational expertise. She will oversee the development

of referral relationships while assisting in crafting clinical care protocols to ensure seamless integration of Brooks’ renowned rehabilitation model.

Golda Parillon, BSN, RN, CRRN, was also recently promoted to director of nursing for the new hospital. Parillon’s journey with Brooks began in 2012 and, over the years, she has consistently gone above and beyond in her leadership and clinical roles to support both patients and staff. She will be bringing her expertise and commitment to building a strong foundation for patient care and nursing excellence to Arizona.



A HOSPITAL BUILT FOR HEALING AND GROWTH

The hospital’s development team includes: Anchor Health Properties (developer); Kitchell (general contractor); Hoefer Welker (architect); Kimley-Horn (civil engineer). Additionally, the hospital entered into a long-term lease agreement for the property with Pan-American Financial Assistance Foundation with funding arranged and structured by Veyron.

Mayo Clinic has a minority interest in this joint venture.

The \$70 million hospital will bring 200 new jobs to the region once fully operational, with an expected completion in fall 2026. The expansion into Arizona sets the stage for new growth, innovation and exceptional clinical outcomes and further demonstrates Brooks’ vision to redefine post-acute rehabilitation.



**ARIZONA
GROUNDBREAKING**

Scan QR code to view on YouTube



Walker Smith: A Rodeo Champion's Ride to Recovery



THREE SECONDS. That's how long it took for 17-year-old Walker Smith's life to change forever.

Scan QR code to view Walker's story on YouTube

A RISING STAR

By any scale, Walker Smith was not your average 17-year-old. As a competitive bull rider, this young Florida star already won several regional junior bull riding championships and more than 20 "buckles" – awards given to top event finishers – across multiple competitions in a single year. He was well on his way to an amazing career.

That all changed on Nov. 15, 2024.

"It was just another day at the rodeo. I got on my bull, tied my hands and nodded my head for the gates to open," Walker remembers.

This time, Walker was bucked off and stomped on by the 1,700-pound bull. Airlifted to a local hospital, he was placed on life support with two collapsed lungs and blood flow restrictions that led to multiple micro-strokes. Doctors gave him less than a 10 percent chance of survival.

PRAYING FOR A MIRACLE

For Walker's parents, Danny and Sabrina, hearing that hospice was being considered was unimaginably difficult. "After two weeks, the doctors told us there was nothing they could do for him and we should start praying because he's not going to make it out of here. So we prayed," said Danny. The next morning Walker started to move his arms and legs, signaling the beginning of an incredible turnaround.

Within a week, Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital clinical liaison, Colm Roe, met with the Smiths and recommended Walker come to Brooks. While Sabrina took in all the Brooks materials and information, Danny refused. "I had plenty of injuries through the years and went to therapy. I didn't see any value in it and I didn't think he needed to go to Jacksonville." Colm persisted, telling Danny repeatedly that Walker needed to go to Brooks.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF TOUGH

With Sabrina's urging, one month after his fall, Walker arrived at Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital – University Campus. His family was able to stay close by at Ronald McDonald House Charities – Jacksonville.

"My initial assessment of Walker when he was admitted was that he was medically doing very well considering everything that happened. And I just kind of knew that I was going to have a patient that was ready to fight," said Allison Wessner, MD, Nemours pediatric hospitalist at Brooks Rehabilitation.

Still, the challenges Walker faced were overwhelming. He couldn't talk, walk, take care of himself, or do any basic things we all take for granted.

"You never think about how tough your kid is. Bull riding is cowboy tough. This is a whole different kind of tough," said Danny. Walker's days were filled with physical, occupational and speech therapy sessions, all aimed at rebuilding his abilities and independence.

One pivotal moment in Walker's recovery came when his physical therapist, Dylan Nachum, told him, "You're not someone who can't walk; you're someone who's learning to walk." This mindset shift became the foundation of Walker's progress. It inspired him to approach therapy with hope, grit and a new perspective.



Getting stronger and stronger, he went from not being able to speak or move independently to cracking jokes and dancing with his therapy team. He was soon ready for the next phase of his recovery.

JOINING THE DAY TREATMENT PROGRAM

After leaving Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital, Walker transitioned into the Brooks Pediatric Day Treatment Program. The program provides an additional layer of structured, intensive care designed specifically for younger patients.

Walker thrived in this environment, forming tight-knit bonds with his therapists. The collaborative efforts of the team created a nurturing – yet challenging – place for Walker to excel.

Beyond the physical recovery, Walker forged meaningful connections with other patients in the program. Together, they encouraged and motivated each other, proving that recovery is as much about community as it is about individual perseverance.

In February 2025, Walker proudly graduated from the program and walked out of Brooks. His father Danny, at first hesitant, said, "If I ever see Colm again, I would hug him like crazy. He was right. We needed to go to Brooks. The therapists, nurses and doctors were all great. I'll put this rehab facility up against anybody in the world."

