No ‘Maybe’ Here

Mountaintop Rescue Ends Well

Last autumn, John Fabian was on a mountaintop near his Montville home with a friend, when he fell 20 feet down a 90-foot embankment. He plunged straight downward, his trajectory stopped by rocks and the tree branch that he dangled from.

“I knew I was in trouble because blood was pouring out of my left ear,” he recalls. “The rescue workers said it was a miracle I was alive.”

The delicate process of extracting Mr. Fabian from the mountain took the Montville police, fire department and EMTs over an hour. Once in the ambulance, he asked if he was going to the nearby hospital. The answer: “No, you’re going to Morristown Memorial; you have to go to a trauma center.”

As soon as he arrived, the Emergency Department (ED) staff assessed the urgency of his situation and took action. “I felt like the lion in ‘The Wizard of Oz,’” he says. “Someone was cleaning the blood off; a different person was taking my vitals; a different person was assessing my jaw; a different person was plugging the blood; someone else was addressing my pain. Everyone had a duty, and there was a well-coordinated effort.”

As hurt as he was, he was cognizant, and his military school background helped him appreciate the efficiency that occurred those first few minutes in the Trauma Center. He was impressed with everyone’s positive and calming demeanor. “They kept telling me everything was going to be ok; everyone was smiling,” he adds.

While a CAT scan showed no damage to his brain or spine, his jaw was broken, the bone having shattered in thousands of pieces. The oral surgeon on call, Gerald Begley, DMD, performed over three hours of surgery to wire Mr. Fabian’s jaw shut. “He’s a terrific surgeon; there was no option to interview other doctors, and he did a great job,” he says. “This speaks to the level of hospital that Morristown Memorial is. I learned that there are good hospitals and there are great hospitals.”

Today, a fully recovered Mr. Fabian smiles easily and is eager to share his appreciation: “This has been an amazing experience from beginning to end. I question, ‘If I was at a different hospital, would the outcome have been the same?’ Maybe. But there was no ‘maybe’ at Morristown Memorial. I was at the right place.”

Did You Know?

1. Morristown Memorial became a regional Trauma Center in 1993.
2. When the Trauma Center first opened, there were two helicopter flights a year. Now the hospital averages about two a day.
3. In the Trauma Center’s first year, its medical experts handled 150 cases. Today, they average 1,500 cases a year.
The Contes: Counting Blessings

Robert and Debra Conte of New Vernon are supporting the ED Expansion Campaign because they have a history with the place.

On Jan. 16, 2006, their 14-year-old son was rushed by ambulance to the ED after a skateboard fall. The boy had a skull fracture and neurosurgeon Ronald Benitez, MD, was called in to perform surgery. “We were told they were going to put our son’s skull back together,” says Mr. Conte.

The operation was successful and the boy stayed briefly in the Edward and Joan Foley Pediatric Intensive Care Unit. The time Mr. and Mrs. Conte spent walking the halls made them realize the importance of the hospital to the community. “Our son would be leaving in a day or two, but there were children with bigger issues,” he says. “It made us count our blessings.”

It also made Mr. Conte get involved with helmet safety initiatives through Northern NJ Safe Kids/Safe Communities, sponsored by the hospital’s Trauma Service. The Contes’ recent gift to the ED expansion is another way of saying thank you for their son’s care.

“I always knew the hospital was a good place, and we experienced it firsthand,” he says. “We’re pleased with Morristown Memorial and glad to show our appreciation.”

Rallying Campaign Support at Fawn Hill Farm

The ED Expansion Campaign was kicked-off in style on May 13 at the Mansion in May’s Fawn Hill Farm in Harding Township. Hosted by the Health Foundation board of trustees and the ED Expansion Steering Committee, the celebration featured a cocktail reception and private house tour for the 150 guests.

To date, $3.2 million has been generated through philanthropy for the $22 million expansion project. Morristown Memorial is looking to raise $1.3 million more from the community by year’s end. All proceeds from the Mansion in May, sponsored by the Women’s Association, will benefit the campaign.

The evening’s speakers (l-r) Marc Robinson, campaign chairman; Dr. David Shulkin, COO and president-elect, Morristown Memorial; John and Helen Connell; Peter Simon, Health Foundation board chairman; and Dr. Mark Mandell, chairman, Emergency Medicine