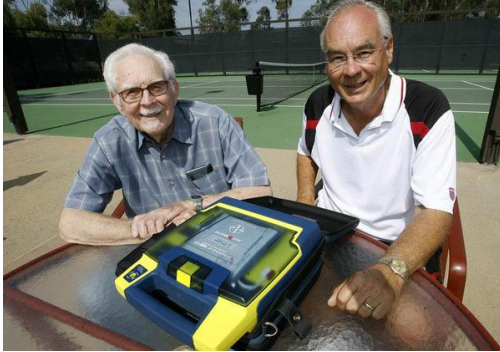


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Tom Francis, right, likely saved Wes Cresap's life when he used this external defibrillator after Cresap suffered a heart attack during a tennis match last month at Eastview Community Center in Rancho Bernardo. (Photo by Don Boomer - staff photographer)

RANCHO BERNARDO: Man saves tennis partner with help from cardiac device

By COLLEEN MENSCHING - Staff Writer

RANCHO BERNARDO ---- Wes Cresap doesn't remember having his life saved by an automatic external defibrillator.

The 85-year-old Rancho Bernardo man said he recalls feeling dizzy during a June 25 tennis match, then sitting down with two friends at the Eastview Community Center.

"The next thing I know, Tom's pounding on my chest," Cresap said last week, a day after being released from the hospital.

Tom Francis, who had been on the court with Cresap, initially thought his friend had caught his breath and decided to head home. Francis was walking away when he heard shouts for help.

Fearing Cresap's heart might have stopped, Francis grabbed an automatic external defibrillator from the community center office.

"I knew if he needed this that he needed it right away," Francis said.

According to the American Heart Association, it takes just four minutes from the start of cardiac arrest for a patient to risk brain death. The process can be interrupted by a shock to the heart, which is what the \$1,500 device, also called an AED, is designed to provide.

Francis popped the lid to the community center's AED and followed the verbal instructions given by the machine.

After Francis applied two wired pads to Cresap's bare chest, the machine told Francis to press the button that would deliver a shock to Cresap's heart.

"He jumped, kind of like a fish on a table," Francis said.

He also survived.

Cresap credits Francis' quick action and the defibrillator with saving his life.

The community center bought a defibrillator in 2002, with help from San Diego City Councilman Brian Maienschein and Project Heart Beat, a program to place easy-to-use defibrillators throughout the county, including schools, businesses, medical facilities and tourist attractions.

"They can be used by an elementary school student," said Lorelee Olejnik, a Project Heart Beat spokeswoman. "Our goal is essentially to make them as ubiquitous as fire extinguishers."

The device, which first analyzes a person's heartbeat, won't deliver a shock to someone who doesn't need it, Olejnik said.

As long as they don't demonstrate gross negligence, people who use defibrillators in emergency situations are protected from civil litigation under the state's "Good Samaritan" law, she said.

There are about 4,000 portable defibrillators in the county, Olejnik said. They can be used more than once.

Cresap was the 50th person to be saved by a Project Heart Beat defibrillator, Olejnik said.

Cresap, who had a pacemaker implanted in his heart after last month's incident, said he's not sure when he'll be able to play tennis.

"I told him he's got to get well so we can finish our match," Francis said.

For more information about San Diego Project Heart Beat, visit <http://sdprojectheartbeat.com>

To view a video demonstration of an AED online, visit http://powerheart.com/products/phaed_g3_demo.htm

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