LOOKING AHEAD

Walker is back in his hometown of Tallahassee and continues with outpatient therapy. True to his nature, Walker is already setting his sights on the next big chapter of his life – owning his own bulls and eventually organizing his own rodeos. And if the opportunity arises, he wouldn't hesitate to get back on a bull. "If God allows me, I'd love to ride a bull again," he said with a smile.



"You never think about how tough your kid is. Bull riding is cowboy tough. This is a whole different kind of tough,"

- DANNY SMITH

A Learning HEALTH SYSTEM

BROOKS REHABILITATION'S CLINICAL INTEGRATION AND RESEARCH DIVISION

From the time Mark Bowden, PT, PhD, first interviewed for the vice president of Clinical Integration and Research position at Brooks Rehabilitation, one of the main initiatives for the organization was to develop a learning health system.

According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, learning health systems:

- Gather and analyze data from patient care experiences and internal metrics to improve overall care.
- Continually assess outcomes, while refining processes and training, to develop a cycle of learning and improvement.
- Provide care teams with actionable data and tools.

Most of these components were already in place at Brooks, but they needed additional focus and collaboration. Brooks Rehabilitation's newly formed Clinical Integration and Research Division combines the programs under one umbrella that coordinates, collects and connects information and data from specific groups to improve healthcare delivery and ultimately enhance patient care and outcomes.

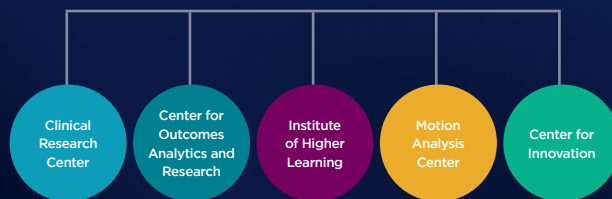
The following Brooks groups are under the umbrella of the Clinical Integration and Research Division:

- Clinical Research Center
- Center for Innovation
- Center for Outcomes Analytics and Research
- Motion Analysis Center
- Institute of Higher Learning

Evidence into Practice

Innovation, Research, Data & Education = The Best Outcomes

CLINICAL INTEGRATION & RESEARCH



Systematically gather and create evidence.

Apply the most promising evidence to improve care.

“In its most basic definition, a learning health system is learning from what we do to be able to make what we do better in the future.”

- Dr. Bowden



Clinical Research Center

The Brooks Clinical Research Center is committed to advancing rehabilitation science, technology and care through research. By collaborating with patients, healthcare professionals and researchers to conduct groundbreaking studies, the center is able to develop the most effective therapies for patients and integrate discoveries into everyday clinical practice.

Our clinical research programs are focused on patient populations who have experienced neurological injuries including spinal cord injury, stroke, brain injury and individuals who are battling musculoskeletal pain and other disabling conditions.

Collaboration is important for rehabilitation science and it's important for Brooks as an organization. Brooks partners with leading experts in academia, clinical care and the industry to conduct high-impact research that focuses on solving real-world problems that patients and healthcare professionals experience each day. One of the key collaborations is with the University of Florida, College of Public Health & Health Professions (PHHP). Through the Brooks-UF PHHP Research Collaboration, we're able to bring together the strength of a robust health system like Brooks with the scientific expertise and academic strength of the University of Florida in new and innovative ways to improve patient care.

"In our Neuromuscular Research Program, the goals and focus areas align with what we see in our clinics. For example, people with stroke and spinal cord injury

experience serious impacts on their respiratory function and cardiovascular health. And that's something that we're actively researching to identify strategies and interventions that help somebody breathe better, experience less illness, fewer hospitalizations and really live a long and full life," said Emily Fox, DPT, MHS, Ph.D., director of neuromuscular research and the Brooks-UF PHHP Collaboration.

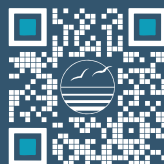
"Another area that our group is interested in is, is how we as physical therapists, manage the many patients we treat daily with musculoskeletal pain. Let's say, for example, a patient has shoulder pain and a lot of times they're fearful or hesitant to raise their shoulder or reach for something overhead. So instead of just focusing on the shoulder muscles and the shoulder joint itself, we also are investigating interventions that address how a patient thinks about their shoulder pain and the movements that they might be avoiding because they think it may make their shoulder worse. It's more than just identifying and treating the shoulder, but it's learning how to treat the whole person," said Jason Beneciuk, PT, DPT, PhD, MPH, director of musculoskeletal research and clinical research scientist in the Brooks/UF-PHHP Research Collaboration.

"I think it's very impactful that we have a multidisciplinary team - engineers, scientists, clinicians, assistants, public health experts - all working together. And our whole multi-disciplinary team comes together for each patient, delivering the research in the best way possible. Our ultimate goal is to generate new evidence and integrate the latest research discoveries and technologies into clinical practice," said Dr. Fox.



"Our whole multi-disciplinary team comes together for each patient, delivering the research in the best way possible."

- Dr. Fox



To learn more about Research at Brooks, please visit BrooksRehab.org/Research or scan the QR code to watch the video.



