

The Perfect Storm – David Miller’s Save Story

Guelph, ON. Every Thursday evening, policeman, David Miller could be located at the West End Community Centre, where he and friends would play “shinny” hockey in the I.H.L. (Italian Hockey League).

January 9, 2014, was a Thursday night like any other for David, except for one thing; part way through the game, he died.

David was just finishing up his shift on the ice when he suddenly felt very strange. It was as though every ounce of possible energy in his body had been expended. Feeling light-headed he moved towards the benches before he passed out on the ice.

This was the last thing David remembered before everything went dark. David sprawled to the ice and lay very still. All the players thought David was goofing around and playing a joke. But very quickly, they all realized that this was no laughing matter. David had just suffered a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA).

Without missing a beat, the group of hockey friends quickly transformed into a well-organized team of first responders. Fellow player, Staff Sgt. Steve Gill, took charge, and directed the first response efforts. One player grabbed his cellphone and ran up the cement steps, in his skates, to call 911. Another player ran to get the AED while other players removed David's hockey equipment, and began CPR compressions. As soon as the AED arrived, Mark Gazzola (a fellow player) took charge, applied the AED pads, and waited for instructions. After hearing “Shock Advised” from the AED, he pushed the shock button. This quick action re-started David’s heart into a normal rhythm, after being clinically dead for over 6 minutes.



Word quickly spread throughout the Guelph community that David had suffered a SCA and was at the hospital. Friends, family, and many of David's police family soon flooded the waiting room to await news.

After several hours in the Emergency Department, David's vital signs continued to improve. Initially his speech was garbled and incomprehensible, but soon he was able to start speaking. He asked what the score of the game was and wondered if there was still enough time to have a beer. Everyone laughed and they knew that David was going to be just fine.

David spent two weeks at the General Hospital in Guelph before he was taken to St. Mary's Hospital in Kitchener for a quadruple coronary bypass; three of David's main arteries were completely blocked, and yet he had no idea. He had always been athletic and physically active and never showed any signs of heart disease. Yearly medical tests showed that he was in tip-top shape. A stress test one year earlier was passed with flying colours. That attending physician commented it would be at least 10 years before he would have to worry about his heart.

At over 50 years of age, David had thought that he had beaten the so-called "Miller Curse" – both his father and uncle had died at an early age of 45 with heart-related illness.

David calls the whole event, "the perfect storm" in a positive way. Everything that needed to happen to save his life was put into play. He was at a facility that had a defibrillator on the premises and there were people that came to the rescue with CPR. David understands first-hand how important it is to get certified in CPR and First Aid – as well as to encourage businesses and municipalities to place AEDs in their facilities for anyone to use.



David owes his life and special thanks to friends Gino Santi, Mark Gazzola, and Sgt. Steve Gill. Gino for performing superior CPR that allowed David to have a fighting chance against death and maintain a functioning brain, and Mark for having the courage to use an AED, a device he had never seen or used before. Finally, to Staff Sgt. Steve Gill, without Steve's intervention and expertise, David believes he would not be here today. Gino, Mark, and Steve are truly life-saving champions!

David made a complete and full recovery. He is now retired and has joined the Action First Aid team as an AED Consultant/Cardiac Arrest Survivor. David devotes much of his time informing, and educating business owners, about the importance of cardiac safety in their workplaces.