

'It's just senseless violence': Extent of injuries from Waukesha parade coming into focus

BILL GLAUBER , CATHY KOZLOWICZ , TALIS SHELBOURNE | Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

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Yaretzi Becerra is one of the fortunate ones.

She's just 11 years old, a member of the Waukesha Xtreme Dance Team, a

survivor of Sunday's terror at the Waukesha Christmas Parade.

When an SUV roared through the parade, Becerra was caught in the maelstrom that left her with a hematoma on her head and lacerations and bruises on her back and legs.

She stayed in a hospital overnight and has been having difficulty moving around.

But she's grateful. And so is her mother.

"My kids mean everything to me," Laura Becerra said. "Life will never be the same. I was not expecting this. It feels like we are not safe anymore."

In snippets of interviews and in online posts, the full scale of the physical wounds of some of the survivors is coming into focus.

Six lives were lost. Sixty-two people were injured, some critically.

Among those injured was 11-year-old Jessalyn Torres, a member of the Xtreme Dance Team who was left with a broken pelvis, skull fracture and lacerations on her lungs. She lost the use of a kidney.

"She's a fighter. She's a stubborn child," said her uncle, Ryan Kohnke.

According to a GoFundMe page, Jessalyn woke up and told her parents: "Just glue me back together."

Kohnke said he was at the parade, scrambling to gather family members during the chaos when they discovered "Jess" lying on the ground.

"It's just senseless violence," Kohnke said. "The horrific scene that followed and the trauma that it's going to have on this community, it's unfortunate."

MORE COVERAGE: What we know about the Waukesha Christmas Parade tragedy

Financial support coming in

The pain and suffering of the victims is revealed in online posts on websites like GoFundMe as families reach out for financial support.

Alejandro Gutierrez said he was trying to raise money for his father, who suffered a broken leg and torn ligaments when he was hit by the vehicle during the parade.

"Sadly, he will have to have surgery done in order for him to be able to walk again," Gutierrez wrote. They have raised \$8,130 of a \$30,000 goal so far.

The Perez family surpassed their goal of raising \$50,000 after Osvaldo Perez said his little sister, Camila, and his mother, Romelia, were seriously injured during the parade.

Camila, he wrote, suffered a fractured leg and head injuries while his mother

experienced internal bleeding and fractures to her pelvis, spine, wrist and leg.

"Just last night my mom had three surgeries and is currently on a breathing tube as she has many more to come," Perez wrote. "My family and I are extremely shaken up from this horrific event."

Lucero Isabel Perales organized a GoFundMe for several members of her family who were hit by the vehicle. Perales said that a cousin who suffered skull fractures is in a coma, her uncle was forced to undergo surgery for his broken leg and another cousin has bruises all over his body.

That family has raised nearly \$40,000.

Tamara Rosentreter, who led the Milwaukee Dancing Grannies group and was struck by the SUV, is badly injured but grateful she's alive.

"I'm still here," she wrote in a post on Facebook.

Rosentreter said she had a lot of "pain, stitches and broken bones" and was praying for the others who were injured and killed.

"My heart aches for my teammates (and) their families," she wrote, "who are my family."

Rosentreter's daughter, Amber Knutson, shared the message to the GoFundMe page she set up, which had raised more than \$12,000 as of Tuesday afternoon.

The funds will go toward medical bills and will help sustain the family as Rosentreter will likely miss at least six months of work. Rosentreter has four children and one grandchild.

“She has a long recovery ahead of her before she can get back on her feet,” her daughter wrote. “She is very lucky to be here today.”

As Rosentreter lay in the street, a woman ran up and asked her name. Then the woman covered her in her children’s blankets and stayed with her. Rosentreter found the woman's account of the incident on Facebook, and reposted it:

“In those moments all she (Rosentreter) was worried about were the other grannies, and what had happened to them. Not herself, not worried about why she was hurt, only worried about everyone else while she (lay there) on the street,” the woman wrote. “This true and pure act of selflessness is something I will hold onto forever ... there are far more good people than evil.”

When the woman got back to her family, her young son asked what happened to their blankets.

“I was thankful to be able to tell him his blankets helped a woman named Tamara,” the woman wrote.

Rosentreter was the “small glimpse of peace and hope me and my family have grasped onto while healing from what we saw,” the woman wrote.

People rushed to help

Even in the most horrific situation, Leanne Hollingsworth found something to be thankful for as well.

Her daughter Mackenzie Hollingsworth was injured, and there was no shortage of people who rushed to the 4th grader's side.

On a CaringBridge page, Leanne Hollingsworth wrote that people covered her daughter with blankets, an off-duty EMT checked on her, a sheriff's deputy drove them to the hospital and medical workers in the ICU provided care.

Mackenzie suffered severe head injuries and a broken leg, and by late Monday had undergone two surgeries to repair the damage, according to her CaringBridge page.

"I am so thankful for every single person that helped us to allow Kenzie to still be with us right now," her mother wrote.

As of 3 p.m. Tuesday, the GoFundMe page for Mackenzie had raised nearly \$38,000, out of a \$50,000 goal.

Eric Tiegs, junior at Waukesha South High School, is another victim receiving care at Children's Hospital in the Intensive Care Unit.

According to Tiegs' donation page, he and his brother Tyson were members of the Waukesha South High School band, though it wasn't clear if they were marching when the SUV plowed through the parade. It said Tyson was not injured and was with his brother the whole time.

Erick suffered a broken femur, skull fracture, broken ribs, C4 vertebrae fracture, a bruised lung and collapsed lung. The donation page said he was awake and heavily medicated, and very little was known about how long a full recovery would take.

Aside from being a member of the band, Erik Tiegs played on the Waukesha South Baseball team and Stiks Club Baseball team, according to the Land O' Lakes baseball club.

Sophie Carson, Devi Shastri, Jordyn Noennig and Sarah Volpehein of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.



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