If you are like me, the emotional, physical and mental roller coaster of the COVID-19 pandemic has likely required a daily dose of Dramamine. If you have been able to join me on a “Zoom with Jandel” session, or read the information on our website or social media channels, you know that we have had to make a myriad of difficult decisions in order to keep our patients and employees safe.

I can recall the Saturday morning after Week One, when I was trying to determine how to manage the impending issues that would arise should any members of our Craig Family become ill with the disease. While out walking, I thought a great deal about the decisions we would have to make in the coming weeks, none easy and none without risks or the possibility of creating anger or fear — and all requiring the balance of competing and conflicting interests and priorities. Talk about the start to a number of anxiety-riddled moments!

(Continued)
And then it dawned on me.

I said to myself, “Jandel, the only lens through which to make these decisions is your values and Craig’s.” Because when all is said and done, if you are true to your values, it is difficult to second-guess difficult decisions. And even if the decision plays out in an unexpected way, it was not one that was arrived at capriciously.

By the time I got home, I had identified the five values that I believed we needed to apply to our decision-making process, especially the most challenging and difficult ones.

- Safety — we must protect our patients and teams from exposure to this illness by minimizing the opportunities for viral spread.
- Equity — we must provide all and only what individuals or groups need to manage through this, knowing that the definition of “all and only” varies for a host of reasons: personal, professional, role in the organization, the problem to be solved, etc.
- Fairness — there will be things required of each of us, and sometimes those decisions will require us to be disadvantaged or made uncomfortable. Just as none of us are immune to the possibility of exposure to the virus, none of us should be immune to the changes we need to make.
- Trust — transparent, ongoing connection to all we serve through straight talk, acting with integrity and demonstrating vulnerability are things that each of us needs to bring to the table, so we can all see the situation for what it may be and offer help and support.
- Sustainability — of our emotional and physical energy and of Craig’s precious resources, which include our time, our talent and our treasure.

We have tried to lead and serve this way through this crisis. I pray we are living these values and that you can see them in our actions. It has been a tough few months in ways unimaginable and yet we are finding and making our way forward. That is easier to do for those fueled by values.

Thank you for what you have done to support Craig during these challenging times. Know that I am/we are here for you.

All the best,

Dr. Jandel Allen-Davis
President and CEO
As COVID-19 (coronavirus) continues to be a global health crisis, we understand that there are many concerns in our community. Our priority remains the health and safety of our patients, families and staff. As of this writing, there have been no COVID-19 cases at Craig. We are doing everything we can to minimize the spread of COVID-19, including:

- Staying up to date on the latest information from state and local officials, and responding quickly and appropriately to meet the unique needs of our population.
- Providing virus-specific resources for individuals with spinal cord and brain injuries on our blog.
- Responding to phone calls — from Colorado and around the country — to our Nurse Advice Line, providing expert advice from our specialized staff.
- Limiting visitors at Craig and making operational changes.

The Craig Foundation team is working with hospital staff daily to identify needs and deploy resources to assist our patients and families during this time of uncertainly. We are so grateful for your generous support that allows us to respond quickly to meet urgent needs. You can donate to the Patient Assistance Fund to support these efforts at craighospital.org/covidassistance.

Please be assured that we continue to provide the highest level of care for which we are known, and are planning for reopening/reintegration with thoughtfulness and great consideration for the needs of our Craig Family.

For the most up-to-date information from Craig, please visit our COVID-19 website at craighospital.org/covid-19 or call our hotline at 303-789-8888.

Grad Sets World “Everesting” Record — and Raises Money for Craig

When she’s not busy working on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s COVID-19 emergency response and injury prevention efforts, Craig brain injury grad Lauren De Crescenzo is setting world records. The Craig grad and former professional cyclist climbed 29,777 feet, the equivalent height of Mount Everest, in a world-record time of 9:57:29 on May 30. Lauren took 24 laps of the Hog Pen Gap climb in Blairsville, Georgia, a 4.6-mile stretch that averages 9.8% grade. Lauren used the challenge to raise more than $1,100 for Craig through her peer-to-peer fundraising page. In 2016, Lauren rehabilitated at Craig from a brain injury she sustained in a race. Learn how you can create your own fundraiser at TeamCraig.org.