Center for Innovation

The Center for Innovation identifies the best ways to introduce and integrate new rehabilitative and assistive technologies into clinical practice. It does this by determining clinical efficacy, cost efficiency and overall ease of integration.

“We’re on both the forefront of product development and also the forefront of patient care to determine what technology is most beneficial,” said Robert McIver, PT, DPT, NCS, director of the Center for Innovation and Clinical Technology and Wellness Programming. “We may test a new piece of technology, establish a protocol for its use, identify what data is needed so we can determine if it will be successful both financially and in improving patient outcomes.”

This method allows clinicians to receive technology paired with detailed data on its impact, for example, how it improves outcomes or works best with specific diagnoses or care settings. The goal is to use innovation to enhance care delivery and ensure new solutions add real value.

The center also provides consultation and services to companies looking for development and placement of their technologies, including clinical research trials and government approval assistance. These partner companies gain access to Brooks’ best-in-class clinicians, accomplished research team and complex patient population.

“We may also consult with companies who have a new product they want to test. The device may have many advanced features, but we can test it and tell them the specific functions that are most important to our patient population and how it can be applied to therapies,” said McIver.

The center has pioneered advanced tools such as FDA-approved neurostimulation systems like Vivistim, which improves motor recovery post-stroke. They have recently acquired the ARC-EX. Named a TIME Magazine Best Invention of 2024, ARC-EX is the first and only FDA approved technology shown to improve hand strength and sensation after chronic spinal cord injury (SCI). Data indicates 90% of clinical trial participants showed improved strength or function in clinical trials. Also included within the Center for Innovation are:

- Two Neuro Recovery Centers in Jacksonville and Orange Park, Florida
- Assistive technology program
- Wheelchair clinic
- Aquatic therapy
- Virtual Reality
- Cyberdyne and other robotics
- And other technology house/launched out of the Center for Innovation

“The Center for Innovation is often coming up with an idea, helping evolve technology, developing the processes. We’re figuring out a new way of thinking and doing the initial tests. Is it feasible? Are we gathering the right data? And then we can hand it off to research and analytics for more extensive study,” said McIver.



To learn more about the Center for Innovation, please visit BrooksRehab.org/Innovation or scan the QR code to watch the video.



Center for Outcomes Analytics and Research

The Center for Outcomes Analytics and Research (COAR) plays a pivotal role in advancing data-driven, evidence-based practices to elevate the quality of rehabilitation care. It achieves this by enhancing clinical effectiveness in rehabilitation research through seamless collaboration between data teams and clinical and research professionals.

“By studying rehabilitation outcomes, we aim to identify best practices, reduce care variability and provide the highest quality of care, as well as promote health equity through rehabilitation research,” said Mindi R. Manes, PhD, COAR director.

Here’s how COAR contributes to a learning health system approach:

Data Analytics

By analyzing large-scale healthcare data, COAR uses advanced analytical tools to uncover insights that drive evidence-based practices.

Research

COAR conducts rigorous studies and develops innovative methods to address healthcare challenges and generate new clinical knowledge.

Quality Improvement

COAR collaborates with healthcare providers on projects that reduce care variability, enhance patient safety and improve health outcomes.

Patient-Centered Care

Every initiative at COAR revolves around the needs of patients. Through data and research, COAR ensures care is personalized and tailored to meet diverse needs.

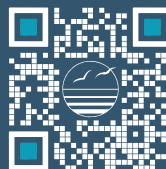
COAR transforms complex data into clear insights that support better clinical and operational decisions across the organization. By identifying patterns and forecasting future needs, the team helps improve patient outcomes, optimize

resources and guide strategic planning. From statistically validating survey tools to developing predictive models, COAR’s rigorous research tackles critical healthcare questions. Notable projects include identifying factors impacting patient experience in both inpatient and outpatient care and standardizing therapy and nursing outcome measures to improve care delivery.



A hallmark of COAR’s work is its commitment to creating “learning communities” that bring together researchers, clinicians, healthcare leaders, academic experts and individuals with lived experiences. These communities foster collaboration by combining complementary skills and insights, ensuring research projects receive comprehensive support from ideation to implementation.

“We’ve implemented a formalized project request and prioritization system, which creates a streamlined process for internal and external shareholders to engage with COAR on research and improvement efforts,” said Dr. Manes. “Whether it’s Brooks clinicians or academic collaborators, this unified approach brings together diverse expertise, from data analysts to external partners, to propel projects forward and maximize their impact.”



Please submit all projects to the **“New Project Application”** by scanning the QR code.

CHARLEE'S STORY

When Charlee was admitted to Brooks Rehabilitation Hospital following a stroke, she didn't anticipate still being in physical therapy nearly two years later. She has seen a lot of progress since then, but her treating therapist wanted to ensure they were still focusing on the right things to keep her challenged. Charlee's primary way of getting around has been by wheelchair and she has been fearful of walking without the support of a harness or use of the parallel bars while in therapy. In cases like this, where complex patients are in therapy for an extended period, a motion capture assessment at the MAC can be helpful to promote clinician collaboration based on detailed information about muscle activation, timing and joint movement.

