Victories of Spirit

A benefit evening for
Sharp HealthCare Rehabilitation Services

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY
1897

EAGLE SPIRIT AWARD

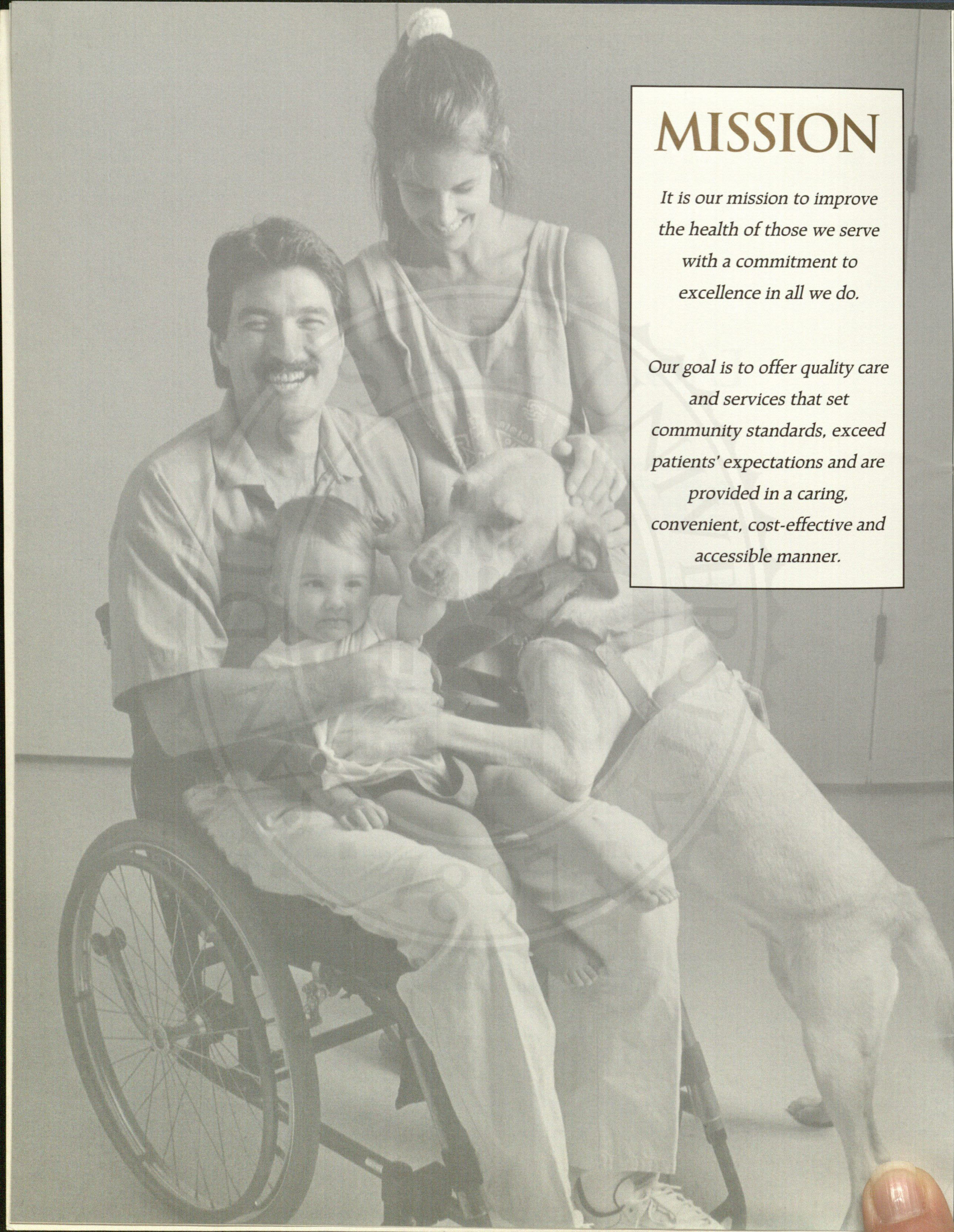
Sharp Rehabilitation Services created The Eagle Spirit Award to recognize achievement. The award incorporates the symbolism of the Eagle Spirit, a Navajo sign of the most potent healing power. The eagle also elicits images of soaring, of conquering adversity, and of excelling.