Craig Clinicians Instrumental in Brain Injury Conference

Alan Weintraub, MD, FACRM, served as the conference program and scientific chair for the North American Brain Injury Society’s annual meeting in February. The meeting included 600 participants representing 46 states and 15 countries. A number of Craig staff members attended and presented.
Candy Tefertiller Named Craig Executive Director of Research and Evaluation

Candy Tefertiller, PT, DPT, Ph.D., NCS, has been selected as Craig Hospital’s executive director of research and evaluation. Her long tenure with Craig as director of physical therapy (PT) since 2010, and her ongoing, active involvement in research at our hospital, position her to advance current and future research interests and needs in the field of neurorehabilitation.

During her time as director of PT, she was involved in establishing several innovative Craig programs, such as the PEAK Center, NeuroRecovery Network and Peer Mentor Program. Her new role will lead the overall strategic direction of research and evaluation at Craig. When the Endowed Chair of Translational Research is fully funded and established, she will be the first chair holder.

Candy received a BS in biology from Mount Olive College and a master’s degree in physical therapy from East Carolina University. She then received a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Rocky Mountain Health Care University and a Ph.D. in clinical sciences from the University of Colorado. Candy has been working in the field of neurological rehabilitation since 2000 and is also a certified neurological clinical specialist. She has been involved in numerous research projects, and has focused much of her career on interventions, program development and research promoting recovery after neurologic injury.

Mary Feller Steps Down as Foundation Executive Director

Mary Feller stepped down from her role as executive director of the Craig Foundation at the end of December. She remains with Craig, working with donors on a part-time basis.

Mary joined the foundation in 2010. Under her leadership, the foundation has grown to 16 employees and has significantly increased annual fundraising results. Mary also successfully led “Redefining ROI: The Campaign for Craig Hospital,” Craig’s largest fundraising effort to date. The campaign raised more than $73 million for our expansion project and programs.

Shannon Lowe is serving as the interim executive director until a national search for the next executive director is completed. Shannon joined the foundation in 2017 and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to her role. She can be reached at slowe@craighospital.org or 303-789-8651.

Craig CEO Named a Minority Leader To Watch

Craig President and CEO Jandel Allen-Davis, MD, was recognized by Modern Healthcare as one of 2020’s Minority Leaders to Watch in Healthcare for working with government leaders to expand research and access to care for people with disabilities.
Endowed Chair To Drive Research Efforts

For four decades, Craig’s Research Department has made innovative and cutting-edge contributions to research that impacts those living with spinal cord and brain injuries. Over the coming months, we will introduce you to the work and priorities of this important department.

Endowed Chair of Translational Research

In order to continue to excel, the Craig Research Department must have a stable source of funding to recruit, retain and support the best minds, the most creative researchers and the most engaged staff. The Craig Foundation is currently raising $2 million to create an Endowed Chair of Translational Research. Organizations like Craig establish Endowed Research Chairs to attract outstanding scientists, enhance the quality of research activities and give donors the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy to the institution.

When an Endowed Chair is started, a permanent fund is established with gifts from one or more donors. These funds are invested, and the annual investment earnings are used at the discretion of the Endowed Chair for the good of the department. The principal in the fund remains untouched, thus providing a perpetual source of funding.

An Endowed Chair of Translational Research will provide a wide variety of benefits:

- **To Patients and Families:** Endowment funding will enable the research team to advance ideas and make discoveries that lead to better treatments and new technology to benefit all of us — both now and in the future. Craig clinicians take what they learn through studies and apply that learning immediately to enhance functional capabilities and increase the quality of life for our patients. While other facilities may take years to bring an idea to practice, Craig is able to take our learnings to the patients immediately.

- **To Craig:** Endowment funds will help us share our work, enable our scientists to travel to present their findings and create opportunities for collaboration with researchers and staff around the world. Funding will allow us to maintain our seat at the table and elevate Craig’s reputation as a leader in the field of rehabilitation.

- **To the Staff:** The investment would guarantee funds to push the frontiers of our work. The funds could establish a post-doctoral fellowship program to grow the next generation of scientists, propel specific research goals and pay for other needed resources. Clinicians at Craig — even those practicing outside of the Research Department — have the opportunity to participate and learn from the real world of innovation and discovery.

How You Can Help

By supporting the establishment of the Craig Endowed Chair for Translational Research, you become part of the permanent fabric of this renowned institution, providing gifted and prolific scientists with an unending source of support for their important work.

