His heart stopped.
Thirty-six years old. Perfectly healthy. And it just stopped.
Heather Mack was home with their four young children when she got the phone call. Jason, her husband of 13 years, was found unconscious and unresponsive at his place of work. When she arrived at the Metro Health Emergency Department, Dr. Todd Hartgerink, the ER physician caring for her husband, met her with somber news.
“I knew by the look on his face,” remembers Heather. “He was visibly shaken, and he just told me honestly, ‘It does not look good.’”

Time passed slowly. Family, friends, church members and coworkers poured into the hospital to be with Heather. With every minute that went by, fear and uncertainty grew. And Heather waited and prayed.

Jason had been down too long. The ER team had been working feverishly for hours to stabilize him. When they were finally able to steady his heart rate, he had already been exhibiting signs of certain brain damage. All indicators pointed to complete devastation.

Thanks to the life-saving work of Metro Health and Dr. Hartgerink, Jason Mack is alive and well and can continue to spend quality time with his wife and four children.
Defeating Death

(continued from page 1)

“I had been holding it together pretty well until then,” said Heather, tears filling her eyes at the memory. “But I just began thinking, what am I going to tell my kids... they were 10, 9, 6 and 3...how am I going to tell them that daddy’s not coming home?”

It was then that Dr. Hartgerink gave her one last hope. He was arranging for Jason to undergo a process called therapeutic hypothermia, where the body is cooled down to allow the brain and heart to heal. As they prepared to send him for further treatment, Dr. Hartgerink met with Heather one more time.

“I had spent a lot of time with his wife, his family and his church. The last thing I said is ‘You’ve got to pray. We’ve done everything that we can,’” he recalls. “That was probably the low point of my career...a 36-year-old man, with this family, and I didn’t think he was going to make it.”

What looked like a certain tragedy had gripped everyone in the ER that night. But just two days later, heartbreak turned to awe. Jason began to wake. And when he did, he showed no signs of brain damage. He was whole, with remarkably no long-term effects.

“He’s a walking miracle, and a testimony to the care he received at Metro,” stated Heather. “His care team in the ER gave all that they had just to give him a chance. He’s here today because they didn’t give up, even when things looked so bleak.”

Only days after a sudden cardiac arrest nearly stole his life, Jason sat as his four children climbed up next to him in his hospital bed. As they snuggled with their daddy, Heather noticed a figure standing in the doorway. Dr. Hartgerink watched silently, overwhelmed at the scene of this family in front of him. An emotional reunion followed.

“I don’t know many doctors who would check on a patient they only knew for a few hours. That’s a special doctor, and that is the kind of care we will always remember Metro for. They truly care about their patients, and they are willing to do whatever it takes to save a life.”

A life saved, and a family whole. Today Jason shows no signs of his brush with death, and life at the Mack’s home is back to normal. But it will never quite be the same.

“Every minute is special. We just can’t take anything for granted,” Jason reflects. “I’ll never forget what Metro did for us and the way they supported my family. We’re forever grateful.”
Rhonda hadn’t slept for days.

Dan Buck, her husband of less than two years, had been admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Metro Health. A diagnosis of pleurisy had quickly turned to double pneumonia. His condition was critical.

After two long days, Dan finally seemed to be stabilizing, and Rhonda went home to get some rest. But her slumber was cut short by the ringing of a telephone. Dan had taken a sudden turn for the worse and, at 51 years old, he was placed on life support.

Rhonda rushed back to the ICU, and what she saw shook her.

“When I saw him there, with all the machines and tubes, I was dumbfounded. It really hit me how serious this was. I could lose him.”

Tests soon revealed Dan was battling the H1N1 virus. He was a fighter, but this disease would test his limits. For three weeks, the virus ravaged his body. Every minute was a struggle for survival. Each step forward seemed to be met by another step back.

Eventually he began to improve, but his progress was slow. As days turned into weeks, Rhonda had some difficult decisions to make to move his recovery forward. Consenting to a tracheostomy was one of the toughest choices, but turned out to be the best.

With the tracheostomy in place, Dan’s health improved rapidly. Within a matter of days he was released from ICU, able to avoid the prospect of a gastric feeding tube and long-term care. He had survived the immediate dangers of the virus, but now he was combating neuropathy and would require extensive rehabilitation.

