

# suburban life

Best OF THE Best  
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Orthopedic surgeon  
Dr. David Hardski  
and others at  
**St. Mary Medical  
Center** facilitate  
a patient's recovery  
from injuries sustained  
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car crash.

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The efforts of orthopedic surgeon Dr. David Hardski and others at **St. Mary Medical Center** enable a patient to recover from injuries sustained in a devastating car crash.

Dr. Hardski with Joel Torres

# Unbroken

by **Phil Gianficaro** | photo by **Alison Dunlap**

**J**oel Torres's life changed forever in May 2021, when a horrific automobile crash in his native Bucks County shattered much of his body.

After a Mustang slammed into his vehicle at 80 miles per hour, Torres sustained a broken right femur, broken right tibia, broken left ankle, and fractured left knee. He also sustained injuries to his left wrist, abdomen, and brain. His blood pressure spiked. He eventually fell into a coma. EMS personnel on the scene reported him as "mangled."

His survival was, by all accounts, a miracle.

Three years later, Torres describes himself as a 27-year-old man with a 67-year-old body. His surgically repaired legs have more metal than a Metallica/Black Sabbath double-bill concert. The accident has stolen his active lifestyle; skateboarding, basketball, and golf have been replaced by the chore of managing his aches and pains. Even standing for long stretches is a chore.

Yet Torres says he considers himself incredibly fortunate, thanks to David Hardski, M.D., and the caring, committed staff at St. Mary Medical Center in Langhorne: "Dr. Hardski and [his team] at St. Mary saved my life. Without them, I wouldn't be here."

Alyssa DiNatale, Joel's mother, takes it one step further. She describes Dr. Hardski as "a hero."

"He is a committed doctor—dedicated, compassionate," she adds. "I cannot thank him enough for the exceptional care he and the trauma team at St. Mary gave my son. They

saved him. What I can say about Dr. Hardski is this: He is a healer and a special person. I will thank him forever."

A Bucks County native, Dr. Hardski is an orthopedic surgeon who specializes in trauma. He sees patients in the Orthopedics Langhorne practice, and serves as the hospital's medical director of orthopedic trauma and chief of surgery.

Dr. Hardski earned his medical degree from Drexel University College of Medicine, and completed his residency training at Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn. He was active in clinical research throughout his training and has authored a number of publications, including a chapter focused on pediatric humerus fractures.

Dr. Hardski emphasizes that caring for patients at St. Mary is a team effort—one that sometimes requires the hospital's highly specialized trauma team. Torres needed them, and Dr. Hardski's team responded by performing surgery while Torres was still in the intensive care unit. The most pressing injuries were to his right leg.

"We placed metal rods on his right tibia and right femur, then waited for him to stabilize," Dr. Hardski recalls. "We used a variety of reduction techniques and performed definitive fixation of his fractures with combinations of plates, screws, rods, and an external fixator."

An external fixation device keeps fractured bones stabilized and in alignment. The device can be adjusted externally to ensure the bones remain in an optimal position during the healing process. Reduction techniques are procedures used to realign the broken bone

fragments back into position to achieve proper alignment for healing.

"I see three or four cases a year like Joel's," Dr. Hardski says. "You do the work piecemeal while working with the ICU and trauma teams. I tell them, 'This is what I have to fix now.'"

Surgery to repair a broken femur can cause a potentially life-threatening fat embolism, or bleeding that can impact the patient's heart.

Thankfully, for Torres, St. Mary is ranked among the best hospitals in America for orthopedic surgery, according to a national study from Healthgrades, a leading online resource for information about physicians and hospitals.

"I can't estimate the number of individuals who laid their hands on Joel," Dr. Hardski says. "From the people who loaded him on the [ambulance], to the ER physician, to the people in the trauma bay, the anesthesiologist, the respiratory therapist—everyone."

Torres initially spent 16 days at St. Mary. He returned to undergo rehabilitation so he could re-learn how to walk, talk, and eat. While Dr. Hardski succeeded in repairing his patient's body, he says Torres is unlikely to see further "substantial improvements." Yet Torres and his family remain ever so grateful.

"I'm lucky because my son ended up at St. Mary with Dr. Hardski," says Alyssa DiNatale. "I can't say it enough—they saved his life." ■

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