You will contribute to the pursuit and discovery of scientific findings that will empower the lives of individuals who have sustained spinal cord and brain injuries, nurture outstanding researchers, and leave a lasting legacy.

Naming opportunities are available for gifts of $1,000,020 or more, and gifts of $250 or more may entitle you to a 25% tax credit through the Enterprise Zone program. Give online at craighospital.org/foundation/endowed-chair-of-research or call 303-789-8650.
Deep Breaths and Loving Thoughts Help Craig Graduates Cope

Before you read this, stop and take a deep breath. And another. Now, on your next inhale, think “I am grateful for,” and on the exhale, name something. You’ve just practiced a simple meditation. According to Victor Towle, MS, clinical care manager with Craig Hospital, meditation helps us set aside our fears, judgment and worries and lets us accept ourselves, focus on what’s good in our lives and take positive action. In these trying times, meditation is just what we need.

“Meditation helps us deal with the small stuff. If we can deal with small stuff, we can learn to deal with all stuff,” says Victor.

Victor, a longtime rehabilitation counselor at Craig, has been interested, since his college days over 30 years ago, in meditation, relaxation, yoga and the power of music to help people with traumatic brain injury cope. He has been leading ongoing meditation classes for Craig graduates for the past three years. Concurrently, he and his colleague Ina Schakaraschwili, Occupational Therapist, added a guided meditation class for staff three times a week.

“The work we do can be heavy, so finding that loving, giving heart and compassion inside ourselves, for ourselves, allows us to have it for others,” Victor says.

In recent years, Victor has added mindfulness to his work life. Mindfulness focuses on the present moment while acknowledging and accepting your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations. He learned mindfulness techniques from the best. Thanks to a Busch Scholarship, funded by a foundation donor, he was able to formalize his education by participating in a two-year mindfulness meditation teacher certification program with the biggest names in the field, Jack Kornfield and Tara Brach. The Busch Scholarship was made in honor of a recent patient who found Victor’s meditation class extremely helpful. The scholarship supports staff at Craig who wish to further their education.

“Mindfulness practice purposefully brings our attention to the here and now, without judgment,” Victor adds.

So far, about 75 Craig graduates have gone through Victor’s eight-week class that now includes family members. Craig graduates find it helps them focus better, stay calmer and manage their frustration while adapting to life after injury. Caretakers find it eases their stress. Mindfulness and meditation are tools people can turn to when life feels overwhelming.

Victor explains that practicing helps people deal with current challenges and accept where they are, right now, rather than wishing for their past or missing their future. The class comes at just the right time for Craig graduates — after they leave Craig and adjust to life on their own.

“Focusing on loss is tough. Mindfulness and meditation encourages people to let go of the wound and start where they are at, right now, to heal with loving kindness,” he concludes.
Good Lawyers, Changing Lives Right Here at Craig

They ride. They lead. They reward for home runs and touchdowns. Meet Peter and Jake Burg, law partners with Burg Simpson in Denver. The father and son duo are big fans — and big supporters — of Craig Hospital. And they have the backing and unrivaled shared support of other Burg Simpson shareholders.

Peter Burg has been giving to Craig in one form or another for over a decade — as has Burg Simpson. He first served on the Craig Hospital Board, including as chairman. He then brought his skills and passion to the Craig Foundation Board. He and his wife Sandy have attended the PUSH Gala every year, and have supported it as sponsors and chairs. If that’s not enough, Peter and Jake organize a Burg Simpson team to cycle each year in Craig’s Pedal 4 Possible. Jake Burg has served on the PUSH committee for the past three years.

“I was looking for a way to give my time, energy and money. I learned about Craig and it hit all the right notes,” Peter says.

Peter considers serving as chairman of Craig’s board one of the “great honors of his life,” and he describes his involvement with Craig as a “spiritual journey.” He supported Craig’s capital campaign for improved facilities and had to fight back tears when touring it for the first time.

“Over the years, I’ve had clients at most of the top traumatic brain injury and spinal cord rehabilitation facilities around the country, so I am constantly reminded how special Craig is for its unique culture,” he says.

Eight years ago, Burg Simpson was looking for a meaningful way to give to Craig. That’s when Peter and the team put their heads together to come up with the idea for Home Runs for Craig and Touchdowns for Craig — innovative fundraisers for which the firm donates $50 to Craig every time the Rockies hit a home run or the Denver Broncos and Colorado Buffaloes score a touchdown. Since its inception, this program has amounted to donations of more than $125,000.