With Rhonda by his side, Dan began a three-week course of inpatient rehabilitation. As he regained his strength, his health continued to improve, and his tracheostomy was removed before he went home.

“I’ve known Metro my whole life—but not like this. Being here every day and watching them care for a loved one that was so critically ill, it gave me a whole different perspective and a deeper appreciation for who they are and what they do,” said Rhonda.

Nearly seven weeks after he was first admitted, Dan was able to go home. He would return frequently during the months following to continue his rehabilitation as an outpatient. But it wasn’t long before he was back at work, reclaiming the life he knew before his near-tragic bout with the flu.

“It’s been a long, slow process, but Metro was there every step of the way. Everyone in ICU and rehab cared for Dan like he was their own family. That makes all the difference,” said Rhonda. “We are just so grateful. Dan is doing great now. I could have lost him, but they saved his life, and they helped us get back to normal.”
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In Memory of Dr. H.M. Heller  
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Whigham
Investment Returns
Paying Dividends in Health and Life

They know about good investments. It’s what they do.

And Metro Health is one of the top choices for return on investment for the Veldheer, Long, Mackay & Bernecker Group, a local Merrill Lynch Financial Advisory Team. However, it’s not financial yields they seek from Metro, but rather returns in lives changed.

“We care deeply about the people of West Michigan. And through the years we’ve seen Metro’s growing impact in this community,” states Jim Veldheer, Managing Director, Wealth Management. “They’re doing things no one else was brave enough to do. They’re really touching lives. That passion for community is something we want to be a part of!”

The high-profile team has long been a supporting partner of Metro Health, a relationship that began thirty years ago with the first donation from Bob Bernecker, one of the group’s founding partners. Current partners Jim Veldheer, Tim Long, Bill Mackay and Scott Bernecker have carried on that tradition, growing it to new levels in the last decade.

Their repeated sponsorships and continued charity have helped launch life-saving programs and facilitate outreach to those in need. But their involvement never ends with a signature on a check. Whether they’re leading a committee, serving on the Foundation board or recruiting promising new volunteers, the group gives legs to their dollars.

“It’s not just about donating money,” said Tim Long. “To have a real and lasting impact, you have to bring others along. You have to encourage and inspire others to give of their money, time, and abilities and to make that a part of their lives.”

It is an approach to giving that seems to be contagious. Their example has enticed many into volunteerism, encouraged some to share their stories, and moved others to make donations. From friends to family to colleagues, everyone in contact with the Merrill Lynch team seems to catch their passion for Metro.

“We’re proud to help connect others with Metro through service and donations. My dad’s enthusiasm for giving and respect for Metro influenced each of us,” said Scott Bernecker. “If we can continue to share that with others, we can continue to impact our community for generations.”

For the Veldheer, Long, Mackay & Bernecker Group, philanthropy is not a transient deed. It is a long-term investment that builds a legacy of caring, involvement, and ownership among many…and pays dividends in health and life.
Tribute Gifts

Our appreciation to the following donors for making tribute and memorial gifts between March 1, 2012 and May 31, 2012.

In memory of Ardis Adams
Surgical Services Employees

In memory of Gerrit Bultema
Mr. and Mrs. William Leeder

In memory of Mr. Charles Fenton
Dr. Kristopher L. and Dr. Carin Brenner

In memory of Lisa Garwood
Mr. and Mrs. David Kapolka

In memory of Elizabeth Klopcic
Mr. Donald L. Klopcic, Sr.

In memory of Lauren Lovse
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In memory of Tom Storch
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In memory of Harris Timmer
Mrs. Hazel Timmer

In honor of the Fifth Floor
Patient Care Staff of Metro Health Hospital
Mr. Gerald Foy

In honor of Peter J. Haverkamp
Mr. Thomas G. Windeknecht

In honor of Robert Israels
Wolverine Glass Products

In honor of Dr. Adam Wolfe
Mrs. Bernadine Pearson

These gifts are a celebration of life, health and hope. They are often made to commemorate a milestone such as a birthday, wedding, graduation or anniversary – or to remember a deceased loved one. If you’re interested in making a memorial or tribute gift, please complete the enclosed envelope and mail with your check. The accuracy of this list is very important so please contact us at 616-232-5000 if an error has been made.
Your Gifts at Work

100% of your donations go to support programs that help the patients and families of Metro Health.