Charlee's evaluation revealed hip weakness during a specific phase of walking, leading to increased movement and instability in her trunk. Based on these results, the MAC offered recommendations of a more focused treatment approach to help target these specific impairments, which were immediately implemented into her therapy sessions.

After six months, Charlee is now able to walk up to 120 feet with her walker and 20-30 feet in a harness without arm support. She participated in the 2025 Challenge Mile with for the third time with multiple 8-10 minute walking bouts to cross the finish line. According to Charlee, "I feel like I've done nothing but progress since this time last year. I feel more strength and more comfort with my left leg. I trust it more. My walking seems to be smoother too".



Motion Analysis Center (MAC)

The MAC is a specialized clinical and research assessment facility focused on gait and movement impairments in people of all ages. The MAC uses 3-D motion capture, expert clinical examination and biomechanical analysis to provide detailed, quantifiable information to advance rehabilitation science and clinical practice. The ultimate goal is to improve recovery and performance in individuals with orthopedic or neurological impairments.

"Clinicians and physicians often refer to us to help figure out 'why' someone may have difficulty walking, standing or balancing. We also assess athletes to determine when it is safe to return to sport after injury or before injury to help improve performance and prevent injuries," said Christy Conroy, PT, MSPT, NCS, MAC center manager.

By performing 3-D motion capture along with clinical assessments, staff at the MAC can often identify issues that aren't always visible to the naked eye. This specific knowledge helps therapists and researchers direct patient care that is more effective and leads to better outcomes faster.

The MAC is also an important component of the Neuromuscular Research Program by providing neuro-biomechanical testing. This testing is done before and after interventions to determine the impacts of these new, experimental therapies, and to understand the mechanisms behind these changes. Data from the MAC is critical for quantifying research results, leading to published manuscripts and presentations.

"I also work with the Brooks Institute for Higher Learning (IHL) Residency Program and the Mayo Clinic Florida/ Brooks Rehabilitation Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Residency to provide education about how the data from a MAC assessment can be used as a tool in their practice. At times, our data and mentorship is used to guide the findings for their case studies in the residency program. This all helps new residents grow as clinicians and better support their own patients," said Conroy.

To learn more about the MAC, please visit BrooksRehab.org/services/therapy/neurorehabilitation/motion-analysis/.





CONGRATULATIONS SARA CRISTELLO

Sara Cristello, PT, DPT, OCS, FAAOMPT, has been named director of Brooks Institute of Higher Learning (IHL), effective March 30.

Cristello served as interim director of the IHL since Nov. 1, 2024. She advanced several exciting initiatives and a progressive philosophy for the future of the IHL.

Cristello previously served as the IHL's director of operations since 2020, which includes serving as program director for the residency and fellowship programs. Prior to moving into that role, she was the program coordinator for IHL's Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy (OMPT) Fellowship Program, where she continues to serve as a mentor.

Cristello completed an orthopaedic residency in 2011 and an OMPT fellowship in 2014 at Brooks Rehabilitation. In addition to her roles within the IHL, Cristello has served as a clinic manager at Brooks Rehabilitation Outpatient Clinic Amelia Island and the Brooks Rehabilitation Center for Sports Therapy, eventually assuming a regional manager role.

Institute of Higher Learning (IHL)

The IHL has developed over the years into a world-class organization at the forefront of evidence-informed practice and professional development. It is the educational backbone of the division, providing clinicians with learning and development opportunities throughout their careers, thus empowering clinical professionals to meet the highest standards of care.

Hundreds of rehabilitation professionals within Brooks and from across the country have excelled through the IHL's accredited residencies and fellowships, while thousands more have achieved their goals through its continuing education courses.

IHL offers:

- Residencies and Fellowships provide highly focused educational experiences for clinicians seeking professional growth and clinical specialization.
- We currently offer the following accredited programs:
 - Geriatric Physical Therapy Residency
 - Neurologic Physical Therapy Residency (Jacksonville and Orlando)
 - Orthopaedic Physical Therapy Residency (Jacksonville and Orlando)
 - Pediatric Physical Therapy Residency
 - Sports Physical Therapy Residency
 - Women's Health Physical Therapy Residency
 - Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapy Fellowship
 - Neurologic Occupational Therapy Fellowship
 - Speech Therapy Clinical Fellowship
 - Transition to Practice Nursing Program
 - Mayo/Brooks PM&R Residency

Residency and fellowships are not required for physical and occupational therapists. Less than three percent of therapists have completed a residency or fellowship program in the U.S. When a physical and occupational therapist graduates from school, they have general skills within several areas of practice. The programs that the IHL and its highly skilled faculty offer allow therapists to specialize – thereby proving more efficient and effective care.

Educational Courses

Through high quality clinical education courses offering CEUs, clinicians can gain knowledge and skills that are immediately applicable to their clinical practice.

Topics span a multi-disciplinary spectrum and are delivered in-person, over webinars and on-demand, making the content accessible and applicable to all rehabilitation practitioners.