“As a family, we have always enjoyed watching our Denver teams play. It’s a great way to weave in our sports passion to benefit Craig,” Jake says.

Burg Simpson sponsors radio ads throughout both sports seasons to spread awareness about Craig, their work and this program.

Peter is thrilled to be passing the Craig torch to Jake, who has been inspired by his work on the PUSH committee. He can see following in his father’s footsteps and joining the board someday.

“The PUSH Gala committee experience is fantastic and it has inspired me to expand my horizons and get even more involved with Craig,” he says.

“Now, as we [hopefully] head into the baseball season, let’s root, root, root for the home team and raise some money for Craig!”

We are grateful for our partnership with Burg Simpson and other corporate groups! If you are interested in learning more about corporate partnerships at Craig, contact Becky Plunkett at bplunkett@craighospital.org or 303-789-8166.
Don Daley Is Back in the Saddle and Helping Others Get There Too

In 2017, Don Daley, 68, bought a mobile wheelchair and a van with a ramp and lift, but he didn’t need them for long, despite hearing the words “you will never walk again” from doctors. An avid horseback rider, Don was on a riding expedition with friends in Douglas, Wyoming, when he was thrown from an all-terrain vehicle and sustained a spinal cord injury. He was airlifted to the nearest hospital and then to Denver.

“I have to tell you, I always thought I would walk again,” Don says.

Giving up isn’t in Don’s DNA. He was willing to do what it took to reach his physical potential — and get back on his beloved horse, Ezzy. He spent three months in SCI rehabilitation at Craig Hospital, working hard and finding motivation from the staff’s positive attitude.

“I’ve never seen so many positive people in one organization in my life. They never told me I couldn’t do something,” Don says.

Don recalls his PEAK Center therapist saying that he hoped he hadn’t bought a mobile wheelchair, because he wasn’t going to need it — he’d be walking. Don bought one anyway to ease the transition home, but he only used it for six weeks. He appreciated the personalized care he received at Craig, not just from the therapy teams but from his rehab tech and even the cashier in the cafeteria.

“The gal in the cafeteria knew I liked avocados. Every day, she’d have an avocado waiting for me,” he says.

A few programs at Craig really stood out for Don and his wife, Taunya. They described Family Housing as “a lifesaver” for providing an apartment for Taunya so she could move to Denver to be with Don. Through eight one-on-one sessions, Psychology helped the couple ready for life after injury. He also appreciated occupational therapy for helping him tackle flying home.

“Craig is so good about never hesitating to say, ‘Let’s go accomplish that.’ My occupational therapist, Steph, suggested we practice going up and down steps. I was literally able to get into that airplane because of her,” Don says.

Don continued to work hard when he arrived home. He immediately started rehab, finding it too easy after being at Craig. He also hired a personal trainer to come to his house three days a week for two hours a day. They worked on walking. Don would go 50 feet, then sit in his wheelchair. Each week, he went a little farther. Now, he walks three-fourths of a mile without the help of a cane.

(cont’d on page 9)
“I’m still working on getting my balance and some muscle memory back,” says Don. “My doctor here says I’ve hit a plateau. I’m getting past that plateau.”

Don returned to horseback riding just seven months after his stay at Craig. He and Ezzy are part of a group called the Sunday Riders in San Diego. He’s also a longtime member of Rancheros Visitadores or “Visiting Ranchers,” a social club in Santa Barbara that travels 60 miles over seven days each May, culminating in a parade through the town of Solvang, California. In 2019, the Rancheros Visitadores raised $1 million for breast cancer, and Don was right there with them.

Philanthropy is not new to Don, a fourth generation San Diegan. Throughout his life, he played an active role in the San Diego community and supported several organizations, including Toys for Tots, The Polinsky Center, Maranatha Chapel, Horizon Prep, Pedal the Cause and the Mission Valley YMCA. In addition, Don provided pro bono asphalt restoration and development work for local public parks and schools via his commercial asphalt company. Today, he serves on the board of his son Don’s company, DIII Transport, named in honor of three generations of Don Daleys. Recently, he gave to Craig’s Operation TBI Freedom, which supports veterans and active duty military personnel with traumatic brain injury.

