

OL

OPENLINES

TOP 250

03

Cover Story

UF Health Jacksonville is ranked in the top 5 percent of hospitals.

04

Thumbs Up for Chris

UF Health TraumaOne heals a teen with a traumatic brain injury.

07

Same-Day Assessments

UF Health Jacksonville offers fast answers to mother-daughter duo.

What is a Hero?

UF Health Jacksonville is proud to be home to Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia's only Level I adult and pediatric trauma center. It's a big part of what positions our organization to become the region's most valued health care asset.

Providers at UF Health TraumaOne serve more than 4,000 patients from 30 counties each year. These heroes save lives every day.

But what is a hero?

Trauma surgeons, neurosurgeons, orthopaedic surgeons, anesthesia and emergency medicine personnel, nurses, therapists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and our resident trainees are all here to do a job for which they are compensated. But their dedication to trauma care — to not just healing but comforting — is what makes them heroes.

Trauma care is so much more than simply fixing the broken man. It is comforting a patient's family through a trying time. It is going the extra mile to ensure a patient stays on track in rehabilitation despite extensive follow-up appointments. It is, thankfully, revisiting the emotional connections forged in a person's darkest hour when that patient walks back through our doors and smiles to greet those heroes who saved their life.

Last month, we welcomed one of those patients at the 12th annual "A Night for Heroes Gala," honoring the contributions of those who work tirelessly to make our trauma center a leader in the field. The event benefits UF Health TraumaOne by providing the funding to pay for lifesaving equipment and resources to comfort relatives of the trauma patients we serve. The gala has raised more than \$1 million over more than a decade.



UF Health TraumaOne is fiscally responsible in its coordination of the complex medical care and research that make it indispensable to the health of our community. It is through our drive to improve that our trauma providers are able to save lives that may otherwise have been lost.

Sincerely,

Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA, CPE, FACEP
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville

UF Health Jacksonville Named One of the Top Hospitals in the Nation

UF Health Jacksonville is ranked in the top 5 percent of hospitals in overall clinical excellence.

UF Health Jacksonville has been named one of the best hospitals in America by Healthgrades, a national organization that analyzes the performance of hospitals across the country. UF Health Jacksonville was among the top 250 hospitals nationwide, or the top 5 percent, in overall clinical excellence.

This is the second recent Healthgrades honor for UF Health Jacksonville, which received two clinical awards in late 2018, when it was ranked as one of the top hospitals in multiple areas of care in the organization's report.

"This is an amazing achievement for everyone at UF Health Jacksonville and is a direct result of the focus we put on patient care," said Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, MHSA, CEO of UF Health Jacksonville and dean of the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville. "All of our caregivers and those who support them should be proud of this honor. Our goal will always be to provide the most comprehensive and compassionate care to our community."

Healthgrades America's Best Hospitals is based solely on clinical quality outcomes for 32 conditions and procedures. This premier distinction rewards hospitals that consistently exhibit exceptional, comprehensive quality care. Healthgrades says patients are more likely to have a successful treatment without major complications — and have a lower chance of dying — at America's Best Hospitals.

"Healthgrades congratulates recipients of the America's 50, 100 and 250 Best Hospitals Awards," said Brad Bowman, chief medical officer at Healthgrades. "Consumers have many options for care, so when hospitals prove their long-term commitment to the patient and to

achieving high-quality clinical outcomes, it sets their system apart in a sea of choices."

The Healthgrades analysis revealed that, on average, America's Best Hospitals outperformed their peers in treating a core group of conditions that account for more than 80 percent of mortalities in areas evaluated, including heart attack, heart failure, pneumonia, respiratory failure, sepsis and stroke. These hospitals are also among the top 5 percent in the nation that deliver high-quality care across at least 21 of 32 common inpatient conditions and procedures, according to the Healthgrades analysis.

"We have put a tremendous amount of effort into boosting our quality scores because in the end, that means better outcomes for patients," said Kelly Gray-Eurom, M.D., chief quality officer for UF Health Jacksonville. "This shows that the steps we have taken, and continue to take, are having a dramatic, positive effect on care."