• 27 to 30 patients a day will be impacted by the power of music in the cancer treatment and simulation room. Giving the patient the ability to choose a satellite radio station as a distraction can reduce anxiety and loneliness while receiving treatment.

Hope & Healing Luncheon

In an effort to raise awareness and funds for Metro Health’s services and community impact, the Foundation hosted a special luncheon on April 24 at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park.

The fourth annual Hope & Healing Luncheon drew more than 390 attendees interested in the programs and services of Metro Health.

We would like to acknowledge and thank Lindsay Draher, LaMarte Hightower, Terry Thronton, Jason Mack and their families for sharing their personal stories about the life-saving care they received at Metro Health. We would also like to recognize and thank those who served as table hosts, and all those who attended to learn more about our important mission.

The event raised more than ever totaling $105,000. The generous donations from this event will help to make sure that Metro Health can continue to ease pain, conquer life-threatening diseases and save lives.

We are grateful to the following sponsors who helped make this event possible:
Great things are happening at Metro Health and among the many who deserve credit, this “shout out” goes to individuals and families who have contributed to the philanthropy arm of Metro Health, the Metro Health Hospital Foundation. Through their donations, they are making the patient and visitor experience a better one.

There are many things that ONLY happen because of the generous support of Metro donors. Programs like Child Life, the Cancer Center’s Patient Navigation and Survivorship Program, purchasing education and medical equipment, and so much more – would not happen without their support.

Metro Health is able to provide award winning care in part due to the kindness of individuals, corporations and foundations that made the decision to direct their charitable giving to us.

The ultimate gift to Metro is one that will ensure that we are able to adapt and meet the changing needs that the future will inevitably bring and it is quite an easy task to perform: include the Metro Health Hospital Foundation in your estate plan. Naming the Metro Health Hospital Foundation in your will or trust, or as a beneficiary of your retirement plan, IRA, life insurance policy or through a charitable gift annuity is a powerful, yet simple act.

People who have made this commitment are recognized as members of the Metro Health “Legacy Society.” Members of the Legacy Society receive invitations to special events and educational programs, a special history book of Metro Health Hospital, a membership gift, exclusive hospital updates, and their names inscribed on our society plaque on display in the hospital.

Please consider securing the future for the patients and families who rely on Metro Health by becoming a member of the Legacy Society. If you would like to have a conversation about the Legacy Society or would like additional information about charitable gift annuities, call Teresa at 616-252-5004.

Joining the Metro Health Hospital Foundation’s Legacy Society is a wonderful way to ensure that the highest quality care and the best patient experience will continue for generations to come.
Many Hands Make Light Work

Each year thousands of people walk through the doors of the Metro Health Community Clinic (formerly Breton Health Center) in desperate need. More than 60% are living in poverty and have little or no insurance, and many are part of the area’s growing refugee population. They only want what every person deserves: to protect and provide for the health and well-being of their families.

Several volunteers from the New York Life office in Grand Rapids generously spent a Saturday morning in April helping to prepare the clinic for much needed renovations. When it came to removing molding or patching walls the group was enthusiastic about the impact that this face-lift will have for patients and their families.

It truly is amazing what can be accomplished with teamwork. The renovations to the clinic will enable many individuals and families struggling with health and financial hardships to have a healing place to turn – a place they can count on to receive lifesaving services, delivered with the dignity they deserve. Thank you to New York Life for encouraging your employees to give back.

Feelin’ Grand 2012, Conquering Big Fears for Little Patients, will be held on Saturday, September 22, 2012 at DeVos Place. Social Hour will begin at 6:00 p.m., with dinner and entertainment following at 7:00 p.m.

The proceeds from this year’s premiere dinner event will go to the Child Life Program. This important program transforms children’s hospital experiences through the healing power of play. Child-friendly distraction, diversion and educational techniques relieve fears and help little ones understand and manage their health care experience. Specialized equipment and technology make treatment easier and take away pain of common procedures. Family support activities help kids cope with the illness of a loved one.

Metro Health is one of only a handful of community hospitals in the nation to offer this powerful pediatric program. Completely funded by philanthropy, it is a rare treasure afforded our community by the kindness of donors. Without ongoing donations, the program would not exist…and our children and their families would face the pain, uncertainty and anxiety of hospitalization on their own.

For sponsorship or individual ticket information, please contact the foundation at 616-252-5000.