



IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO SAVE A LIFE

Located on the western shore of the Gulf of Thailand is the city of Surat Thani, which translates to "city of good people." For resident Kovit Tunsila, 48, that moniker proved to be more accurate than he could have ever imagined.

On the morning of June 23rd, 2018, Kovit, a fisherman by trade, was riding his bicycle in the Lampoo Islands public park when he suddenly collapsed. "I exercise in the park sometimes, but not on a regular basis," Kovit says. "I remember just feeling bad as my heart rate went up, and then I woke up at the hospital."

A City of Good People

Fortunately, a number of bystanders noticed when Kovit fell off his bicycle and did not get up. They immediately ran over to help. One of the first to arrive was Anantachai Kawkamchan, a government officer who frequently ran in the park.

"I was shocked during that time, as I've never seen an actual cardiac arrest occur in front of me," Anantachai says. "The first thing that came to my mind was to call for an ambulance. Others helped during the rescue, calling the hospital and checking the patient for vitals before starting CPR."

Several medical professionals were nearby, including Dr. Nuttawut Wetchasat, an obstetrician at Surat Thani Hospital, as well as Walaiporn Wongmaneetham and Kanyarat Sensing, two nurses who happened to be in the park training for an upcoming marathon.

"We were not the first to arrive on the scene, but after seeing the situation, we acted like we would in the hospital and did our best to ensure his survival," says Walaiporn. "There were others aiding in the rescue in that area by calling emergency medical services (EMS). One man started performing CPR and took turns with me and Kanyarat."

As Dr. Wetchasat monitored Kovit's vital signs and the nurses assisted with CPR, other bystanders ensured that emergency services were on their way and contacted park security. "There were around 20 people there, and everyone tried to assist," says Dr. Wetchasat.

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"I want to thank the people who bought the AED and installed it in the park. It saved me that day."

– Kovit Tunsila
Sudden cardiac arrest survivor

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More than CPR

Despite the group's coordinated and heroic efforts, he may not have survived if the park had not had a ZOLL® AED Plus® placed nearby. Because AEDs (automated external defibrillators) are still relatively rare in Thailand, none of the responders – including Dr. Wetchasat and the nurses – had ever used one in a real-life cardiac arrest situation. Thanks to the device's user-friendly design, that was no problem.

They performed CPR until park security arrived with the AED. "After attaching the defib pads to the patient, the AED analyzed the victim and advised for 3 to 4 shocks before the ambulance arrived," Walaiporn says.

"This AED is easy to use for lay people," notes Walaiporn. "It clearly shows you how to attach the defibrillator pads to the bare chest. The Chain of Survival process is shown as well, which greatly helps, as [rescuers] might forget or even panic during a serious situation like this."

"After shocking [Kovit] and performing CPR, he remained unconscious," Dr. Wetchasat says. Kovit later regained consciousness at the hospital, where he remained for several days during recovery.

Heroes for Life

While he has no memory of the SCA event itself, Kovit reflects on the experience with deep gratitude toward those who helped save his life. "I felt lucky that there were people around me who knew CPR. I want to also thank the people who bought the AED and installed it in the park. It saved me that day," Kovit says.

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– Dr. Nuttawut Wetchasat

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When someone suffers an SCA, their best chance of survival depends on rescuers performing high-quality CPR and a defibrillating shock from an AED to help the heart resume a normal rhythm. Dr. Wetchasat adds, "It's very important for people to learn CPR skills and to know whether their area has an accessible AED. Some SCA victims do not survive if people don't know how to help and just wait for emergency services to arrive. If you can perform CPR, you can help increase [a victim's] chance of survival."

Thanks to a "city of good people," Kovit is now back out in his boat fishing. Dr. Wetchasat speaks for the entire community of selfless rescuers when he says, "We're all happy to see him alive and safe."



Kovit Tunsila and his rescuers receive ZOLL Heroes for Life awards and an AED Plus to donate to a charity of their choice.