Patients treated in hospitals named as America's Best Hospitals have, on average, a 27.1 percent lower risk of dying than if they were treated in hospitals that did not receive this award. According to Healthgrades, if all hospitals, as a group, performed similarly to America's Best Hospitals, more than 168,000 lives could potentially have been saved.

In the separate report released in late 2018, UF Health Jacksonville was singled out for clinical quality awards in cranial neurosurgery and critical care. UF Health Jacksonville is the only hospital in Northeast Florida to receive those distinctions. UF Health Jacksonville also achieved 5-star ratings from Healthgrades in caring for heart failure, respiratory failure, sepsis, esophageal/stomach surgery and stroke.

UF Health TraumaOne and an outpouring of community support heal a Jacksonville-area teen with a traumatic brain injury.

Pam Hemmen sent her son, Chris, to his part-time job coaching youth sports with the family's signature goodbye on the morning of July 23, 2017.

"Don't eat Tide Pods," she said, with a winking acknowledgement that the reminder was unnecessary.

Pam and her husband of 23 years, Geoff, are raising their three kids to be smart, confident young people. Nolan excels as a ninth-grader on Bartram Trail High School's junior varsity cross country team. Sarah is in her second year at the Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University. Chris, the middle child, is a sports fan who is naturally drawn to math and science. He studies architectural drafting in Bartram Trail's design academy.

These kids don't eat Tide Pods.

But that piece of advice was nearly the last thing Chris' mother ever said to him. As he walked out the door, he flashed his infectious smile and gave a "thumbs-up," unaware of how his life was about to change.

CHRIS... ACCIDENT... SEVERE BRAIN INJURY...

Chris had been coaching at a nearby park, but a scheduling change would later require a 45-minute commute to the Jacksonville Ice and Sportsplex just south of downtown. Financially, it didn't make a lot of sense for \$10 an hour. Besides, all that driving for a 16-year-old made Pam nervous. He was planning to resign that day.

But Chris never made it to work.

While he traveled north on Bartram Park Boulevard — being careful to avoid the high speeds of Interstate 95 — water was pooling on the road from what the Hemmens can only suspect was a broken sprinkler head. When Chris' Jeep Liberty hit the slick, it hydroplaned and began to roll toward a row of neatly planted oak trees outside a new townhome development. The Jeep's roof, and Chris' head, crashed into a tree.

Back at home, Pam was outside pressure-washing the back patio. She

came in for a glass of water and saw several missed calls from an unfamiliar number. Then Geoff called.

"All I heard was Chris... accident... severe brain injury," she said.

The phone dropped to the floor.

MICROSCOPIC DISRUPTIONS

First responders took Chris to the nearest emergency room, where doctors worked to stabilize him. Pam rushed out the door, leaving Sarah home with Nolan.

By the time Pam arrived at the hospital, Chris was already set to be transferred to the region's only Level I adult and pediatric trauma center, UF Health TraumaOne.

Pam accompanied her son in the ambulance. When they arrived, Chris was whisked away and Pam was soon meeting Gazanfar Rahmathulla, MD, medical director of neurosurgery trauma at UF Health Jacksonville.

Incredibly, Pam learned, Chris had no broken bones and required no surgery. But the news wasn't exactly good.

The brain's neurons are connected by tiny axons, like a vast array of microchips in a computer. This circuit is the network through which information travels in the brain. When the roof of Chris' Jeep caved in, the force caused a diffuse axonal injury.

"The acceleration and deceleration of the brain within the cranial vault stretched these axons out and caused microscopic disruptions," Rahmathulla said. "So the electrical signals that normally jump across are not jumping across. All the signals are stopped or disrupted."

Chris was in a coma.

THUMBS UP FOR CHRIS

"Nobody gets up in the morning and says they're going to fall off the roof or get in a severe crash," said Andrew Kerwin, MD, division chief of acute care surgery at UF Health Jacksonville. "But it happens to people in everyday life. And when it happens, it's scary."

