



HEROES FOR LIFE™
PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

AN UNUSUAL TURN OF EVENTS



While interviewing witnesses at a residence, La Porte, Indiana, police Corporal Joseph Toth heard a request on his radio for an ambulance to treat an unresponsive male — at his location. Unaware of any medical issues, he looked around the scene. Outside he found an officer standing near witness David Foster, who was lying on the ground unresponsive and having difficulty breathing. Within seconds, David stopped breathing and began turning blue. Corporal Toth suspected sudden cardiac arrest (SCA).

No time to waste

Knowing the importance of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) during SCA, Corporal Toth began compressions and asked fellow officer Josh Leonhardt to retrieve the ZOLL® automated external defibrillator (AED) from his vehicle.

With no prior experience using an AED, Officer Leonhardt depended on the guidance of the ZOLL Powerheart® G3 AED to attach the electrodes to David. The AED immediately analyzed David's heart rhythm, advising a shock. Corporal Toth resumed compressions as instructed by the device's real-time guidance and David began breathing on his own.

"It was fortunate that we were there. . . . we had him hooked up within 3 minutes of being on the ground. [The AED] gives you concise directions and coaches you through delivering compressions," says Corporal Toth.

The EMTs arrived on scene and transported David to a local hospital. David remembers he was speaking to an officer when his legs suddenly buckled but doesn't recall any warning signs. Doctors found that his coronary arteries were partially blocked, started him on medication, and released him from the hospital a few days later.

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- Corporal Joseph Toth
La Porte, Indiana

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Life comes full circle

Even before his SCA, David knew the value of an AED from firsthand experience. As a volunteer fire fighter and a CPR instructor for many years, he used AEDs in training and rescue situations.

"What . . . comes around, goes around," he says. "For 20 years I taught CPR classes for the Red Cross and then someone had to use an AED on me. The EMTs told me I had died, and they brought me back." David considers the date of his SCA as a new birthday. He plans to celebrate the anniversary of his survival each year.

More resources needed

Only two La Porte Police vehicles — Corporal Toth's and one other — are equipped with AEDs. David is grateful that one of them was on scene that day. Corporal Toth's AED was donated through a joint effort by Play for Jake, a foundation dedicated to preventing cardiac arrest in youth, and Bolt for the Heart, an organization that provides life-saving equipment to first responders. Both organizations believe that putting AEDs in police cars will help

save more lives and use all proceeds from the annual Bolt for the Heart 5K Family Run/Walk in Michigan City, Indiana, to purchase AEDs. In the fall of 2020, the two organizations and their sponsors donated 33 AEDs to La Porte County first responders. David feels strongly that these efforts to equip vehicles should be expanded beyond patrol cars. "I believe every government-owned vehicle should have one," he says. He hopes that awareness of how important AEDs are in responding to SCA events will help make this a reality one day.



From left to right: Officer Josh Leonhardt (rescuer), Police Chief Paul Brettin, David Foster (survivor), Corporal Joseph Toth (rescuer)