Student Program

The IHL helps more than 1,000 students a year at all phases of their professional path gain experience in their field of interest. Brooks' system of care provides observation and internship opportunities across the post-acute spectrum. We collaborate with university partners to enable students to gain exposure to a variety of disciplines and specialties to better prepare them for graduation. In turn, students reinforce our culture as a learning environment by asking thought-provoking questions and bringing new information to our clinical settings.

Clinical Practice Enhancement (CPE) Program

The Clinical Practice Enhancement (CPE) Program is a thoughtfully designed professional development initiative aimed at empowering clinicians to integrate evidence-based practices into their care so they can provide exceptional rehabilitation solutions for patients and their families.

Through the CPE Program, we provide clinicians with a personalized professional development framework, rooted in our core values and commitment to excellence. An additional strength of the program is the mentorship we provide to new therapists at Brooks. Each therapist is paired with an exemplary clinical mentor who will both support and challenge them to be deliberate and reflective, with an emphasis on optimal patient outcomes. The goal is to uplift all clinicians to the "Brooks standard" and provide them with the skills and resources to continuously learn, adapt and innovate.

However, the IHL isn't simply about education; it's about implementation. It translates research findings into practical skills and tools clinicians can readily apply, ensuring new advancements reach clinical care quickly and efficiently. As mentors and residents work together, they can review a new piece of technology and the new benefits discovered through the Center for Innovation and Research. As residents rotate through the Brooks system, they may discover a newfound interest that leads to a research or data analysis project through the Clinical Research Center and COAR. This comprehensive approach guarantees that the latest advancements are not only understood but also embraced and utilized by therapists and nurses in the organization, driving sustainable improvements throughout the healthcare system.

"We have the full spectrum of a learning health system now. All the basic discovery work that's happening in the Clinical Research Center and advanced ways to be able to assess patients in the Motion Analysis Center, combined with emerging technology in the Center for Innovation allows for the full spectrum of scientific discovery. Then we can analyze the impact of it across the organization with COAR. And ultimately, we can educate all the clinicians on how to utilize it best through the IHL. All the critical components are in place and working together at Brooks to be able to provide the best care possible for our patients."

- Dr. Bowden



Brooks Rehabilitation Aphasia Center Wins International Identity & Impact Award



Congratulations to the staff at the Brooks Rehabilitation Aphasia Center on this inaugural award!

Brooks Rehabilitation Aphasia Center (BRAC) is honored to be named the inaugural winner of the Identity & Impact Award, presented by Stroke Onward and Aphasia Access at the 2025 Aphasia Access Leadership Summit.

Established in 2025, the Identity & Impact Award recognizes individuals and organizations that incorporate identity-focused approaches to aphasia care. BRAC emerged as a trailblazer in this space, recognized for its dedication to fostering community, empowering identity and transforming the lives of those living with aphasia.

HONORING INNOVATION IN APHASIA REHABILITATION

Aphasia is a communication disorder, usually caused by a brain injury or stroke, that can affect a person's ability to speak, read, write or understand language. Aphasia does

not affect a person's intellect but can have lasting effects on their identity.

"When you lose your language and can't communicate due to aphasia, you can also lose your identity. You might not be able to be a lawyer anymore. You might not be able to be a teacher anymore. You can't communicate with your family in the same way you did before," said Jodi Morgan, CCC-SLP, director of Aphasia Programs at Brooks Rehabilitation. "Identity renegotiation is a major focus for us at the BRAC. Helping our friends with aphasia rediscover who they are again after their stroke or brain injury is a significant challenge we sought to address."

FINDING A NEW VOICE

Since opening its doors in 2016 in Jacksonville, Florida, the BRAC has served more than 1,000 individuals and their

families through programs grounded in the Life Participation Approach to Aphasia (LPAA). That includes both a community (social communication) group and a six-week Intensive Comprehensive Aphasia Program (ICAP). Zoom conversation groups and satellite programming extend BRAC's reach across Florida and globally.

The BRAC was nominated for the award by two of its current members who highlighted some of their innovative work:

- **Aphasia expertise:** Members have access to a team of professionals, students and volunteers who are highly trained in stroke, aphasia and ways to help with recovery of the whole person. A full-time mental health counselor is also on site and has been instrumental in improving self-confidence, reducing anxiety and increasing sense of self in some of the most vulnerable members.
- **Empowering community:** BRAC supports expression of identity by encouraging members to take leadership roles as peer mentors, group leaders and ambassadors, fostering self-confidence and purpose.
- **Identity development:** Book clubs and narrative storytelling groups provide members with tools to redefine and reclaim their identities with aphasia.
 - **"Story of Me" Group:** Over the course of 12 weeks, a BRAC member meets with other members to help them create and share their before, during and after aphasia stories with the group and at family-centered events.
 - **"Identity Theft" Book Club:** By reading and discussing *Identity Theft- Rediscovering Ourselves after Stroke* by Debra Meyerson and Danny Zuckerman, along with the accompanying aphasia-friendly modules, BRAC members are able to explore questions that help to redefine their identity.

