



Amy Vitelli - One of Ours

As a MetroHealth employee who is also a trauma survivor, Amy Vitelli has first-hand knowledge of the lifesaving care that MetroHealth provides every day.

Amy Vitelli called her husband to let him know that she would be making a stop after she finished her overnight shift. On an icy November 2012 morning, Amy, an ultrasound technologist at MetroHealth, headed to her car, eager to pick up an item she'd purchased on Craigslist.

She lost control of her vehicle on Interstate 71 at the Fulton Road overpass in Cleveland and hit the guardrail. Rather than "guiding" the car as it had been designed to do, the rail punctured her driver's side door, slicing its way through to the back of the car. It caught Amy's winter coat as it passed through the driver's seat, twisting her arm, dislocating her elbow and breaking both the radius and ulna.

At first, Amy thought her injuries "weren't that bad." But when she began to lose feeling in her legs, she realized just how wrong she was. Amy sustained six broken ribs, a broken tailbone and a non-displaced broken pelvis. Her lower leg was shattered and the guardrail had taken a significant chunk out of her thigh.

Amy hadn't gotten around to updating her emergency contact information after she and Eric were married. It would be two hours before her husband learned that anything had happened. Only when he saw footage of the accident on a local news station's website did he realize just how bad it had been. Amy's injuries brought her brother, a critical care doctor, to tears which reinforced the gravity of her condition.

"When the insurance adjuster called to let me know that they were going to total the car, he told me that he was sorry for my loss," Eric said. "There had been so much blood and so much damage to the vehicle, they just assumed that the driver had died." And, had Amy been much further away from MetroHealth when it happened, she would have.

After a week in the intensive care unit and 21 days in the hospital, Amy came home in time for Christmas. She wore an external fixator on her leg to prevent her from bearing weight on it. The first time she stood up from her wheelchair, it took five people to steady her as she pivoted on her good leg. The second time, she did it on her own. She did six months of outpatient rehabilitation. Four months in, she added yoga to help increase her flexibility. She had six surgeries in all.

Amy returned to work at MetroHealth just 10 months after the accident, doing limited duty and partnering with an ultrasound student for two-hour shifts. She now works regular eight-hour shifts. She's back teaching at Lorain Community College. She also volunteers with Meals on Wheels in addition to dedicating time to attend Trauma Survivors Network meetings at MetroHealth, encouraging interaction among its participants.

Oh ... and she updated her emergency contact information.

