

Family Affair

The Dolan Family has made it their mission to advance Shirley Ryan AbilityLab's transformative powers through their fundraising efforts, notably as co-chairs for the Art in Motion event on Friday, February 16.

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“I'M NOT LEAVING until they ask me to go,” says Lake Forest's Daniel (Danny) Dolan Jr. of his many roles with Shirley Ryan AbilityLab, most currently as the Vice Chair of its Board of Directors. “This hospital is so unbelievable. So inspirational. So mind blowing. I can't imagine not being part of this organization.”

Danny first came to know Shirley Ryan AbilityLab in the early 1990s, when it was called the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC). Danny's third child—a son named John—experienced a traumatic birth, resulting in his spinal cord being severed. The Dolan family had a connection with Dr. Henry Betts, RIC's CEO at the time, and

Danny called Dr. Betts regarding John.

“From the beginning, I knew this hospital was extraordinary,” Danny recalls. “I was asked to join its Associate Board and have been involved with them ever since.”

In the early years of his involvement, Danny launched the John Dolan Golf Challenge, in memory of his late son, to raise money for the hospital's pediatric rehabilitation programs. “We hosted this event at the Merit Club for more than 20 years and introduced a number of people who are now significant donors to the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab,” Danny says.

Danny's other children—he and his wife Mary had six in total—have been included in their father's philanthropic work for as long as they can remember.

“Since Dad introduced the John Dolan Golf challenge, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab has been a big part of our lives,” says daughter Genevieve, an Associate Board member. “Dad would have us speak at the event and when we could finally golf, we joined the outing. We would be paired with 'pros' who could be missing an arm or playing from a wheelchair and they would be better than us. It was really humbling experience and opened my eyes to the beauty of the hospital.”

Genevieve's younger sister Caroline was born after her brother passed but feels connected to him through her work on the Associate Board.

“My introduction to the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab was also through the golf challenge,” Caroline





Genevieve,
Caroline and
Danny Dolan

2021 - Art by
Tom Perkowitz
Kayla Nelson



Genevieve
and Caroline
Dolan

says. “We would go to the event every year and be so inspired by the pro who would participate year after year. I was so moved to see how they played, knowing that they didn’t have everything we did.”

Genevieve and Caroline have continued their family’s legacy of giving by chairing the annual Art in Motion event—Genevieve in 2021 and Caroline in 2024. Art in Motion raises funds for Shirley Ryan AbilityLab’s Art Therapy and Therapeutic Recreation programs.

“Art in Motion is being held on Friday, February 16, at Wildman BT. It’s the third year that it’s being hosted there,” Caroline says. “Wildman BT is very artsy—a big, open, raw warehouse. It’s a super location and many of the artists will come and hang out near their work. It’s an incredibly special night. And the money we raise is so important because this programming is often not covered by insurance.” The 2024 planning committee’s goal is to raise \$570,000.

The Art Therapy program at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is based on the belief that the creative process facilitates mind-

body connection and assists patients in exploring intense emotions accompanying the rehabilitation process. It encourages self-expression, reduces stress and anxiety, and promotes healing and self-awareness.

Individual and group art therapy sessions focus on building resiliency through the promotion of self-esteem and functional independence. Patients explore new possibilities to approach their lives and discover strengths through adaptation of art materials. They are able to engage in art with the highest level of independence and find freedom in the artistic process.

At Art in Motion, emerging artists and hospital, civic, and business leaders enjoy a lively cocktail party with music, raffle, refreshments, and patient artwork on display. Artwork is created by patients of varying abilities and is for sale via silent auction; half of the sale proceeds go to the artists while half go to Shirley Ryan AbilityLab.

“When you purchase a piece of art at Art in Motion, there is a deeper meaning, something so special, to what you’re buying,” says Genevieve. “The artwork often speaks to a patient’s journey. It’s very sentimental, very emotional, and it beautifully showcases the magic of this hospital.”

The pride Danny feels for his daughters continuing his family’s work with Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is hard to miss.

“Genevieve and Caroline have so eloquently expressed what makes this hospital so outstanding and I’m so proud of the work they’re doing with Art in Motion,” Danny says. “Every day, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab is disrupting how medicine is delivered. The outcomes are outstanding—transformational. The research being done, and the medicine being practiced is what is giving patients and their families hope. Our leadership team has created this culture, and they won’t settle for anything less. You can feel this passion come through in the art.”

To learn more about Shirley Ryan AbilityLab or to purchase tickets to Art in Motion, visit sralab.org/AIM.