To work through that fear, Pam created a Facebook group as an outlet for her

thoughts and feelings. The group, #ThumbsUp4Chris, became a place where family and friends could express their support.

Within five days, Chris received more than 200 messages of encouragement. Through the group, Nolan and Sarah organized a prayer circle at a neighborhood park. More than 300 people showed up.

DEDICATED TO TRAUMA

Chris spent 21 days in the pediatric ICU at UF Health Jacksonville, under the care of a dedicated team of trauma care providers that is unmatched in Northeast Florida or Southeast Georgia.

"Our hospital is unique because we have so many people dedicated to trauma," Kerwin said. "All of the staff from the first floor to the eighth floor of the hospital are dedicated to trauma."

With a diffuse axonal injury, the goal of hospital care is to quickly get the patient well enough for rehabilitation. In rehab, the aim is work hard each day to regain a relatively normal life. There are no days off. It was in this environment that Chris began to ask questions.

The last thing he remembered was going to see a movie with friends the night before his accident. Now he was relearning how to brush his teeth. One morning, Chris looked up and asked what happened.

"Chris... accident... severe brain injury." The story hadn't changed.

"I was lying in bed and I started crying," Chris said. "I might not be able to walk again."

His family assured him, "You'll be walking in the next week."

Sure enough, he was walking with assistance six days later.

ABSOLUTELY AMAZING

For every step along Chris' journey to this point, there was a range of possible outcomes. Pam had been told to prepare for lifelong, in-home care. But there was also the slim possibility Chris could walk out of this, back to his normal self.

continued on next page



"It is very difficult to predict," Rahmathulla explained. "We don't want to make the patient's family lose hope, but neither do we want to provide them with a false sense of an outcome which is unexpected."

Chris' recovery was certainly unexpected. Not wanting to interrupt his incredible progress in rehab, UF Health providers made every effort to streamline his follow-up visits.

"Complex trauma patients often have to come back and see many specialists and also have to get imaging or further testing," said Brian Yorkgitis, DO. "It really takes away from their therapy and so we really try hard to focus on getting them back into rehab."

Yorkgitis arranged for Chris to come back to the hospital for multiple appointments in one visit. Chris needed to have his feeding tube removed — one step closer to getting that sweet, smoky barbecue. He also needed a repeat CT scan and to see several specialists.

"This doctor from UF Health is calling me on my cell phone because he heard Chris needed to have certain things done that we couldn't do because we couldn't take away from his therapy," Pam said. "He said 'Can you come in today? We can get the feeding tube out, do the CT scan, and we can do the neuro analysis.'"

Yorkgitis met Chris and Pam in the parking lot, navigated them through the hospital for several appointments, removed the feeding tube right in the radiology office and walked them back out to their car. The visit took a half hour.

"It was absolutely amazing to have a doctor do that," Pam said. "Amazing."

THUMBS UP FROM CHRIS

Soon it would be Chris' turn to amaze his mom, as well as his doctors. On Sept. 15, just 54 days after the accident, Chris walked out of Brooks Rehabilitation with a double thumbs-up and that same smile.

He completed his first semester of the 11th grade from home and returned to school the following January.

This May, Chris will graduate on time. He has been accepted to the University of North Florida, where he can pursue a college degree while staying close to home.

Unless you were one of Chris' providers, a family member, friend, classmate or any one of the nearly 1,400 members of the #ThumbsUp4Chris Facebook group, you would never know he spent part of 2017 in a coma. At the site of the accident, the St. Augustine grass has spread its thatch, erasing tire tracks. The hedges have matured outside the suburban neighborhood, but peer through them and you can spy an inscription carved into one of those neatly planted oaks.

"Chris was here," it says.



Thank you to the sponsors of the
12th Annual A Night for Heroes gala!

Champion Sponsors

Perry-McCall Construction Inc.

Dedication Sponsors

Brooks Rehabilitation
Crothall Healthcare

Champion Sponsors

Batson-Cook Construction
Gresham Smith
Miller Electric Company
Pajcic & Pajcic

Hero Sponsors

Ameris Bank
bestbet Jacksonville
Century Ambulance
The Fiorentino Group
The Lazzara Family Foundation
Lending Bear
Mayo Clinic
Med-Trans Corp.

