



Rolando Fernandez, Dave Green, Mike Stack

Sarasota - Berlin YMCA Heroes Save Life

By Leslie Roberts

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The YMCA motto is “We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities.” and I will add ‘save lives’. Monday January 25th started a new week, but one that three people will remember forever. They received a call around 10:40 that a man collapsed on the hand ball court . Mike Stack, Membership Director, grabbed the HeartStart AED located in the cabinet around the corner from his office and headed to Court 1. Rolando Fernandez, Aquatics Coordinator came running from the pool area and Dave Green, Fitness Coordinator came from the gym. They found Sandy Meggert ashen blue lying on the floor.

Rolando couldn't find a pulse. Mike Stack put the AED pads on him while Rolando started to give CPR. Dave got the oxygen started and hooked up to the Ambu bag mask. The next thing they heard was the AED saying “Stand clear analyzing rhythm, do not touch the patient. Shock advised, charging. Deliver shock now.” Mike pushed the shock button and Meggert's body jerked.

Rolando and Dave continued to give several sets of compressions and rescue breaths when Rolando said that he felt Meggert's chest fill with air. His color came back and he started breathing on his own. They checked his pulse again. This time there was a heartbeat and they turned him on his side so he wouldn't choke.

It happened so fast, yet seconds seemed like minutes. The team said that Sandy was conscious enough when EMS arrive to answer the questions such as “Are you taking any medications?”

Sanford Meggert, “Sandy”, has been playing hand ball for years. Normally, he would have been playing golf at Buffalo Creek as soon as it is light enough to see the ball. He said that morning he woke up at 5:30, and went to pick up one of his buddies at 6:00 to go play golf. But it was raining and his friend didn't come out. At 9 o'clock he started his first hand ball game. After four matches he was finished, but another guy asked him to play a fifth.

“I remember being at the serving line and a dizzy spell hit me. That's all I remember. They tell me Mike was called and showed up within seconds, they had oxygen, did CPR while Mike hit me with the paddles“. He was told an ambulance was there in nine minutes. “On the way to the hospital I remember them saying ‘Sandy stay with us, Sandy stay with us’, that's when I knew I was in trouble“. They took him to Sarasota Memorial and did a heart catheterization and ran tests. They only found a minor heart blockage, put in a stent and an implantable defibrillator. He was in the hospital five days.

Because CPR was started and the AED shocked him so quickly, he had no permanent heart damage, and no brain damage. If it had happened on the golf course he probably wouldn't have made it.

Sandy, 70, is a snowbird and heads north to Arlington Heights, IL in May. He has two daughters in Wisconsin and Illinois.

When asked what he thought about AEDs, Sandy said "They would be remiss to not have them in the places like the Y. Every place that has older people should have them. If they hadn't had it, I wouldn't have made it".



The Frank G. Berlin Senior Branch of the Sarasota Family YMCA is located on 1075 South Euclid. The Amicus Center is a large facility with fitness area, racquet ball courts and Olympic-sized pool that many seniors were taking a water aerobics course the day I visited to get the story. The parking lot is packed and the facility has over 11,000 members. There is also a day care and large gymnastics center. They have two Philips defibrillators. Ironically, it was in November the Y traded in their older Philips FR2 for the newest Philips HeartStart FRx.

The three heroes are pretty modest about what they did. Mike Stack, currently Membership Director, originally from Key West has been with the Y since 1992. Dave Green, Fitness Coordinator from Mississippi, has been with the Y for nine years. Rolando Fernandez, born in Cuba has been here for 45 years and learned CPR in the service. He is a Life Guard and Aquatics Coordinator. Although he has taught CPR for years, this is the first time he needed to do it.

Having an AED can make all the difference. To prevent brain damage you need to restore normal heart rhythm in four to six minutes from the onset of collapse. "Even with our excellent EMS system, it is very unlikely that someone can realize the severity of the problem, call 911, explain the situation, have them dispatched, arrive at the scene, unload, get to the patient and deliver a shock in four to six minutes. That's why it is so important to have AEDs, explains Leslie Roberts of Altra Medical.

Sudden cardiac arrest like Mr. Meggert had is due to ventricular fibrillation, an electrical problem with the heart. Often there are no warning signs such as chest pain like you have with a heart attack.

"It is heroes like these three men, and the commitment from the management of the YMCA to provide the training and safety equipment such as oxygen and AEDs at their facilities that make a difference," said Roberts. "This is the second save in the area in the past two months. The Legends Golf & Country Club revived a man on the tennis courts with one of our AEDs. He was also revived on Court 1. Sounds like a lucky number to me".

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