

# INSPIRATION AND TRANSFORMATION

BY SUSAN B. NOYES

Two cutting-edge organizations where progress and innovation in the field of rehabilitation abound—RIC’s AbilityLab and Pathways, will be joining forces as the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab thanks to a record gift from Shirley and Pat Ryan

University of Notre Dame and was recently honored by the Chicago History Museum

strength to act too. “It’s easy when you have the giant power of this man behind you,” Ryan grins. But those who know the couple well understand that the success of each is a tribute to the other and evidence of the power of a loving union.

The concept at the core of the new hospital — putting all patients at the center of the closest possible collaboration between researchers and clinicians in a world-class, positive and empowering environment called an “AbilityLab” — has proven to be transformational at Pathways and in an RIC pilot program. RIC and Pathways are also known for strategic online dissemination of best practices, which are accessible to all.

The scale of RIC’s research enterprise is the largest of its kind in the world, and will continue to grow in the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. Currently, more than 200 research projects are underway,

PHOTOS COURTESY OF RIC

funded by both private and public supporters, including the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the United States Department of Defense, and the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research. Additionally, it is an academic home and clinical partner for the Department of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at Northwestern University in the Feinberg School of Medicine.

“We are investing in science and technology more than any other place of our kind on the planet,” says RIC President and CEO Dr. Joanne Smith. “A new era in physical medicine and rehabilitation, perhaps a whole ‘new category’ in medicine, starts with this merger and our new facility.”

Ryan stresses that the work is about more than science and physical rehabilitation though. “We’re breaking down stereotypes,” she explains. “The hospital will be a miracle workshop — literally a miracle workshop. It is about building on our strengths, our abilities. Everyone has them. It is not about our limitations. It is about what I can do, and what you can do. About [Board Chair] Jude Reyes, Joanne Smith, the technologists, clinicians and researchers who will collaborate on the same floor too.”

With characteristic loving, faith-filled and community-building words, Ryan inspires all to lean in and do more — to believe and work towards better together. We can all do this together.