Persons with brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke, neuromuscular disease and musculoskeletal injury are faced with incredible challenges to perform even the most ordinary activities of day-to-day living. Reconstructing a meaningful, productive life requires great personal courage and perseverance by persons with disability and by their loved ones and friends.

The Eagle Spirit Award honors the achievements of patients whom we have been privileged to serve at Sharp. Even more so, we celebrate the power of the human spirit in our awardees and their loved ones. It is this power that is necessary to overcome the ongoing daily challenges of life with disability.

The Eagle Spirit Award also recognizes the achievements of members of our community whose efforts have made substantial contributions to persons with disability. We applaud efforts designed to prevent traumatic injury and disease. We honor contributions made to reduce the tragic consequences of such trauma or disease. We celebrate the actions of those who remove barriers to persons with disability, fostering reintegration to our community.

Every day we at Sharp Rehabilitation Services witness victories in the face of incredible adversity. The Eagle Spirit Award celebrates such victories and those who make them possible.



MISSION

It is our mission to improve the health of those we serve with a commitment to excellence in all we do.

Our goal is to offer quality care and services that set community standards, exceed patients' expectations and are provided in a caring, convenient, cost-effective and accessible manner.

VICTORIES OF SPIRIT BENEFICIARY WHEELCHAIR SPORTS PROGRAM

The Sharp HealthCare Rehabilitation Services Wheelchair Sports Program is essential to assisting individuals with catastrophic injury progress toward a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle. Wheelchair sports have developed from solely recreational social activities to include highly competitive athletic events.

The desire of individuals with disability to compete has pushed the boundaries of wheelchair sports beyond the traditional game of basketball to include snow and water skiing, rugby, mountain climbing and more. Combine this yearning for competition with rehab technology and you have adaptive equipment unleashing the wheelchair sports of today.

Individuals participating in wheelchair sports are serious athletes with varied levels of skill requiring the same inspiration, dedication and training that all athletes need to achieve their goals. They strive to be recognized as athletes first (who happen to use wheelchairs for competition), rather than as disabled persons in wheelchairs competing in sports.

Sharp HealthCare provides a wide range of wheelchair sporting events from quad rugby — the fastest growing wheelchair sport in the world — to aquatic activities, fishing and camping, and power soccer for individuals in electric wheelchairs. For individuals in wheelchairs, athletic activity contributes to self-esteem, positive thinking and physically improved strength, endurance and health maintenance.

Funds raised at the *Victories of Spirit* event for Sharp Wheelchair Sports Programs will be utilized to enhance and expand existing programs throughout San Diego and South Riverside Counties.

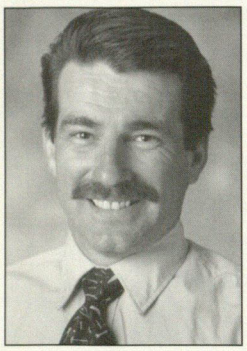
HONORARY SPORTS COMMITTEE

Chairs
Duke Snider and Patric Reilly

David Bailey
Jim Black
Craig Blanchette
Willie Buchanon
Rick Draney
Marshall Faulk
Irv Grossman
Doug Harvey
John Kibler
Jim Knaub
Gene Littler
Archie Moore
Craig Nettles
Paula Newby-Fraser
Ed Rungey
Steve Scott
Junior Seau
Fred Swearingen
Bill Wagner
Bill Walton
Kellen Winslow

PATIENT ACHIEVEMENT

STEVEN CONNOR



Steve Connor will always remember October 10, 1991 as the day he nearly lost his life. "I was making excellent money operating an 18-wheel semi," Steve says. His future was forever altered when, on his commute home one day, another truck hit a car that spun head-on into Steve's semi, totaling it and several other cars.

"I suffered extensive internal injuries, but I was brought up to ignore pain and 'take it like a man,'" Steve admits. For about nine months, he refused to seek treatment, until the pain became so acute that he finally confided in his doctor. A thorough exam revealed that he had a herniated disc and nerve damage. But for two years after the accident, in what he describes as "macho stupidity," Steve kept silent about the debilitating chronic pain. He was unable to work and could barely function.

