Since 2001, more than 2.4 million men and women have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan to protect our nation’s freedom.

Of those who have served, an estimated one in three will experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and one in five will suffer from traumatic brain injury (TBI), with many veterans suffering from both conditions at once. According to a 2016 report from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 20 veterans commit suicide each day.

The Emory Healthcare Veterans Program, which began in 2015, is a comprehensive treatment program for post-9/11 veterans with PTSD, TBI, and other service-related conditions. All of the services offered to veterans are covered by philanthropic support so the veteran never pays out of pocket.

Recently, Emory was awarded two institutional grants—from the NCR Foundation the SunTrust Foundations—that will help expand the program’s capacity to treat and support more military veterans suffering from the physical and psychological wounds of combat and help them reenter civilian society.

The Emory Healthcare Veterans Program integrates behavioral health care, psychiatry, neurology, rehabilitative medicine, wellness, nutrition, yoga, and family support at no out-of-pocket cost to veterans.

The NCR Foundation’s generous gift will help make this work possible for patients with PTSD and TBI, and help ensure that wounded veterans will not be denied access to state-of-the-art, patient-centered care due to their geographic location or inability to pay.

Another key pillar of the services that the program offers to veterans is vocational support and financial literacy training, which the generous gifts from SunTrust Foundation and the SunTrust Trusteed Foundations—Walter H. and Marjory M. Rich Memorial Fund will support, along with purchasing a van to help with veterans’ transportation needs.

Financial mentoring and career assistance is one of the most essential services veterans request and is critical to the long-term success and recovery of patients and their families reintegrating into civilian life. SunTrust’s support will help overcome barriers to providing this care to underserved veteran populations and make these services truly accessible to all veterans in Georgia and beyond.

With the help of philanthropic supporters including the NCR Foundation and the SunTrust Foundations, the Emory Healthcare Veterans Program aims to almost double the number of veterans served this year.

“I remember being asked, ‘What do you want to get out of this program?’ I said I wanted my life back. And that is essentially what they have done for me.”
—Matt Barnes, Former US Marine

Based on last year’s demographic data of veterans seeking care at Emory:
- 75% of our veteran patients are male.
- 25% are female.
- The majority of PTSD and TBI patients have three or four medical diagnoses.
Based on last year’s demographic data of veterans seeking care at Emory, 75% of our veteran patients are male and 25% are female, and the majority of our PTSD and TBI patients have three or four medical diagnoses. With the suicide rate of female veterans rising more than 85% from 2001 to 2014, it is particularly important that female veterans have a private option like Emory for seeking care.

These important partnerships with SunTrust Foundations and the NCR Foundation will help allow the Emory Healthcare Veterans Program to increase access for veterans who urgently need care and will make it possible for more veterans to receive services to help them recover and thrive with dignity.

To learn more about the Emory Healthcare Veterans Program and how you can support this work, contact Courtney Harris at courtney.harris@emory.edu or 404-727-5282.

Local Philanthropist Honored with Memorial Donations for Cardiac Care

When Martha Looney passed away last October, she left behind a legacy of generosity and kindness, both among her family and friends, and in the Emory community.

Praised as a quiet philanthropist who strove to make the world a better place, Martha supported numerous causes, including the Carlyle Fraser Heart Center at Emory University Hospital Midtown, which she helped to establish, and where she later benefited from care.

To honor that legacy, Wilton Looney, her husband of 74 years, and their daughter, Sylvia Dick, donated $200,000 to the Carlyle Fraser Heart Center, and asked that memorial gifts be designated to the center in lieu of flowers.

A testament to the power of her inspiring legacy, memorial donations in Martha Looney’s name from friends and family totaled nearly $350,000.

The Carlyle Fraser Heart Center, named for Wilton Looney’s mentor at Genuine Parts Company, is one of the country’s leading cardiac treatment and research facilities. Its mission is to provide superior health care to Georgia and beyond, and to advance cardiac care through discovery and education.

The center is recognized nationally for innovation and research, especially in structural heart disease and in development of new devices for treating heart valve problems. The center works to provide the best patient care, and to discover new methods of cardiovascular treatment.

These efforts would not be possible without the Looney family, memorial gifts, and others who have supported the Carlyle Fraser Heart Center through philanthropy.

In August 2015, Scott Boden, MD, Director of Emory Orthopaedics & Spine Center, was introduced to the new CEO of the Atlanta Hawks NBA basketball team, Steven Koonin, and a unique partnership was born.

The plan was to build a state-of-the-art facility that would serve as a practice space for the team, but would be located on Emory Healthcare’s campus. The facility would include comprehensive, on-site sports medicine services to the team, as well as to community members and athletes at all levels of play, including professional, college, high school, and recreational.