"We incorporated the book and modules into the BRAC back in 2019 and it's been wonderful. Every time we run the book club, we discuss the most stimulating questions like, 'Who am I now? How did you feel after you realized that you couldn't do this? Where can you see yourself going?'" said Morgan. "It's honestly been one of the most profound book clubs we have ever run. And at the end, we were honored to have the authors join us over Zoom to talk more about it."

LOOKING AHEAD

Winning the Identity & Impact Award reinforces BRAC's dedication to its mission of providing exceptional, identity-centered aphasia care. The center will continue to innovate, inspire and empower its members while advocating for greater awareness and inclusivity within the broader community.

"There are so many deserving individuals and programs, so to be selected as the inaugural winner still feels like a dream. Our team was incredibly honored", said Morgan. "Our members are at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to advocate for them every day. They show us all what courage and resilience looks like."

To learn more about Brooks Rehabilitation Aphasia Center, visit their website, email Aphasia@BrooksRehab.org or call (904) 345-6780.



"Our members are at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to advocate for them every day. They show us all what courage and resilience looks like."

- JODI MORGAN

Jennifer Nguy: New Opportunities to Live Her Best Life



A CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR A LIFETIME

For many people, physical rehabilitation is a “one and done.” There’s a torn tendon or a broken bone that leads to medical treatment and then rehabilitation. After that, it’s back to work, the golf course or the pickleball court. For others, rehabilitation is a process that involves a continuum of care over a period of months, years or even a lifetime.

A SURPRISING DIAGNOSIS

In 2000, as a 21-year-old student in Tallahassee, Jennifer Nguy spent the day at presidential campaign rallies at the state’s Capitol. She then came down with a headache unlike anything she had experienced before. Back at home, Jennifer collapsed and fell unconscious. She had a ruptured arteriovenous malformation (AVM), where an artery and vein in her brain intertwined, creating a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate surgery.

Nguy lost the ability to speak, walk and eat independently. She spent the next months, and then years, undergoing therapy to regain the physical and cognitive abilities the trauma had taken from her. With time, patience and an unshakable spirit, she recovered to the point of being able to walk short distances before requiring a wheelchair.

A NEW CHAPTER IN RECOVERY

Years later, Nguy set her sights on a new goal – finishing her bachelor’s degree. She sought out a campus that offered

ample accessibility and supported her needs. Her search led her to the University of North Florida (UNF) in Jacksonville.

While exploring ways to engage with her community, Nguy discovered the Brooks Rehabilitation Celebrate Independence Challenge Mile. The free event is designed for individuals of all ages and abilities, and is a way for participants to mark milestones in their recovery. Open to the public, attendees walk, jog, wheel or run. Nguy decided to join the event with her grandmother, intrigued by the opportunity. “Prior to attending the Challenge Mile, I had never heard of Brooks,” she said. “It was interesting because as I was still relearning to walk, my grandmother was transitioning to a wheelchair. I thought, we could take turns pushing each other.”

That single event opened the door to learning more about Brooks. Nguy began therapy at Brooks Neuro Recovery Center (NRC). There, she used state-of-the-art equipment for gait training and electrical stimulation technology to strengthen her body.

“The technology at the NRC was incredible,” Nguy said. “Every session made me feel stronger, and that progress reignited my determination to reach my goal of walking again.”

Nguy’s hard work and determination paid off – she walked unassisted across the stage at her UNF graduation, a powerful testament to her resilience and strength.

REDISCOVERING PURPOSE THROUGH COMMUNITY

One of Nguy’s therapists at the NRC told her that she would be a good candidate for the Brooks Brain Injury Clubhouse. This recommendation became another life-changing opportunity. The Brain Injury Clubhouse is a full-time program that offers a range of activities designed to help the individuals regain social, physical, cognitive and vocational abilities.

Since joining the Clubhouse in 2023, Nguy feels that her life has blossomed. Whether she’s preparing meals in the kitchen or participating in group activities, she has found a renewed sense of purpose and belonging.

“Spending time with this community, while still having the flexibility to handle my other responsibilities, has been the perfect balance. For the first time in years, I finally feel like I’m truly living.”

Joanne Hoertz Receives 2025 HealthImpact Daisy Nurse Leader Award

Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at Brooks Rehabilitation, Joanne Hoertz, RN, MSN, CRRN, has been recognized as a 2025 honoree for the prestigious HealthImpact Daisy Nurse Leader Award. Nominated by Adam Francis, MSN, RN, CRRN, director of nursing, Hoertz has distinguished herself through exceptional policy work and compassionate care initiatives that have significantly improved patient outcomes and nursing workforce development.

“I nominated Joanne because she is an extraordinary leader whose dedication to advocacy for our patients and staff is evident at every level. She leads with compassion, always placing the well-being of our team and community at the forefront of her efforts,” said Francis “Joanne invests countless hours to ensure that every decision made—whether at Brooks or on a national platform—reflects the best interests of those we serve.”