“I give because I have been gifted a lot in my life,” says Don.

In the PEAK Center above The Lokomat, a robotic locomotor training system, is a picture of a past patient sitting on a horse. That photo provided extra motivation for Don. He told his physical therapist that he wanted to ride again, and he responded by saying, “You will ride again, if that’s what you want.”

“It’s great to be back in the saddle,” Don says. “The foundation I received at Craig is what gave me the ability to do what I am doing today, there’s no question about it.”
The 2020 PUSH Gala on Feb. 29 raised a record-setting amount for Craig programs, research and patients. More than 1,200 generous event attendees and donors contributed more than $2,033,000.

The event was presented by Arrow Electronics and chaired by Michael Long, the chairman, president and CEO of Arrow, and his wife, Karen.

Proceeds from the PUSH dinner fund Craig’s unique Culture of Care programs like Therapeutic Recreation, Assistive Technology, Music Therapy, Community Reintegration, and school and teen programs — which are generally not covered by insurance. PUSH funds also support spinal cord and brain injury research, including ongoing studies and clinical trials aimed at improving outcomes, reducing long-term complications and enhancing the quality of life for those affected by these traumatic injuries.

Of the $2 million raised, more than $771,000 was committed by generous donors to the paddle auction for the Craig Foundation’s Patient Assistance Fund. This fund helps patients meet urgent financial needs resulting from their injury.

The 2020 PUSH Impact Award was given to the Buschling Family of St. Louis. The award is presented to a Craig Hospital graduate or family in recognition of their perseverance, dedication and determination to adapt to the injury and use the experience to make a positive
difference in society. Honorees serve as positive and influential role models to others in similar situations while impacting the broader community through their professional or personal achievement, innovation, advocacy, collaboration or service.

Dane, Randy, Tammie and Josh Buschling are the founders of Brain Buddies, a grassroots organization in St. Louis that works to connect individuals with brain injuries for mentoring, support and social activities. The family started the organization following Dane’s brain injury.

Also at the dinner, Colin Heffern accepted the Dave and Gail Liniger Spirit of Craig Award. This award recognizes an individual or family who brings to life the spirit of Craig Hospital through significant direct hospital involvement, philanthropic support, advocacy and volunteer efforts on Craig’s behalf, service to patients, or leadership at the hospital or foundation. The award is named in honor of Craig graduates Dave and Gail Liniger, founders of RE/MAX International, who truly reflect the Spirit of Craig in their own lives.

Since 2016, Colin has led a biweekly class focused on independent lifestyles for patients with high spinal cord injuries. He is also a volunteer peer mentor at Craig.

The 20th-anniversary PUSH event will be held on Saturday, April 17, 2021.

Watch the PUSH Honoree videos at craighospital.org/PUSH.
Pedal 4 Possible Kept Mike Neu Rolling During Rehab

Last place never felt so good for Mike Neu.

As an avid biker, Mike had a competitiveness that usually put him at the front of the pack. That changed when he sustained a spinal cord injury while mountain biking in Moab, Utah.

He finished last at Craig Hospital’s Pedal 4 Possible Bike Ride in September. A major victory.

Coming in last meant Mike had met his rehabilitation challenge. Craig’s Therapeutic Recreation (TR) therapist, Kimmy Strat, set the ride as a recovery goal for Mike during his 14 weeks of inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation at Craig.

“Kimmy kept saying it was possible and we kept working toward it,” says Mike.

Mike’s spinal cord injury was deemed incomplete, meaning it has the potential to repair itself. Regaining movement and the chance to get back to the sport he loves was part of his motivation to work hard at Craig in physical therapy, occupational therapy and recreational therapy.

“Every day, Trey Downey, my physical therapist, would start our session by saying, ‘Hey Mike, I want you to try this. What do you think?’ I decided I would never say no,” Mike says. “Trey quickly learned he could ask me to do anything.”

That positive, can-do attitude has taken Mike far. While he still feels like he’s living a new normal — recumbent biking and walking with crutches — he is grateful for the movement he has, and for Craig for helping him get there. His goal was to walk out of Craig after his inpatient treatment, and he did.

While at Craig in 2019, Mike took full advantage of the TR program, joining them for adaptive biking, cross-country skiing and adaptive scuba diving. This year, he even got his ski legs back after spending five days with Craig graduates at the Adaptive Sports Center at Crested Butte.