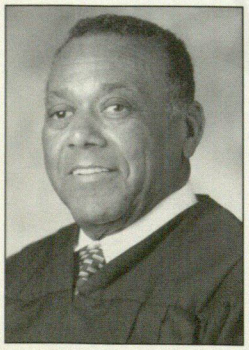
"My pain changed me, and I kept that change locked up inside of me," he says. "Before the accident, I was a happy-go-lucky guy. After—you talk about the devil himself. I missed *myself* a whole lot." Steve's marriage was threatened and he became suicidal.

Finally, Steve was referred to Sharp's Pain Rehabilitation Management Program. "They showed me how to start over. I learned stretching, biofeedback, relaxation and exercise techniques. They treated me like family; they cared with their hearts."

Hugging his wife, Bobbi, and their brand-new son, Ryan, and daughter Salina, Steve's voice grows quiet. "Without her and without Sharp, I would be dead right now."

Steve is now off all medication, working and winning awards repairing and maintaining photocopy machines, a career he loves. "I feel great!" he shouts, showing off his new flexibility by doing toe-touches, where once he could hardly bend forward. "Sharp has given me the best gift of all. They gave *me* back to me."

JUDGE EARL B. GILLIAM



Two weeks after U.S. District Court Judge Earl B. Gilliam and his wife, attorney Rebecca Prater, were wed, they experienced a tragedy that put "for better or worse" to the ultimate test. During elective heart surgery at a hospital in northern California, the Judge's aorta collapsed. Lack of blood flow to his lower body left him paralyzed, in complete renal failure and with brain damage. He spent over 180 days in the hospital; the bills alone ran above $2 million. Remarkably, in the year since his surgery, this man—the first African American municipal, superior and federal court judge in San Diego County and one of the most brilliant legal minds around—has not had a bad day.

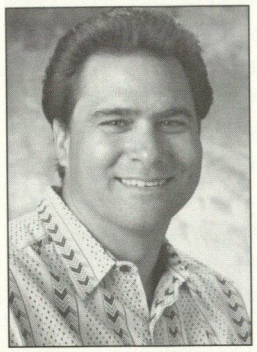
"I don't think I was ever really sad," he recalls. "I just kind of took the situation for what it was and made my mind up to just get on with it." Rebuilding himself at Sharp Rehabilitation meant making progress in small increments. Last August, cheers went up when he was finally able to string five words together in a sentence. "I was surrounded by therapists who were so very encouraging," Judge Gilliam says. "I had no strength at all. They encouraged me to sit up, not to become exhausted, to take my time. Later I learned to put my clothes and shoes on. Eventually I started lifting weights and doing aerobics. I learned to talk and write."

The Judge received inpatient care at Sharp Rehabilitation for two months and is currently receiving outpatient service. When not in therapy, he spends time with the kids in the community, talking with people who seek his advice on politics and the law, and attending functions at the Federal Courthouse. Rebecca has given up her law practice to focus on caring for her husband in their home, now modified to accommodate the Judge's wheelchair. He has been able to resume a pledge: "Lawyers have to work longer hours than judges, so before we were married I had promised to cook." And cook he does.

Because of his frequent kidney dialysis treatments, the two have revised world travel plans to include the beach, the zoo and the movies. Simple pleasures include gardening and jigsaw puzzles — and one another. Rebecca says she may eventually return to work. "We want to take the legal skills we both have and apply them to enforcement of the Americans With Disabilities Act and to fight for changes in the insurance laws, which cover so little of what people who are paralyzed need." In a quiet moment, Rebecca sighs, "I had always known my husband as an intelligent, powerful man with a brilliant intellect. But until now, I had no way of knowing how incredibly courageous he was."

PATIENT ACHIEVEMENT

SHAWN GRAY



On February 24, 1990, Shawn Gray was riding his motorcycle in North Park when the kick stand suddenly dropped. Shawn's bike skidded into a slide and sent him crashing into the back of a parked car, which burst into flames. When he came to in the hospital, Shawn was told that his back was broken — and that he was paralyzed from the chest down.

