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Trauma Survivors Return to Kendall Regional to reunite with those who saved their lives



By Bruna Doering

Trauma patients across the nation were brought together this past Wednesday to celebrate the triumph of their survival by returning to where they received life-saving care. Florida's #1 Trauma Hospital for survivability, Kendall Regional Medical Center, was no exception as their patients rejoined the

clinicians, caregivers and first responders, at the hospital's eighth annual Trauma Survivor's Day.

This national day of recognition not only serves to honor these trauma survivors, but it also gives them the opportunity to share their stories and gratitude for all those who aided in their recovery. Kendall Regional's trauma patients reunited with Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, Miami-Dade Police Department, Miami-Dade Air Rescue, the Miccosukee Fish and Wildlife team, Florida Highway Patrol, and all of the medical professionals and hospital staff.



Among the trauma survivors was 48 year-old Paulina Herndon, a woman who suffered a traumatic scalp avulsion after getting her hair caught in a boat engine. "It ripped off everything and this man put it back on for me," said Herndon referring to Dr. Haaris Mir, the Medical Director of the Burn and Reconstructive Center at Kendall Regional Medical Center. "This is very much the best place to come to if you want to survive."



The celebration's aim to provide support to and seek inspiration from trauma patients continued as City of Miami Police Officer, trauma patient and keynote speaker Mario Gonzalez shared his story and spoke about his "new normal". The former officer endured a high-speed motorcycle crash followed by a car running over both of his legs. He suffered traumatic injuries to both his lower extremities, which required immediate amputations to both legs as well as immediate reconstructive surgeries. "As much as they say I was fighting, they were fighting to keep me alive. Thanks to them, I am here today".



However, Officer Gonzalez would not have even had the chance at survival if it were not for bystander and Miccosukee Fish and Wildlife Officer, Alexis De Los Santos, who rushed to the scene of the accident with two tourniquets; a device used for stopping the flow of blood and preventing someone from bleeding to death.

De Los Santos applied a tourniquet to each of his thighs, which may have saved Mario Gonzalez's life. "His outcome would have been far worse had the tourniquet not been placed on his legs," explained Kendall Regional Medical Center's Trauma Medical Director, Dr. Mark McKenney.

Along with several other trauma survivors who attended Kendall Regional Medical Center's Trauma Survivors Day, Mario Gonzalez is still on the road to recovery; however, he beat the odds and continues to inspire other trauma patients every day. "Not every moment is going to be a happy moment, but you need to move on. This is our new normal. This is our new life."

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