

A Story of Will and Courage

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Jonathan “Jon” Metz, a 2001 graduate of Tulane University, is not the typical patient admitted to Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, Conn. Alone, with his left arm stuck between two heating elements in his basement furnace, the 31-year-old West Hartford, Conn., resident chose to do something few people have to confront: begin amputating his own limb. After two days, he had nearly completed the amputation, when help finally reached him.



Tulane alumnus Jon Metz (right) talks with Dr. Scott Ellner at a news conference at Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center in Hartford, Conn., about Metz's remarkable recovery after nearly amputating his own arm. (Photo by Joe Driscoll, visual communications manager, Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center)

Speaking at a packed news conference in the hospital's auditorium following his discharge from the hospital, Metz reviewed his experience, which he admitted was still “fuzzy” in his mind and at times “surreal.”

“The human spirit is strong □ trust me. Whether it's cutting your arm off or finding some other way, people will be surprised what they're capable of in those

situations,” Metz said.

Metz explained that he intended to sever his arm, grab it out of the firebox, put it in the freezer, call 911 and have it reattached. However, gangrene had set in, and surgeons were unable to reattach the arm when Metz was brought to Saint Francis' Emergency/Trauma Center, where Dr. Scott Ellner, attending surgeon, was waiting for him.

“You could tell that he had been through quite a bit, but through it all, he had demonstrated such an enormous amount of strength that it inspired all of us,” recalled Ellner.

Ellner operated on Metz the night he arrived to close the wound, then operated again the next day to prepare Metz to be outfitted with a prosthetic arm.

“John has done remarkably well. I attribute this to his strength, his athleticism, his ability to think through and problem-solve under an incredible, horrifying situation,” said Ellner.

For his part, Metz is looking forward to resuming his active lifestyle. “I have absolutely no intention of giving up on life and the things that I used to love to do — softball, woodworking. I'm under no illusions that's going to come easy, but that is the goal.” He works as a financial manager with Travelers.

He and his fiancée, 30-year-old Melissa Mowder, of Kinston, N.C., a 2001 Newcomb College graduate, plan to get married in November in New Orleans, where they met as students at Tulane.

Metz's ordeal moved Tulane President Scott Cowen to write to Metz and express “our tremendous awe and admiration. Please know your Tulane family is cheering on your recovery.”

Metz is seeking assistance on his [website](#) for a prosthetic arm.

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