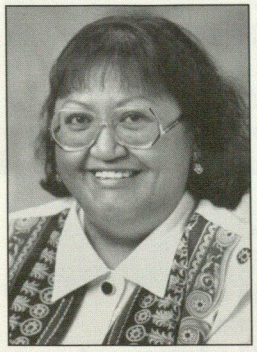
"My whole existence for the first year after the accident was in hospitals and rehab centers—with people picking me up, turning me over, and moving me from my chair to my bed," he says. After spending 12 weeks with Sharp Rehabilitation, Shawn was introduced to Sharp Recreation Therapy's "Day on the Bay" program, where the native San Diegan found that he could still play in the water using a personal watercraft or jet ski. Soon, he learned to compete and win. "I had never been associated with such a supportive atmosphere, with such genuine, giving people," he says. "They truly in their hearts wanted to help me achieve."

Reconnecting with sports rekindled Shawn's zest for life. With the help of the Disabled Businesspersons Association, Shawn founded Aqua Sports Association for the Physically Challenged. He has been at work on adapting personal water crafts for use by the physically challenged. "I made myself the guinea pig and got help with engineering better designs for the equipment," he says. "I am trying to make a solid, safe product for the consumer and also run a non-profit organization that allows the disabled to experience this sport safely."

For Shawn, sports are a direct link to independence. "On the water, you can compete with able-bodied people on the same level," he says. Describing the first time he helped another person share the experience, he smiles: "She came back from her ride grinning from ear to ear, eager to go again. Seeing that woman's face was so gratifying. I knew immediately that this is what I wanted to do with my life."

Photos of Shawn sailing 20 feet above the water in a jet ski are proof of the never-say-never philosophy of this young entrepreneur. "After my accident, they told me from day one that I would not walk again," he remembers. "But they never said I wouldn't fly!"

CARMEN KIYABU



After spinal surgery at a West Coast medical center left her paralyzed, Carmen Kiyabu struggled with countless physical and emotional challenges. "For a long time, I was in a crushing depression," she says. "My children were afraid to approach me with their problems because they thought I had too much to deal with. I just locked myself in a room and wondered why this had happened to me."

Once she entered Sharp for physical therapy and rehabilitation, Carmen began to notice that people were reaching out to her. "Besides the support of my family, I realized there were really neat people who would go out of their way to help me," she says. "That gave me the motivation to work harder, get back to work and contribute to my family."

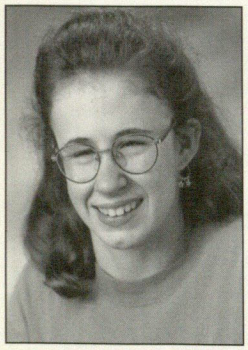
After taking part in Sharp Rehabilitation's Transitional Employment Program (TEP), Carmen realized there were a lot of things she was still capable of doing. "The staff was caring and supportive and really opened up a lot of doors for me," she says. She learned to stand/walk using leg braces, and gradually became more independent. She was so committed to return to work that, for six months, Carmen volunteered to perform data entry in Sharp Memorial Hospital's blood bank. The work continued to build her skills and confidence. "Little by little, I was getting stronger and more confident—coming back to life!"

While it was awkward starting work at Callaway Golf in a wheelchair, Carmen says that her new employer made several modifications to accommodate her, including installing a handicap push button in the rest room, adding an elevator, lowering the time clock and customizing a desk for Carmen. "When I first started working again, I had no self-esteem. But everyone has pitched in and made me feel important." She has even thought about starting a business selling customized clothes for disabled women.

"Sharp's TEP program gives people like myself the chance to get back into the work force," Carmen says. "All of the support, help with the job interview and application process, follow-through training and visits to the worksite, have been so valuable to me. Without such a program, I don't think I would have been able to go back to work full time."

PATIENT ACHIEVEMENT

DANNIELLE PEACOTT



It's easy to imagine how people who have spent time with Dannielle Peacott are forever changed. For, while she has all of the bubbly enthusiasm of a typical 16-year-old, there is a light that seems to reach out from inside her and to draw others in. A very miracle herself, Dannielle was born three months premature with cerebral palsy. She was not expected to live—let alone ever speak or write. One day though, when Dannielle was three years old, her mother walked past her toddler's room and overheard Dannielle practicing talking. The energetic youngster had wanted to perfect her speech before uttering a word to her parents.