“We wanted to make it something special and unique,” said Dr. Boden of the collaboration between the Atlanta Hawks and Emory Healthcare.

By the following February, plans were underway, and in June 2016, the partners broke ground on the new Emory Sports Medicine Complex.

The new Emory Sports Medicine Complex will be the new home of Emory Sports Medicine Center, Emory Physical Therapy, and Emory Healthcare Courts, where the Atlanta Hawks will conduct basketball training and practice, and house the Hawks basketball operations. Additional space at the complex will serve as the East Coast headquarters for P3, Peak Performance Project, a world leader in applied sports science.

“This partnership is going to create a facility with an unprecedented level of integrated medical services where all athletes can come to train and have treatment and rehabilitation,” Dr. Boden said.

“It will allow Emory to deliver the highest quality of care to Hawks players, while conducting the most advanced research and treatment in rehabilitation and sports medicine.”

The new facility is scheduled to open in fall 2017.

If you would like to make a donation to the Emory Orthopaedics & Spine Center please contact Susan House at 404-778-4258 or shouse2@emory.edu.
As the Director of Guest and Volunteer Services for Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University, DaVida Lee-Williams gets to spend her days doing something she loves—working with people, specifically patients, their families, and volunteers at Winship’s four locations throughout the Atlanta metro area.

Lee-Williams, who is approaching her 10-year anniversary at Emory, recruits volunteers for special events like the annual Winship Win the Fight 5K Run/Walk, coordinates a group of patient and family advisors, and manages an undergraduate summer volunteer program.

But it’s the relationships formed in these venues that make everything worthwhile, says Lee-Williams. “Being able to match patients with volunteers who meet their needs is the best part of my job,” she says. “We’re creating a supportive environment where patients and volunteers can interact with diverse people from different backgrounds and make meaningful connections.”

Lee-Williams’ work makes Winship truly unique among similar facilities. “We can see the ways our volunteers impact others, connecting with them and hearing their stories—it’s more than just a typical patient and clinic relationship,” she explains. “We become part of the family.”

Her team organizes Patient Appreciation Week, with activities for patients and their families like a circus-themed celebration, ice cream day, and family portraits. In the spring, they stage a building-wide Easter egg hunt and have a social worker who dresses up as the Easter bunny for patients and their families.

As part of the Arts and Health Program, Lee-Williams and her team bring in local artists to work with patients on crafts and other activities that provide a creative outlet in the midst of what can be a difficult healthcare journey. Patients and volunteer artists even created a mural together.

“No matter what we do, whether it’s bringing a patient a blanket or an extra pillow, or just sitting and talking with them—I know we’re making a difference in the lives of everyone involved.”

Employee Spotlight: DaVida Lee-Williams

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“It’s how we connect with people that is most important,” says Lee-Williams. "I know we all have bad days, but when I see the impact our volunteers have—whether it’s bringing a patient a blanket or an extra pillow, or just sitting and talking with them—I know we’re making a difference in the lives of everyone involved.”

Volunteer roles include hospitality, administrative work, front desk help, and other duties, all of which are patient-centered and allow for these meaningful bonds between patients, their families, and volunteers.

If you’re interested in volunteering with Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University or to find out more, visit winshipcancer.emory.edu and click on “Support Winship,” or call 404-778-2405.

Area Student Raises Funds to Fight Parkinson’s Disease

When Keegan Casteel found out she needed to do a senior project to graduate from Etowah High School, she knew exactly what cause she wanted her efforts to support.

Twelve years ago, her grandfather, whom she calls “Poppy,” was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease. Although Casteel was a child at the time, she remembers how difficult the disease was to manage and how often her grandmother spoke of the amazing support that Emory provided.

She knew of an older classmate who had organized a charity tennis tournament for a senior project, so she decided to do the same to benefit Emory’s Parkinson’s disease research and treatment programs.

The Emory Movement Disorders Center was the first American Parkinson Disease Association Center for Advanced Research.

“I was really excited to do the tournament because of Poppy, but also to give something back to the community and help other families affected by this disease,” Casteel says. “I also wanted to do something to help a local cause.”

Emory Development and Alumni Relations staff helped her organize the event and came to show their support on tournament day.

Her initial goal of raising $800 was ambitious, but between supportive friends and family, and eager participants, the tournament drew such a crowd that 24 teams of adults and youth participated and the event raised $1,650.

Casteel and her tournament participants raised $1,650 for Parkinson’s research at Emory.

“It was so nervous,” Casteel recalls. “The weather had been bad and I was afraid no one would show up. But it turned out great, and I couldn’t have done it without support from Emory staff.”

