



IN THE VALLEY

A Really 'Good' Good Friday

Officers and AED Save life

By Pam WittHillen, Flight Nurse, ThedaStar

Not only was April 10 Good Friday, but it turned out to be a REALLY good Friday for Dennis Schroeder because of the rapid response and lifesaving actions by Officer Heidi Thaves and Officer Elinor Harris of the Shawano Police Department. While out for dinner, 56-year-old Dennis collapsed without any warning. He had no palpable pulse, nor was he breathing. 911 was called.

When the two female officers arrived, they placed their automated external defibrillator or AED and delivered one shock as advised to Dennis's heart. AEDs are reliable, safe, computerized devices that deliver defibrillatory shocks to victims of cardiac arrest. They use voice and visual prompts to guide rescuers and are suitable for both lay and professional rescuers. Once shocked, Dennis became responsive and started to talk but was somewhat confused and amnesic to what had just happened. Shawano Ambulance transferred him to Shawano Medical Center Paramedics determined Dennis's heart rhythm had been ventricular fibrillation (VF). He was stabilized and then flown by ThedaStar to Appleton Medical Center (AMC).

VF is a potentially fatal, uncoordinated series of very rapid, ineffective contractions of the ventricles of the heart caused by many chaotic electrical impulses. No blood is pumped from the heart. It is an extreme medical emergency and sudden cardiac death may occur in a matter of minutes.



Officer Elinor Harris (on the left) and Officer Heidi Thaves (right) pictured with the AED that saved Dennis Schroeder's life.

Approximately 250,000 people die each year from sudden cardiac arrest. Victims of sudden cardiac arrest can survive if bystanders or rescuers act immediately while VF is still present. Electrical defibrillation is well established as the only effective therapy for cardiac arrest caused by VF or pulseless ventricular tachycardia (VT). Scientific evidence supports early defibrillation; the delay from collapse to delivery of the first shock is the single most determinant of survival. The chances of successful defibrillation decline at a rate of 7 to 10 percent with each minute of delay. CPR and basic life support helps maintain a shockable rhythm but is not definitive treatment. The availability and use of AEDs by EMS and lay people has greatly increased chances for survival for cardiac patients.

Dennis and his family are extremely grateful for everyone's actions that day. While at AMC he underwent coronary artery bypass grafting (four bypasses) and had an automated internal cardiac defibrillator placed in his chest to control his rhythm disturbance. He stated he had only 5 percent heart muscle damage attributed to the timely response of the Shawano officers and his definitive treatment at both Shawano hospital and AMC. He was discharged home April 21. He continues his cardiac rehab program and hopes to return to work soon. He is an avid fisherman and hunter and enjoys his family life on Shawano Lake. Because of many dedicated people behind the scenes this lifestyle will continue.

Within the past six months Shawano Police Department went above and beyond the duties that we usually associate with police officers. Dennis is not an isolated success story. There were seven other recent successful resuscitations with their AEDs. Like the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," we also realize that one life touches the lives of many others. We commend Shawano PD for their exceptional service to their community!

Officer Thaves has been with Shawano Police Department since 2005. Before she was hired there, she was a Trooper with the Wisconsin State Patrol from 1994 to 2005. She has been a CPR instructor since 1996 and is the Shawano PD's CPR/AED Instructor.

Officer Harris has been with the Shawano PD since May of 2008. In November of 2008, she resuscitated a 66 year old male with an AED.

We applaud our Law Enforcement Officers who serve as First Responders and who are vital in the chain of survival in the prehospital setting!



A CALL TO ACTION



*If a man loves the labor of his trade,
apart from any questions of success
or fame, the gods have called him*

— R. L. Stevenson