

COMMUNITY NEWS

Fate leads woman to stricken man

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Mary Amoroso cried tears of joy when she heard a man on whom she helped perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation July 18 had survived and was talking with his children.

When an equestrian student that Amoroso of South Park was to instruct earlier that Sunday morning canceled, Amoroso and her husband David decided to leave the South Park stables at 10:30 a.m. and have breakfast in Bethel Park.

"David was driving and he pulled over to let the police car pass," Amoroso said of the trip along Corrigan Drive.

She then watched the Bethel Park police officer jump the guiderail with an Automated External Defibrillator.

"She looked like a superhero, jumping the fence and then I saw people around the gentleman," Amoroso said a few days after the event.

On seeing a man on the paved path and knowing she was certified in CPR, Amoroso told her husband to pull the car to the side and she ran to the scene.

"They were in the process of giving him a shock and I said if they needed a break, that I know CPR. That's when someone said, 'Get in here now,'" Amoroso said.

Another man, whose name she never learned, was doing chest compressions and Amoroso stayed at the downed gentleman's head and administered breaths at the appropriate time.

After about six rounds of breath, the paramedics arrived and took over the life-saving attempts.

Amoroso does not want to be called a hero and was hesitant about even telling her story.

What she does want is to tell the world that knowing CPR is important.

Nora Helfrich is director for Tri-Community South EMS that covers Upper St. Clair, Bethel Park and South Park. The non-profit ambulance service is owned by the three municipalities and responded to the call July 18.

"We have activities and put things on the Web site and there have been multiple articles and people still don't get it, get how important CPR and the AED are," Helfrich said. "We (ambulance service) are the number

one training center for the heart association for this part of the country."

More than 16,000 people have been trained in CPR by Tri-Community employees.

Amoroso is not one of those but she does take an annual CPR course offered through her employer, Buchanan, Ingersoll & Rooney in Pittsburgh. She has taken the course for several years, but this was the first time she's had to use her training.

Every officer on the Bethel Park police force is trained in CPR and use of the AED, said police Chief John Mackey.

That training included Officer Joelle Dixon who responded to the cardiac arrest call. Although South Park is patrolled by Allegheny County Police, more than half of the park is in Bethel Park and its officers often responded to emergency calls, Mackey said. All of the department's patrol cars are equipped with an AED. The automatic device tells the user to shock or not to shock a patient.

Helfrich said Tri-Community offers classes in CPR and use of an AED every month with dates and times listed on its web site.

"We teach all the school dis-

tricts and we're meeting with coaches for recreational football this month," Helfrich said.

She commended Amoroso and the unnamed man for their quick action.

"Absolutely, she did the right thing," Helfrich said of Amoroso and the unnamed man. "A lot wouldn't do anything and she (and he) did."

There have been recent changes in performing CPR.

"We want you to do rapid, deep, fast compressions and not to stop to give a breath. But the key thing is if you don't do anything, they're not going to survive," Helfrich said. "They are basically dead. In cardiac arrest, you're dead. The heart is not beating and they are not breathing and they're dead. We call it a re-birthday because you are giving them a second chance."

Amoroso is glad she stopped to help and was thrilled to learn he is recovering. Privacy laws prohibit her from learning more.

"It seemed like fate to us," she said. "Sunday, normally, is filled with riding lessons and that canceled, and another lady changed an appointment and everything seemed to send us down the path at that time."