



## An open letter to the Greenville community

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Greenville Online By Tyler Gallagher, Guest Column

Dear Greenville communities,

For your extraordinary care, I will forever be grateful. After a devastating trauma that nearly took my life, I'm thankful to be alive this holiday season with my family and friends.

June 7 was a day that changed the way I view life. I was in Fountain Inn working on a statewide project to update storm water and sewer drains. But when I stepped onto the back of a 30,000-pound truck to guide a driver, the unexpected happened. I slipped off the back as the truck continued in reverse. The accident happened so fast, the weight pressed my mid-section and upper legs, crushing my pelvic region and causing massive internal bleeding. As first responders from Fountain Inn Fire Department and Greenville County EMS stabilized me for flight, a woman cradled my head and reassured me. A paramedic put sunglasses over my eyes because the sun was so bright.

Then, like an angel with wings, I heard the distinctive sound of helicopter blades coming to my distress. Greenville Health System's MedTrans helicopter delivered a flight crew that knew how to respond to my dropping blood pressure. There was blood onboard and as soon as I was loaded, the crew started a transfusion. When I arrived at GHS, I found caring surgical trauma teams, nurses, physicians and rehabilitation specialists. Altogether, I needed four major operations and multiple procedures during a month-long recovery in Greenville.

Looking back, timing was critical and many people were in place at the right time to provide the coordinated care that saved my life. A vital link was the blood that was available on the spot, on the GHS MedTrans flight. The best way to treat massive blood loss is with a blood transfusion, but little did I know only a few medical helicopters in the nation are approved to carry blood. The Blood Connection and GHS work together to ensure that MedTrans has blood available when precious minutes count. Fortunately for me, GHS MedTrans – one of less than 5 percent of medical helicopters approved to carry blood – came to my rescue.

Last month, I returned to Greenville with my father and brother to thank everyone. I met Taylor Etcheson, Charles Watkins and Dennis Rector, three local blood donors who saved my life. They'd only just donated blood at The Blood Connection a few days before I needed it. But because of their generosity, blood was available that day on my flight to GHS. Now I know why I hear a lot about the need for blood. We never know when it will be needed. We have to be sure there's a ready supply at a moment's notice.



In closing, this will be the most celebrated holiday of my life. Thank you, Greenville, for making it possible.

Tyler Gallagher lives in Charlotte, North Carolina.