

# DOES MY GIFT REALLY MAKE AN IMPACT?

HOW PAYING IT FORWARD SAVED LIVES

## When Seconds Count.

On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen entered Pulse, a nightclub in Orlando, and carried out the deadliest mass shooting by a single shooter and the deadliest act of violence against the LGBT community in U.S. history, killing forty-nine people and wounding fifty-three.

Orlando Regional Medical Center, home to Central Florida's only Level One Trauma Center and a beneficiary of the Elinor and T.W. Miller Jr. Foundation, treated forty-four victims early that Sunday morning and in the months that followed.

### The Gift that Saved Lives

The Miller Foundation has given several grants to Orlando Health, a not-for-profit healthcare network, including a gift in 2015, which was used to purchase a point-of-care ultrasound for ORMC's trauma center. Not even a year later, the importance of that gift was underscored by the Pulse shooting.

Jeremy Gamble, vice president of the Orlando Health Foundation, said that having the right tools in place was essential for the trauma center's success in treating the victims.

"This tragedy showed the importance of ultrasound in an amazing way," he said. "The technology, specifically the ultrasound, was huge because it was used on virtually every one of our Pulse patients and, in many cases, used multiple times to reassess their condition."

Stephen Leech, MD, ultrasound director for the department of emergency medicine at Orlando Health, has dedicated his career to educating medical professionals on using ultrasounds to make procedures safer and save lives. While he already wholeheartedly believed in the benefits the ultrasound, he hopes that this tragedy will bring its importance to light in a greater way.

"I know that the equipment that the Miller Foundation donated was very expensive . . . and the hospital is a multi-billion-dollar corporation, and you think, 'Does this gift really make a difference?' We can say 100 percent that it did," Leech said. "There is no way we would have gotten through that situation without having that equipment there. No chance."

### An Essential Tool

In mass casualty scenarios, first responders typically assess victims on the scene and prioritize who needs medical attention first. However, ORMC's proximity to Pulse created a unique situation.

Leech explained, "All those people came simultaneously, and there was no field triage." It meant that the ORMC staff had to sort out patients inside the trauma center. Normally, Leech explained, the staff would use an x-ray or a CT scan to determine whether or not the patient needs surgery, but that night, both of those options would have taken too long, making the ultrasounds vital to treating the victims.

"A CT scan takes ten to fifteen minutes. When you have forty patients, you don't have time to do that," Leech said. "When you're using the ultrasound, you can do a pretty rapid trauma assessment in thirty to sixty seconds, and then you can just wheel

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**-Stephen Leech, MD**

the machine to the next patient and do the same thing.” With six operating rooms and dozens of patients needing care, the staff had to determine who needed surgery first, Leech said. The trauma team used the ultrasound’s real-time video to see if a patient had collapsed lungs or internal bleeding. “They were able to shuffle who needs to go when based on what they found from the ultrasound,” Leech said.

There were five ultrasound technicians and only three machines. Two of the machines, which were six years old at the time, only lasted about forty-five minutes before the batteries died, leaving the machine from the Miller Foundation to do most of the work. The older machines had to be plugged in and rebooted each time they were moved, adding unwanted time in a situation where every second counts.

“They were fighting for it, honestly,” Leech said. “I heard the stories afterward. Every person I talked to about that night, our doctors, our nurses, even our administrators . . . were like, ‘Wow, that was so important.’”

### Redirecting Resources

In addition to allowing the staff to prioritize who needed surgery first, the ultrasounds also helped them allocate medical supplies appropriately in a high-stakes situation. Though the trauma center was getting resupplied throughout the night, it was difficult to know how many more patients would arrive and which supplies would run out first. If a patient has a gunshot wound to the chest, Leech explained, one of the first steps is to do an x-ray to see if the patient has a collapsed lung. If so, they need a chest tube to re-expand their lung. “When receiving forty patients simultaneously, we weren’t able to get those x-rays and follow our normal workflow,” Leech said. “So the default was they’re going to get a tube put in their chest with any level of suspicion. The problem was that we had forty patients and twenty tubes.”

### The Reason Why

Of the forty-four victims who were treated at

ORMC, nine died shortly after arrival. The last of the thirty-five survivors was released from the hospital in September 2016, just three months later.

ORMC sees nearly 5,000 trauma patients annually, and that number continues to grow each year. For Gamble and the Orlando Health Foundation, the Pulse tragedy underscored the importance of philanthropy in supplying ORMC with the necessary resources.

Gamble emphasized that, as essential as the ultrasounds were for the Pulse victims, those machines are used to save and improve lives each and every day. He hopes that the Miller Foundation and other donors will see that their gifts really do make a difference.

“I think it’s important for people to know that philanthropy saves lives. Your gift saves lives, and it does that every day.”

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