“Skiing turned out great. I surprised myself by doing it standing up,” Mike adds.

While Mike used to log 2,000 to 3,000 miles on his bike each year, this year he is shooting for 650—a major feat considering the slower speed of his recumbent bike. Some of those miles will be ridden during Craig’s 2020 Pedal 4 Possible on Saturday, Sept. 19. So far, the ride is on despite COVID-19, with fingers crossed that it can still take place. If it can’t, a virtual ride will happen, complete with swag items. Mike’s virtual ride will be from his home in the suburbs of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to Lake Michigan.

Wherever the ride is, Mike plans to bring his competitive spirit.

“Last year’s ride was fun, but this year I don’t plan on finishing last,” he says.
Save the Date

Important Notice: The safety of our event participants and community is our highest priority, and we are actively monitoring the COVID-19 situation. We are following Craig Hospital and governmental directives and will update you should our event plans change. Updates will be posted at craighospital.org/foundation/events.

Craig Hospital Golf Tournament presented by RE/MAX LLC

Sept. 3, 2020
A spectacular day of golf at Sanctuary will raise money for individuals with spinal cord and brain injuries.
craighospital.org/sanctuary

Pedal 4 Possible

Sept. 19, 2020
The sixth annual charity bike ride along the Flatirons through Boulder County will feature courses for all skill levels and include 10K, 30K, 50K, 100K and 100-mile routes.
pedal4possible.org

PUSH Gala

April 17, 2021
Craig’s biggest fundraiser of the year, the annual PUSH dinner, raises money to support Craig’s programs and research.
craighospital.org/PUSH

Pinnacol Volunteer Event Creates Smiles

More than 12 volunteers from Pinnacol Assurance, including Pinnacol President and CEO Phil Kalin, spent a morning at Craig building bikes for children who are staying in Craig’s Family Housing unit while their parents rehabilitate.

Pinnacol Assurance has supported Craig for more than 10 years, giving to Community Reintegration, Adaptive Transportation, Therapeutic Recreation, the equipment fund and more. We are grateful for this ongoing partnership!

Double Your Donation

For nonprofit organizations like Craig, every dollar counts. Corporate employee matching gifts offer the opportunity to turn one dollar donated by a match-eligible employee into two, three, four or even five dollars!

Employee matching gift programs are a type of corporate philanthropy set up to encourage employees to give back to their communities. These companies encourage community outreach by making donations to the same nonprofits that their employees have donated to.

Did you know that more than 18 million employees work for companies with matching gift programs? You might be one of them! You can immediately assess your eligibility and gain access to detailed information about your employer’s corporate giving program by searching our database of companies with matching gift programs at https://craighospital.org/foundation/matchinggifts. If your company isn’t listed, make sure to check with your company’s human resources department.
Craig’s Fertility Clinic Brings Hope to Couples Wanting To Conceive

Jared and Alexis Sanchez found hope hanging on the wall of the PEAK Center. That’s where they noticed a flyer on Craig Hospital’s fertility clinic run by Pam Lauer, nurse practitioner with Craig’s outpatient clinic. The couple had been trying to conceive another child since Jared’s accident in 2012, which left him with a spinal cord injury (SCI). They couldn’t afford the hefty price tag of in vitro fertilization (IVF) — which they’d been told was their only option.

“We tried on our own with no luck and I finally got to a point where I simply let go. I said to myself, if God wants us to have another child, it will happen,” says Alexis. “Shortly after that we walked into the PEAK Center — something we usually don’t do — after one of Jared’s appointments and we saw the flyer. It was kind of crazy how it all lined up.”

Pam established the fertility clinic in December 2016 after attending a certification training called “Management of Infertility in Men with Spinal Cord Injury” through The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis. It was something she’d wanted to do since starting at Craig in 2001 as a nurse.

“Many couples are told that expensive IVF is their only option, but with penile vibratory stimulation we can achieve an 86% success rate among men with a T10 or higher spinal cord injury at a low cost. It’s very satisfying to offer this alternative and bring hope to couples,” Pam adds.

Recently, with dollars from the Craig Foundation and its faithful donors, Pam was able to buy a new piece of equipment to help men with T10 or lower injuries find success. Doing so closes the gap and creates a more affordable option for all men with SCI who want to be fathers.