Casteel with her tournament participants raised $1,650 for Parkinson’s research at Emory.

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Debra Owens is a smart and resilient woman with an impressive résumé in professions typically dominated by men. In her fascinating career, she has been a financial analyst for both cultural icon Waffle House and aerospace giant Lockheed Martin.

She was the “go-to” professional her bosses called upon for the tough jobs. Her financial acumen, combined with an incredible work ethic and a resolve to get to the facts, led to her many accomplishments along the way.

But her flourishing career took a turn a few years ago when a family issue demanded her attention.

Owens’ father, successful and esteemed Calhoun, Ga. real estate developer Don Owens, first developed glaucoma, then age-related macular degeneration, then cancer.

Owens became a loving caretaker, tending to the needs of her father until his death from cancer, just as she had handled his finances and leasing early in her career while he was the business developer for his growing enterprise.

Don Owens ultimately went blind from his eye disorders, saying to his daughter that “blindness is a game changer.”

She absolutely took that to heart. And, during that difficult time for both her and her father—dealing with his multiple health issues—she was also confronted with her own newly-diagnosed glaucoma.

“Tied lived through the impact of watching a loved one go blind, and I’m especially grateful to be able to see every morning when I wake up.”

The timing couldn’t have been worse, as she had begun, on her father’s behalf, to completely take over the successful family business while also caring for his medical needs.

As Owens dealt with many family and business issues each day, her interest in finding out everything she could about glaucoma was piqued.

When she says she “did a bit of research on glaucoma,” she’s not kidding. She knew too well that glaucoma can be difficult to diagnose, even “insidious,” as she says. Her frustration with the lack of information on her particular type of glaucoma—normal tension glaucoma—led her to visit ophthalmology institutions throughout the United States.

After seeing top specialists in Manhattan, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, Owens came back to Georgia, at Emory Eye Center. She had visited Emory Eye Center many times with her father prior to her own diagnosis.

She asked around. She found an ophthalmologist specializing in glaucoma and wanted to be proactive about treatment. “I ended up deciding on Dr. Costarides because he was quite accomplished, and I thought we would be compatible,” she says.

Today, she talks fondly of Anastasios Costarides, MD, PhD, who began treating her in 2010. “I’ve learned a lot along the way,” says Owens. “Dr. Costarides has been very patient with me—I ask a lot of questions,” she says smiling.

Costarides alerted her to the fact that Emory Eye Center researcher Eldon Geisert, PhD, holds a particular interest in the genetics of glaucoma. And, since her family had a history of the disease, she thought that she and her relatives might be of help.

Geisert’s research studies the genetic networks associated with the risk of developing glaucoma, and new findings may lead to enabling early detection, and later, to more effective treatments.

Owens credits her late father with being her greatest mentor. “He often said ‘Do whatever you want to do!’” she fondly recounts. Giving back to the important research on glaucoma is her passion today.

“My hope is that my family’s gift will help place the Emory Eye Center...at the forefront in developing innovative new treatments for this stealthy, persistent disease that affects millions of people.”

“I had often thought if I find the place that I feel has the potential to make a difference in glaucoma research and can help a lot of people, I’ll do something significant.”

Her generosity has formed the Owens Family Discovery Fund, which supports the Emory Eye Center’s research team.

“My hope is that my family’s gift will help place the Emory Eye Center—with top clinicians like Dr. Costarides and the research possibilities offered by Dr. Geisert and others—at the forefront in developing innovative new treatments for this stealthy, persistent disease that affects millions of people,” she says.

“Certainly, blindness is a game changer,” as Don Owens said to his daughter, but so may be the future of glaucoma research, thanks to the keen interest and generosity of Debra Owens.

If you would like to support the Emory Eye Center, please contact Karla Ruggiero at karla.ruggiero@emory.edu or 404-778-4121.
Sign Up Now for the 7th Annual Winship Win the Fight 5K!

Registration is now open for the seventh annual Winship Win the Fight 5K Run/Walk on Saturday, October 14, 2017. The fundraiser benefits Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University and has raised more than $3.2 million to date in support of cancer research at Winship.

In 2016, the sixth annual event raised over $933,000 with more than 3,200 participants — and we’re ready to break that record in 2017.

Teams are encouraged to organize and to take part in the event, and there are options for those who want to donate but not run or walk.

**WHAT:** Winship Win the Fight 5K Run/Walk  
**When:** Saturday, October 14, 2017  
(5K starts at 8:30 a.m.)  
**Where:** Emory University Campus  
**Register:** [www.winship5k.emory.edu](http://www.winship5k.emory.edu)  
For more information, please contact Pam McAdams at pam.mcadams@emory.edu or 404-727-6175.