The HealthImpact Daisy Nurse Leader Award recognizes nurses who excel in policy work and advance compassionate care to improve patient health outcomes – a description that perfectly captures Hoertz’s exceptional contributions to the nursing profession and the healthcare community.

ADVOCACY

In June 2021, Hoertz acted on newly passed legislation to implement the Personal Care Attendant Program at Brooks Rehabilitation. Her leadership was instrumental in implementing this program, which successfully increased direct care staffing levels for overnight settings during the challenges of COVID-19 and subsequent workforce shortages.

As an active board member of the Florida Center of Nursing, Hoertz continues identifying, researching and developing strategic workforce solutions for nurses throughout Florida. Her data-driven approach has helped address critical nursing shortages across the state.

As a Center for Independent Living board member, Hoertz championed services for individuals with disabilities throughout Northeast Florida. Her advocacy work has increased awareness of disabilities and expanded access to community resources at both local and state levels. In addition, her previous work on the Florida Healthcare Association (FHCA) Brain and Spinal Cord Committee ensured that measurable outcomes for state-funded brain

injury and spinal cord injury clients were incorporated into evaluations and awareness campaigns.

EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

In June 2023, Hoertz’s reputation as a champion for nursing education shone brightly. Recognizing an opportunity to enhance training for the Florida State College at Jacksonville nursing program, she established onsite LPN training at her facility, creating a valuable career development pathway for unlicensed healthcare professionals. Through her service on the Florida Healthcare Association (FHCA) Professional Development Committee, Hoertz has helped select scholarship recipients for healthcare degrees and nursing program tuition for FHCA facility staff members.

LEADERSHIP

With a deep understanding of the challenges facing diverse patient populations across various socioeconomic backgrounds, Hoertz has guided Brooks to meet patients where they are. She fosters a supportive culture that ensures patients, families and staff have the necessary training and resources for successful recovery.

Her innovative programs have boosted staffing levels across five facilities and helped community members advance their careers and better support their families. Under her leadership, Brooks achieved the re-designation of Magnet recognition, confirming a commitment to providing the highest quality of care for its patients.

“This award represents a team effort and I’d like to recognize everyone who has encouraged me during my career,” said Hoertz. “First, I’d like to thank my mom for inspiring me to become a nurse. I’d also like to thank the phenomenal team of people at Brooks Rehabilitation who inspire me every day. The past 17 years have been the highlight of my entire career. I’m honored to be able to help as many people as I can and leave a lasting legacy that honors the compassionate care our nurses provide.”



2024 IMPACT REPORT

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS



\$2,507,550
RAISED IN 2024

\$2,635,638
IN CHARITY CARE



18
ACTIVE
RESEARCH
STUDIES



13,850
INSTRUCTIONAL
HOURS



3,232
COMMUNITY PROGRAM
PARTICIPANTS SERVED



5,241
CHARITY
OUTPATIENT
VISITS



1,202
CHARITY
HOSPITAL
DAYS

\$10,142,054
TOTAL GIVEN BACK
TO THE COMMUNITY



239
ACTIVE
PARTICIPANTS
IN RESEARCH
STUDIES

The depth and breadth of Brooks Rehabilitation's community programs are unique from any other health system — rehabilitation or acute — in the country. From Adaptive Sports to the Aphasia Center to the Brain Injury Clubhouse — and much more in between — these programs provide a variety of health and wellness options that promote the physical, social and emotional well-being of those with differing abilities.

ADAPTIVE SPORTS AND RECREATION

- **Jacksonville:** 743 unique participants; average 14 visits per participant
- **Daytona:** 278 unique participants; average 15 visits per participant

What We're Proud of: Cycling now takes place twice weekly and the new NoteABLES music ensemble, funded by the City of Jacksonville, debuted with a June concert. Special events included an adaptive surf event, bocchia tournament, adaptive water skiing with Ann's Angels and the Gifts of the Season talent show.

The Brooks Bandits Wheelchair Rugby Team clinched the Division III National Championship, reflecting the program's spirit of resilience and teamwork. Increased collaboration across Brooks has boosted referrals and community engagement, ensuring more opportunities for all.

APHASIA CENTER

- 129 unique individuals served
- 50% received free individual and group mental health services
- 70+ family members trained in communication strategies

What We're Proud of: The BRAC had a transformative year, serving 129 individuals and training more than 70 family members to improve communication. Our outreach extended to countless healthcare professionals, providing essential training on aphasia and communication strategies.

The BRAC team was featured on PBS's Shelter Me series and presented at prestigious events, including Aphasia Access and the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Monthly outings to restaurants, movies and Starbucks enriched members' experiences, while 16 participants in our Intensive Comprehensive Aphasia Programs achieved milestones like returning to work, driving and living fulfilling lives.



BRAIN INJURY CLUBHOUSE

- 72 unique individuals served
- 23 average daily census
- 76 average visits per individual

What We're Proud of: In October 2024, the Brooks Brain Injury Clubhouse celebrated its 16th anniversary with a vibrant "Sweet 16" prom-style party, bringing members together for an unforgettable evening of fun and connection. The celebration featured a live DJ, a professional photo booth and a delicious array of food, allowing members to dress in elegant prom attire, dance, socialize and create cherished memories. Members reflected on their journeys and the transformative impact of the Clubhouse, celebrating resilience, camaraderie and shared accomplishments.



CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER

- 1,081 participants screened
- 239 participants enrolled
- 18 active research studies
- 857 total visits to the Brooks Clinical Research Center
- 36 research publications

What We're Proud of: In 2024, Brooks Rehabilitation Research advanced care by standardizing outcome measures across diagnoses, uniting clinicians, researchers and program teams in a data-driven approach.

This shift improved treatment personalization, leading to better mobility and quality of life for patients with neurological conditions. Clinicians embraced the model, using data to refine care and enhance outcomes. Beyond Brooks, this initiative strengthens rehabilitation standards, fosters collaboration and positions Brooks as a leader in innovation. By integrating research and care, we're transforming rehabilitation for the future.



HELEN'S HOUSE

- 974 guests served
- 12,559 nights used
- 117 charity guests served

What We're Proud of: In 2024, Helen's House welcomed 974 guests—190 more than last year—providing 12,559 nights of accommodation. It supported 117 charity guests, which was an increase of 33 guests from the previous year. On average, 90% of rooms were occupied with many days at 100% occupancy. Community spirit thrived through 32 Tuesday Night Guest Chef events. The Guest Chef volunteers were from all over the community including the US Navy, local churches and Brooks employees.

LOW VISION CENTER

- 1,732 optometry patients served

What We're Proud of: An innovative 3D-printed smartphone holder reduced assistive technology costs for many patients. A new occupational and physical therapist training further improved mobility support and reduced wait times, reinforcing the center's commitment to patient-centered care. Research grew through Jacksonville University collaborations, including a presentation at the American Occupational Therapy Association meeting.

MOTION ANALYSIS CENTER

- 163 unique Individuals Served
- 210 total assessments completed

What We're Proud of: In 2024, the Brooks Motion Analysis Center completed 210 assessments for 163 individuals

with diverse diagnoses, including stroke, spinal cord injury and ACL reconstruction. Of these, the data was included in six federally funded research studies, while 89 clinical assessments helped optimize rehabilitation plans for patients from cities across Florida and Georgia.

NEURO RECOVERY CENTERS

- **Jacksonville:** 248 unique participants; 30,319 checked in appointments; 123 average visits per person
- **Orange Park:** 80 unique participants; 8,391 checked in appointments; 109 average visits per person

What We're Proud of: Enhancements at the Jacksonville center included new technologies from the Brooks Center for Innovation, expanded classes like Strengthen and Lengthen, and community events fostering connection. At the Orange Park center, advancements included the addition of fine motor programs with RT Xcite, smart board technology and the full establishment of the BASE program.

PEDIATRIC RECREATION

- **Jacksonville:** 427 unique participants; 3,444 visits; average 8 visits per participant
- **Daytona:** 72 unique participants; 428 visits; average 6 visits per participant

What We're Proud of: Participants engaged in adaptive sports like wheelchair basketball, kayaking and archery. The First Coast Cruisers awarded 15 adaptive Jeeps to children with mobility impairments, supported by more than 70 volunteers. Brooks Plant Pals expanded its adaptive garden program to include animal interactions and food exploration. Adaptive Aquatics introduced a new learn-to-swim curriculum. Cooking classes remained a favorite, bringing families together to create simple, fun recipes.



SCHOOL RE-ENTRY PROGRAM

- 280 total served; 49 counties across Florida, Georgia and beyond

What We're Proud of: Set a new record by serving 280 students—the highest number in its history. The program expanded its reach to 49 counties, including 38 in Florida, nine in Georgia and two new states: New York and Tennessee. The 5th annual school supply drive provided essential resources for students in need.



BROOKS VOLUNTEERS

- 996 Volunteers participated across the system of care; 5,037 hours of time
- **Peer Mentor Program:** 109 Patients received guidance by 46 trained mentors; 236 total visits by peers
- **VolunTEEN Program:** 90 high school students volunteered; 5,710 hours of service

What We're Proud of: This year, our dedicated volunteers contributed about 7,500 hours, marking a nearly 30% increase from the previous year. The VolunTEEN Program also saw remarkable growth, with 90 high school students contributing over 5,710 hours of service throughout 2024, fostering a culture of compassion and community engagement across Florida.

WELLNESS

- **Jacksonville:** 278 unique participants; 12,238 visits
- **Daytona:** 39 unique participants; 1,609 visits

What We're Proud of: New community initiatives further enhanced holistic wellness. The Jacksonville Brooks Community Wellness Programs grew with a record 12,238 visits and 278 participants in 2024, fostering physical gains, social connections and personal growth.



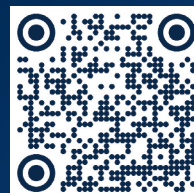
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*Empowering people through
recovery and beyond.*

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Ocean Course





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2026

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

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