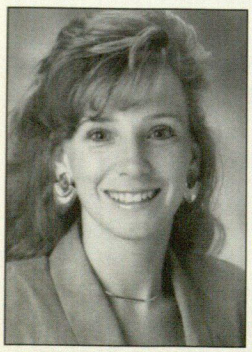
That year, Dannielle's parents enrolled her in swimming to help develop her lung capacity. (She has been in a wheelchair all her life.) "To be able to swim underwater, Dannielle had to learn to hold her breath and blow it out, which she hadn't been able to do on land." Today, Dannielle is a gold medal swimmer with the San Diego Bullets swim team, and her lung capacity is so strong that her mom says they have a hard time keeping her quiet. "I love swimming," Dannielle enthuses. "It's a totally different world for me. Because of the buoyancy, I can actually walk in the water."

Dannielle did not even realize she was handicapped until the fourth grade, when a classmate told her. At 13, she had grown weary of having someone else have to write out her homework, so she laboriously developed the ability to write. "When I dictate my algebra to someone, it takes about 20 minutes," she says. "When I write it out, because of my lack of muscle control, it can take me three hours. But I like to do it myself."

The spunky teen's determination has been recognized by her therapists in rehabilitation at Grossmont Hospital, where she participates in a teen head injury group to help other youngsters who are having trouble adjusting to their disabilities.

Exceptionally driven and poised, Dannielle maintains a near 4.0 grade point average and serves as a junior volunteer at Grossmont Hospital, where she has contributed more than 375 hours of dedicated service to patients and staff. Her boundless enthusiasm and amazing spirit are an inspiration to everyone she meets. "Ultimately, I'm going to go to college to become a social worker," Dannielle says. "I like solving problems for people."

JOELLE STRACHOTA



In some ways, Joelle Strachota's life nearly ended in February of 1992; in other ways, a part of her was born. At age 22, when her car hydroplaned and wrapped around a traffic signal, Joelle was brought into Sharp Memorial Hospital as a trauma patient with a head injury, fractured pelvis, burst bladder, broken femur and torn spleen. She spent six weeks in the hospital, sometimes in a coma. "I have virtually no memory of the first two months following my accident," Joelle says. "I do know that it seems I was constantly surrounded by my family members who would sit with me, hold my hand, and tell me how great I was doing," says Joelle. "They made me want to get well."

Joelle's hospitalization was followed by three weeks of physical, occupational, speech and cognitive therapy at Sharp Rehabilitation, during which she had to re-learn how to talk and walk. "What stands out in my mind is the day I took my first step in Rehab. I was so excited that I could do it! My grandparents were there watching me; I wanted to show off for them."

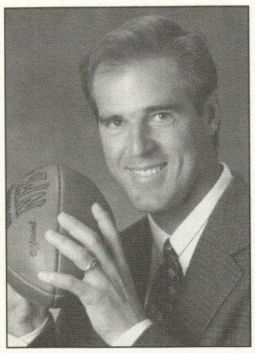
The young mother of a three-year-old, Joelle returned home from the hospital to face yet another challenge: her marriage had fallen apart. "I had to borrow money and start over. I felt like I had no friends. Considering all that happened to me, I have made a very fast recovery," she says. "In day treatment, I'm still learning how to remember things—how to perform the tasks of daily living, such as cooking and doing laundry."

Through Sharp's Transitional Employment Program, Joelle worked first as a hostess in the dietary department, then as an environmental care partner at another local hospital. Encouraged by some special nurses—colleagues whom she calls her "four moms"— and finding new strength she never knew she had, Joelle returned to school to receive her certified nurse's assistant degree. "My 'four moms' saw how well I worked with patients and felt they could train me to do clinical work. They even supported me by fitting my work hours around school."

Now holding two jobs, still paying off medical bills, and coaching her now-six-year-old son's T-ball team, Joelle is aiming much higher—to become a registered nurse. "Now, I constantly want to better myself," she says. "It's like a stronger part of me has come to life since the accident. I've been motivated by all the medical staff at Sharp who took care of me and looked out for me. Now I'd like to be there for somebody else."