Lifesaver Sponsors

Russ and Susan Armistead
Florida Blue
nThrive
Dr. Andrew and Anne Schmidt
Smith Hulsey & Busey
W.W. Gay Fire & Integrated Systems

Friends of TraumaOne

Black Knight
Dalton Agency
Danis Construction LLC
Dr. Andrew and Tammy Kerwin
St. Vincent's Healthcare
U.S. Bank National Association

Special Gifts

Jayce Yoho Memorial Golf Tournament
The Vestcor Family Foundation
Gefen-Jaffe Family Foundation

Sponsor a Hero Donations

Ben and Cynthia Ballard
Cantina Louie Corporate LLC
Intrepid Capital
Össur Americas, Inc.
Synovus Bank
Tom Barrow Company
Victor Smith Law Group
Welltality
The Wildes Family

Same-day Testing, Same-day Peace of Mind.

UF Health Jacksonville offers fast answers to mother-daughter duo.

Ellen Durand fought Stage 3 breast cancer in her 30s. She endured dozens of rounds of radiation, participated in clinical trials and had multiple operations, including a double mastectomy.

When Ellen was diagnosed, her daughter, Ashley, was 6 years old. Ellen was determined to fight cancer so she could raise Ashley and be there for all her childhood milestones.

Ellen learned she was a carrier of a BRCA2 gene mutation and decided to have Ashley tested as a teenager. The test confirmed Ashley was also a carrier of BRCA2, which is associated with an increased risk of developing breast cancer.

Ashley called her mother one morning from Alabama, where she was attending college, with terrifying news — she found a lump and needed help. Ellen knew they should act quickly.

"Finding my lump was probably how you would imagine finding one — initial panic, a lot of crying in the shower and a lot of thinking the worst," Ashley said.

For Ellen, the possibility of her only daughter being diagnosed with breast cancer at age 22 was devastating. She remembered waiting seven agonizing weeks for her own diagnosis, enduring delays with scheduling and referrals to see all of the required specialists.

"I can honestly say waiting for the results in between tests brought me more anxiety and stress than the actual moment I was diagnosed with breast cancer," Ellen said.

Ellen works for UF Health Jacksonville and knew about the hospital's same-day breast assessment service. She called and made an appointment for the same week. Ashley was able to see multiple specialists within that same day.

Fortunately for Ashley, her tumor was identified as a fibroadenoma, or a noncancerous breast tumor. No treatment was necessary. She was able to return to school with a plan for regular follow-ups.

Ashley has since earned her master's degree in biological science from Auburn University. She plans to become a veterinarian and will always remain a steadfast advocate for early breast cancer detection.

"I would really like more of the public to know this is a viable option," Ashley said. "I would have endured unnecessary stress and anxiety wondering about my lump if it was not for the assessment."

Same-day breast assessments are available at UF Health Jacksonville and UF Health North. For more information or to make an appointment, visit UFHealthJax.org/breast, or call 904.244.4387.



Ashley Durand, UF Health Jacksonville patient

OL

OPENLINES

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

May/June – March 25

July/August – May 17

Submit your copy and photos via
email to openlines@jax.ufl.edu.

.....

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Darcy Ladd

PHOTOGRAPHER

Karel Danzie

CONTRIBUTORS

Natalie Spindle

Jesef Williams

.....



UFHealthJax.org

PHOTO SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

We welcome photos that are taken or submitted by employees. Photos should be at least 3 megabytes (3MB) in image size to be published. Please try to take or submit photos that are clear (camera is held very still); not backlit (flash is used and/or light source is not behind the subject); and framed correctly (feet are not cut off and/or subject is not shown too far away). Employees are encouraged to arrange photography with the Media Center before an event to ensure quality. **Direct questions to openlines@jax.ufl.edu or call 244.9750.**

Visit OpenLines.UFHealthJax.org to find current and past issues of Open Lines.