“On our fourth try with Pam, we got lucky,” Alexis says.

Pam helped guide the process. When Alexis was ovulating, the couple would come into her office that same day. Pam would monitor Jared’s blood pressure while gathering a sperm sample, which was then inserted into Alexis. The pregnancy went full term, and today, Jared and Alexis are parents to a beautiful 2-month-old baby girl.

“We named her after Pam. Her name is Briar Lauer Sanchez,” says Alexis. “We couldn’t say thank you enough and this was one way to try. When we told Pam her middle name, she cried.”

Alexis describes Pam as super real and very sensitive to emotions. She appreciates how Pam gave them her all, fitting them in despite a busy schedule and making them feel as comfortable as possible despite an inherently awkward process.

A lot of people have questions about sexuality after SCI. I didn’t have the answers, but I wanted to learn,” Pam says. “Soon, I was the person people came to with questions on fertility and sexual health. Once I became a nurse practitioner, I decided I wanted to create a formal program at Craig.”

Men with SCI face specific fertility challenges. They have a hard time sustaining an erection, and their sperm quality and motility declines. It all adds up to difficulty fathering children. Pam uses special equipment that helps men ejaculate, empowering couples like Jared and Alexis to conceive. She focuses on providing safe, minimally invasive and relatively low-cost options.

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Great neighbors can be like family, and that’s how it was for Estella Cortez and Pat Strait. The women lived two doors apart and became best friends while doing civic work together. When Estella started a neighborhood improvement group, Pat was there to support them, making food and stuffing envelopes. Together, they made sure the area’s community center, library and parks were kept up in their Denver neighborhood.

“They were kind and excellent neighbors,” says Estella. “They were very hardworking and honest people, and were liberal in giving to their church and community.”

Shortly after Pat’s husband, Don, passed away in 1999 at the age of 72, Estella convinced Pat — who had no children or living relatives — to leave their Montbello neighborhood and join her in a nearby townhome community in Aurora. The two women enjoyed attending Aurora Hills Church together, where Don had served as a deacon.

In 1997, Don developed polio-like symptoms that affected his ability to walk, and he became a patient at Craig Hospital. The couple was so impressed by Craig that Pat decided to leave the proceeds from the sale of their house to Craig.

“They often talked about how much they appreciated Craig, telling people how friendly everyone was, and how good they were at working with patients. That’s why when I asked her where she wanted to leave her estate, she said Craig without any hesitation,” Estella adds.

Pat worked as a secretary for the city and county of Denver, possibly where the couple met. Don served as a district representative in the Colorado legislature in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The couple were history buffs who loved to travel, sometimes with members of the legislature. Don’s career was in real estate.

Patricia S. Strait was born on Feb. 27, 1929, and grew up in Hannibal, Missouri. Donald Earl Strait was born on May 14, 1927, and was raised in Canon City, Colorado. Estella cared for Pat leading up to her death on Nov. 25, 2017, at the age of 88. One of Pat’s friends commented on her memorial page that she was “such an encourager, and I will always remember her smile.”

“Don adored Pat. They were always together, and they were definitely in love to the end,” Estella says.

Frank Craig Society members such as Pat and Don have made plans in their wills or estates to leave a legacy gift to Craig. These contributions will make a significant difference in the future of Craig, and will create a lasting legacy for the donor while helping ensure independent futures for those Craig serves. For more information about planned giving or if you have already included Craig in your estate plans, please contact Jacquie Hall at 303-789-8208 or jahall@craighospital.org.

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Estate Gift Leaves a Legacy of Love

Pam wants to help as many couples as she can, Craig patients or not. That’s why she creates educational webinars on fertility and sexuality after SCI and posts them on the resources page on Craig’s website. She plans to add several more webinars in 2020.

“I want people to know that it’s very possible to have a child after SCI outside of IVF,” Pam says. “People need to know that fertility and sexuality don’t end with SCI.”

Craig is unique among rehabilitation hospitals for having a fertility clinic. Pam estimates there are only a few clinics like it in the country that focus on low-cost, low-tech options for conceiving after spinal cord injury.
We Need Masks!

As the number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase, there is a critical worldwide shortage of face masks. We are experiencing this short supply at Craig, so we would greatly appreciate mask donations! Learn more about how you can donate medical-grade masks or cloth face coverings at craighospital.org/donate-masks.