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT

ROLF BENIRSCHKE



As a place-kicker for the San Diego Chargers from 1977 to 1987, Rolf Benirschke set 16 team records and received numerous honors, including "NFL Man of the Year" and "Comeback Player of the Year." During his second season with the team, he was struck with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), which nearly cost him his life. Rolf underwent ostomy surgery that required 50 pints of blood, spent seven weeks in the hospital, and dwindled to 120 pounds.

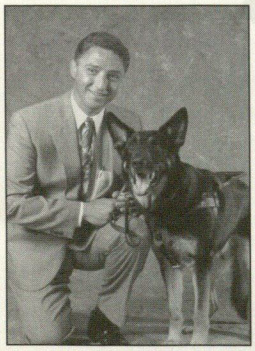
"I struggled with a disease that involves digestion, diarrhea and cramping, so it is not talked about much, yet there are about two million people that suffer from it," Rolf says. For two years afterward, he endured terrible pain. "At the time, the illness was devastating. I was 24 years old. My livelihood and very identity involved athletics. I felt my life was over. But actually, it was just beginning."

Rolf ultimately recovered to play football, prompting an outpouring of support and letters from others who suffered with the condition. "I was awed at the resiliency of the human spirit as I read the inspiring stories about how other people overcame this disease and surgery," Rolf says. "I realized I was being given a new purpose in life." Rolf approached ConvaTec, a division of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company, and created the GREAT COMEBACKS awards program, which recognizes the achievements of people with IBD disease. In its 13 years, this national program has received an average of 300 applications each year.

Rolf and his wife, Mary, have faced yet another challenge. After three miscarriages, Mary gave birth to daughter Kari. Born three months premature and weighing just two pounds, Kari was not expected to live. Now two years old, she has mild cerebral palsy, for which she wears leg braces. Otherwise, she is as bright and animated as can be.

Rolf is a partner in Eastman & Benirschke, a financial services company. He gives of his time generously, chairing this year's United Way campaign and continuing to work for the protection of endangered animals. "I can honestly say that my illness has been one of the real blessings in my life," Rolf says. "When we deal with any of life's major obstacles, we discover we have greater courage and greater creativity than we ever thought possible."

URBAN MIYARES



Urban Miyares returned from Vietnam multidisabled, unemployed and, some would say, unemployable. What is more, within two years of being diagnosed with diabetes in a Saigon hospital, Urban developed related nerve damage called neuropathy in both legs and in his fingers. "I cannot feel from the waist down," he says. Urban's complications from diabetes included kidney dysfunction and hearing impairment.

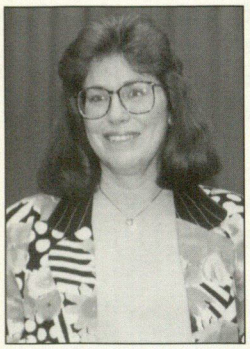
"Based on my health, education level, personality and test scores, the only business the counselors said I was viable for was watch repair," he says. "Since then, I've owned major manufacturing companies, sales organizations and one of the largest steel manufacturing companies on the West Coast, with over 100 employees."

In 1985, due to diabetic complications, Urban went completely blind. Finding it difficult to get appropriate business advice, in 1985 Urban founded the Disabled Businesspersons Association (DBA). The DBA serves about 3,000 disabled people each year. Last year, it helped more than 800 individuals start businesses across the country, including about 50 referred from Sharp Rehab, such as fellow 1995 Eagle Spirit Award recipient Shawn Gray. Clients range from people with disabilities running home-based businesses to earn extra income, to individuals earning over $10 million a year. The DBA's free services include counseling to determine a suitable business, assistance with a business plan, mentoring and networking.

Running one's own business, Urban says, involves "a feeling from inside. It's extremely high risk. But those who have been able to do it have been able to control their life, control their future, and in many cases improve their health. Overall, I'm probably the healthiest I've ever been." "Healthy" means Urban took up skiing and in 1990, was crowned the fastest blind skier in the world—achieving speeds of up to 63 miles an hour. He has also held the title of "Disabled Athlete of the Year" and is an avid ocean racing sailor.

