



HEROES FOR LIFE™
PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

SAVE AT LOCAL GYM STRENGTHENS ARGUMENT FOR AED ACCESS



As Gus Orlando sat in his office at Gold's Gym thinking about ways to increase membership, he glanced at his security monitor and noticed some regulars laughing as they moved between exercise machines. As he watched the monitor, Gus saw gym regular John Mikkelsen laugh and then suddenly drop to the floor! A bystander asked gym manager Chris Travia to call 911 and went to find Gus.

A Rapid Response

Gus grabbed the ZOLL® automated external defibrillator (AED) they kept in the cardio area and was by John's side in under two minutes. Gus remembers thinking that the situation didn't look good. John was unconscious and bleeding from a head wound. "He was gone," Gus says. "His face was purple, he had no pulse, and he was rigid."

While another bystander tended to John's head wound, Gus connected him to the AED, following the device's voice prompts. Within seconds, the device indicated that a shock was necessary. Everyone stood back while the AED delivered a shock. Though none of the rescuers were trained in CPR, Gus recalls that all they had to do was follow the AED audio and text prompts to help their friend. Gus delivered compressions and after two

rounds John regained consciousness. John had no memory of what happened and wanted to know why he couldn't get up and go home. The EMTs arrived and transported John to the hospital.

A Strong Recovery

Doctors found no heart problems and an angiography revealed no arterial blockage. Years before, John suffered a heart attack that left him without function in one quarter of his heart. Doctors attributed this sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) to John's prior loss of heart function and implanted an internal defibrillator to help prevent any further SCA events. John was released from the hospital after three days and was told to restrict his physical activities for five weeks. After that, John was back exercising regularly at the gym.

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If this had happened somewhere without an AED, [John] would have died.

— Gus Orlando
Rescuer and owner of Gold's Gym,
East Northport, N.Y.

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A Foundation of Preparedness

Luckily for John, Gus Orlando's Gold's Gym had an AED on-site. In March 2000, gym member John Acompora lost his 14-year-old son Louis to SCA during a high school lacrosse game. Louis suffered from commotio cordis, an arrhythmia caused by the impact of a high-velocity projectile that often leads to sudden cardiac death.¹ John and his wife established the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation to educate organizations about the importance of accessible, easy-to-use AEDs to help prevent death from SCA. John Acompora urged Gus to install an AED years ago. As a result, an AED was available when needed and the staff was familiar with how it worked. "If this had happened somewhere without an AED, [John] would have died," says Gus.

¹Menezes RG, et al. Commotio Cordis: A review. Medicine, Science and the Law. 2017;57:3:146-151. DOI: 10.1177/0025802417712883



From left to right: John Acompora (Louis J. Acompora Foundation), Gus Orlando (gym owner/rescuer), John Mikkelson (survivor), Chris Travia (gym manager/rescuer), Karen Acompora (Louis J. Acompora Foundation)