April 26 was “A Night for Heroes” at the Baltimore Convention Center when the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center held its annual gala to recognize the medical expertise and tireless dedication of the Shock Trauma team and Maryland's emergency medical service providers.

At the gala, 100 people received “Hero Awards” for their roles in the rescue and recovery of two of Maryland's most critically injured citizens: a St. Mary's County teenager hit by a car, and a Montgomery County mother injured when her SUV rolled over. Both patients were scheduled to attend the gala to thank the dozens of health care providers responsible for saving their lives.

“The patients featured at the Shock Trauma Gala are just two examples of the thousands of Marylanders whose lives were saved last year by these amazing and dedicated professionals. They include dispatchers, firefighters, on-scene EMS personnel, crew members from the Maryland State Police Aviation Command, physicians, nurses, medical technicians and rehabilitation specialists,” says Thomas M. Scalea, M.D., physician-in-chief at the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, which is part of the University of Maryland Medical Center. Dr. Scalea is also professor of surgery and director of the program in trauma at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Dr. Scalea adds, “These men and women work around the clock, 365 days a year, and the gala is our opportunity to take the time to thank them and honor their commitment to providing the world's best trauma care to the people of Maryland.”

Forty-four people received Hero Awards for the case of Thomas Rudowsky, a 14-year-old from St. Mary's County who was nearly killed when he was hit by a car while trying to cross a busy intersection on Route 235.

St. Mary's County volunteers arrived on the scene within minutes and found Rudowsky in critical condition. They quickly called for a MedEvac helicopter to fly the teenager to Shock Trauma. Because Rudowsky had a suspected brain injury, the flight paramedic on Trooper 7 had to use a special procedure to put in a breathing tube.

Tests at Shock Trauma revealed that the teenager had multiple injuries, including fractures to his collarbone, arm, spine and pelvis as well as a bruise on his right lung and a laceration on his spleen. But his biggest problem was a brain injury that required immediate surgery to relieve the swelling. Although the operation went well, several days after surgery Rudowsky still did not recognize his mother, but he was able to follow commands.

Working with therapists and the rest of the team at Shock Trauma, Rudowsky began to make improvements. Nine days after the incident, he left Shock Trauma for a rehabilitation facility. He is now back in school and running on his school's track team.

“Those patient stories highlighted at the gala exemplify the amazing, lifesaving care that is provided to trauma patients in Maryland because of our network of highly skilled caregivers,” says Jeffrey A. Rivest, president and chief executive officer of the University of Maryland Medical Center. “We are fortunate to live in a state with such dedicated professionals working in a well-coordinated system. They serve as a model for how trauma care should be provided.

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