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT

SAN DIEGO COUNTY TRAUMA SYSTEM



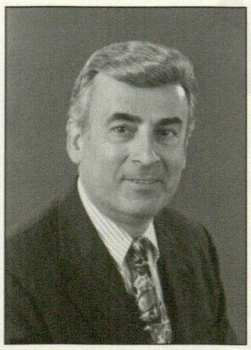
After nearly 11 years in operation, the San Diego County Trauma System — which includes Sharp Memorial Hospital, Children's Hospital and Health Center, Scripps Memorial Hospital-La Jolla, Mercy Healthcare San Diego, UCSD Medical Center and Palomar Medical Center — has treated more than 60,000 patients. By transporting victims of major trauma directly from the scene of the incident to a designated trauma center, this partnership has reduced the preventable death rate from 21 percent to about one percent.

"This is a public and private partnership between the hospitals and the County of San Diego," says Gail F. Cooper, chief of emergency medical services for the San Diego County Department of Health Services. "Together, these entities have developed a system of trauma care to make sure the right patient gets to the right hospital in the right amount of time. In addition to almost eliminating preventable death, the System has positively impacted morbidity, reducing hospital lengths of stay, and returning citizens to their families and the community more quickly, with fewer disabilities."

During its first eight years, the Trauma System focused on treatment during the acute phase of injury. Now, it is taking a leadership role in the prevention of traumatic injury, such as violence and car crashes. While the latter continues to be the number-one cause of traumatic injury in San Diego County, Cooper says, "In the last five years, we have seen an escalation in the number of people who are victims of acts of aggression. We need to continue our efforts at building safer highways, encouraging the use of seat belts and helmets, and reducing drunk and drug driving. Another critical focus is on reducing the incidence of intentional injury or violence by promoting conflict resolution as an alternative to violence," Cooper says.

The San Diego County Trauma System has become a model throughout the country, having input on every piece of state and federal legislation affecting trauma in the last five years. Today, San Diego County has become a testing area for new ideas in trauma care because it has such a high-quality, inclusive trauma registry. "The unprecedented level of cooperation between trauma centers and the County has contributed to its overwhelming success rate," Cooper says. As demonstrated through Victories of Spirit, San Diego residents have benefitted from the collaborative relationship between the County Trauma and rehabilitation providers, whose efforts have produced overwhelmingly successful outcomes.

QUICKIE DESIGNS, INC.



You might say Quickie Designs was founded—literally—by accident. In 1979, Marilyn Hamilton was injured in a hang gliding accident, which rendered her a paraplegic. Yet she was determined not to let her injury ground her spirits. Finding wheelchairs too heavy and cumbersome to move around in, Marilyn asked a couple of friends to help her find a way to make a chair that would be lighter and provide more freedom. In 1980, she founded a company called Motion Designs, and the Quickie Wheelchair was born. After Carlsbad-based Sunrise Medical, Inc. acquired the company, its name changed to Quickie Designs, Inc. Quickie is now the market leader in lightweight wheelchairs.

"We believe that people should be as active as they can be," says Tom O' Donnell, president of Quickie Designs, Inc. "We design products that allow disabled people to get involved in activities in which they might not otherwise be able to participate. It's our challenge to give people as much mobility and independence as we can, because we believe there are no limits."

Initially popular with the active disabled population, Quickie Designs has expanded its product line to cover wheelchairs for everyday use. Quickie provides a full line of pediatric products, power wheelchair products and sports equipment for the disabled, including racing chairs, hand-pedaled cycles and sports chairs for tennis, basketball and quad rugby.

Quickie is an integral part of Sharp Rehab's sports program, both as a long-time vendor and team sponsor. Among many sports teams that Quickie Designs sponsors are the Sharp Shadow quad rugby team and the Fresno Red Rollers wheelchair basketball team that won last year's national championship. Sunrise Medical will sponsor the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta.

"We're servicing the full needs of those in the disabled community and working to improve people's lives through the development and introduction of innovative, high quality products," says O'Donnell. "Our mission is congruent with that of Sharp Rehab, with whom we've been involved as long as we've been in existence. It's a nice partnership."

"More and more people are finding out that it's exciting to watch sports such as wheelchair tennis and basketball," says O'Donnell. "The movement started very slowly and continues to build. People go to these sporting events and find out they are not watching a bunch of disabled people; they are watching *athletes.* The only difference is that those athletes are in wheelchairs. We try to break down barriers. The more disabled people watch these sports, the more they want to participate. That's what we call the *Get Out There* spirit!

PREVIOUS RECIPIENTS

PATIENT ACHIEVEMENT

Cheryl Adam
Juan D. Banda
Laura Blaney
Tim Boice
Stacey Cathey
David P. Curnow
Jack Dow
Gary O. Fitzpatrick
James T. Gianulis
Richard A. Goff
Albert Goldfeder, Jr.
Paul Gonzales
Jerry Gordinier
Percy "Duke" Johnston
Bryan Loyce
Juliana Luz
Joe Mottola
Tamila Ridley
Ellie Stiven
Kit Summers
Cathy Taketa
Mary Thompson
Gino Viens
Paul Welch

COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT

Charles Buck/
Buck Knives
Bill Bodry/
Challenge Center
City of San Diego/
Park & Recreation Department Disabled Services Program
Geico Insurance Company
Richard George/
Head Injury Activity Center
Bob Sioss/
KFMB News
Wanda Windsor/
Learning in Natural Community Setting
Ray Willenberg, Jr./
Mesa Mortgage
Larry Willette/
Peninsula Bank
Bob Breitbard/
San Diego Hall of Champions
San Diego Marriott Hotel & Marina
Ross Ehrhardt/
Torrey Pines Kiwanis Club
Larry Marshall, M.D./UCSD

SERVICES

Sharp Rehabilitation provides the most comprehensive continuum of rehabilitation services in San Diego and Riverside counties for persons with brain injury, spinal cord injury, stroke, neuromuscular disease and musculoskeletal injury. Rehabilitation is provided across the entire spectrum of recovery from the earliest phase of acute care to the latest phases of return to community living. The intensity and frequency of rehabilitative interventions are carefully tailored to meet the individual patient's short-term and long-term needs in the most cost-effective manner. This is made possible by the multiple levels of care available in the Sharp system, including:

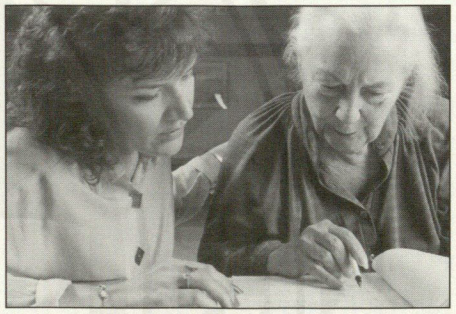
REHABILITATION PREVENTION AND EDUCATION SERVICES

ACUTE CARE/TRAUMA REHABILITATION SERVICES

ACUTE MEDICAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

SUBACUTE REHABILITATION SERVICES

COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION SERVICES



Community and Home Program
Day Treatment Program
Disability Assessment
Driver Adaptive Training
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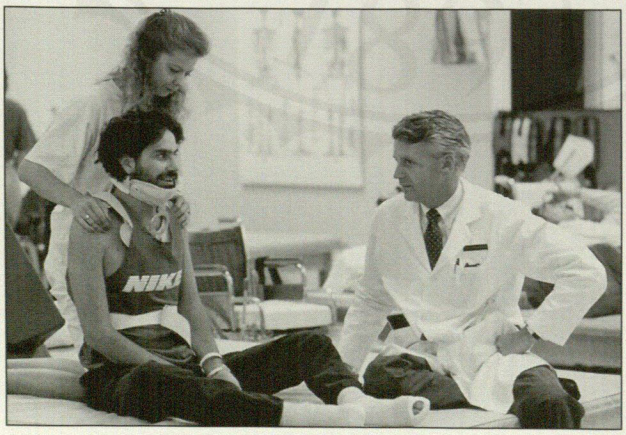
Outpatient Medical Rehabilitation
Pain Rehabilitation
Pediatric Rehabilitation
Rehabilitation Technology
Recreation and Sports Programs
Support Groups
Transitional Employment Program
Transitional Living and Residential Rehabilitation
Work Re-Entry Program
Vocational Evaluation



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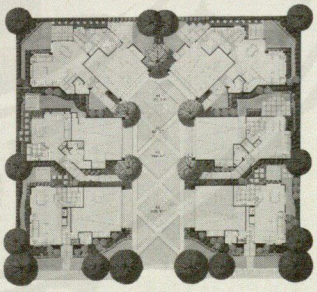

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