



DAN BROWN / Staff

Heart attack victim Wazi Dover looks on while Deerfoot Lodge Director Nick Dotti receives a plaque of appreciation from Glenville-Cashiers EMS Director Jeremy Stewart during an appreciation ceremony Thursday.

Back to Life in Big Ridge

Heroic efforts restore heartbeat of man who had heart attack

BY DAN BROWN
Staff

There is a reason why they train.

“You prepare for the worst and hope for the best,” said Jeremy Stewart, Glenville-Cashiers EMS Director.

The “worst” happened on July 26, around 7:30 a.m. nearing the conclusion of a morning staff meeting at Deerfoot Lodge up in Big Ridge, about 2-3 miles from Glenville. Summer camp volunteer Wazi Dover, 65, of Houghton, New York, who spent the summer at Deerfoot Lodge working in the kitchen, said he knew right away something didn’t feel right and he was about five seconds from going down.

“The room seemed to tilt and I knew I was going down,” Dover said during a ceremony at the rescue squad’s Glenville headquarters on Thursday. “I realized, this was it, and I took off my glasses and thought, drop, tuck and roll. I knew I was going to fall.”

Dover said he remembered his dad having a heart attack and had fallen when he passed out.

“He fell and hurt his head. He was hurt more from the fall than the heart attack, so I wanted to protect my head,” he said.

Something wasn’t right

Chief Nick Dotti, Summer Camp Director at Deerfoot Lodge said he noticed something wasn’t right about Dover as he was wrapping up the morning’s meeting.

“We were having our morning meeting and I saw Wazi close his eyes and slump in his chair and I was afraid he was having a seizure and passing out,” he said.

Dover fell, and bystanders

caught him as he was going down.

“That’s the last thing I remember,” Dover said.

Dotti said Dover couldn’t have picked a better place to have a heart attack.

“We had about 30 of the staff in that room and I’d say, 95 percent of them were certified in some form of CPR training,” Dotti said. “I ran up to him and two other guys, a certified wilderness survivor and a certified nursing assistant were already working on him.”

Dotti said at that time Dover had no pulse.

“When they said this, I said, ‘What do you mean, he doesn’t have a pulse? Of course he has a pulse.’ But we checked him at all the pressure points and there was nothing. No pulse. Nothing.”

Dotti said someone raised the question of beginning CPR.

“I said, ‘Of course, we’re beginning CPR,’ and we started chest compression.”

Three individuals began administering CPR at that point, while a 911 call was made and a ventilator bag was applied to give him air.

“Everybody was helping out and helping each other, which was great,” Dotti said. “I did 20 years in the army and I’ve seen what people look like when they die and I was thinking, ‘What are we going to do next? How are we going to handle this?’”

Quick action saved a life

Dotti said he had never seen CPR work before and it concerned him about whether they were doing the right thing.

“We didn’t have time to think about it,” he said. “We were administering CPR and then, the nurse showed up with the Automated External Defibrillator and it was great

having the AED there. It talks to you. It guides you through the process. We had no idea whether we were doing the right thing or not.”

Dotti said the having the AED present helped them save a life.

“We followed the AED’s instructions and it’s kind of giving you feedback, and telling us what to do next. It was very reassuring to us. We administered the AED and it said, ‘checking patient’ and then it said, ‘Heartbeat detected,’ and that’s when it dawned on me, ‘Hey, he’s back.’”

From the time Dover slumped in his chair until Dotti started doing compressions, about 90 seconds passed. About three minutes elapsed between then and the applying of the AED.

“About 10 minutes had passed from the time he went down, until we arrived,” said Glenville-Cashiers Paramedic Cristian Mireles. “And from the time we arrived until we secured the patient on the (Mountain Area Medical Airlift), about 15 minutes elapsed.”

In total, from the moment Dover collapsed and lost consciousness to the time MAMA airlifted out of Deerfoot Lodge to fly him to Mission Hospital in Asheville, about 30 minutes elapsed.

“Once we realized it was a heart attack, everything changed,” Mireles said. “Once the AED went off we changed direction, got the early notification of MAMA and got him out of here to where he needed to be.”

“They saved this man’s life,” Stewart said. “He could have died. They did a great job.”

Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad Public Information Officer Nat Turner said, the Deerfoot

LIFE

Continued from page 1A

Lodge staff followed the Chain of Survival, a list of events that have to happen in order to insure survival.

“They may not have known it at the time, but they did everything by the book – perfectly,” Turner said.

Links in the Chain of Survival

Turner said, the Chain of Survival depicts the critical actions required to treat life-threatening emergencies, including heart attack, cardiac arrest, stroke, and foreign body airway obstruction. The links within this Chain of Survival include:

- Early Access to the emergency response system, activating 911.
- Early bystander CPR to support circulation to the heart and brain until normal heart activity is restored.

- Early defibrillation to treat cardiac arrest caused by ventricular fibrillation, administering the AED.

- Early advanced care by EMS and hospital personnel.

“The statistics are overwhelmingly against you when an emergency like this happens and the victim’s chances of survival,” Turner said. “They did everything right. They saved this man’s life.”

On the mend

Like the recent story of Highlands resident Scott Vuncannon and his snakebite on the hiking trail outside Highlands last year, Wazi Dover’s story is another account where training and people completing the necessary steps during a time of emergency, helped turn what could have been a tragic story into a happy ending.

Many of the rescue squad personnel who attended to Dover, also played a critical role in Vuncannon’s successful recovery.

“The training pays off,” Stewart said.

For his part, Dover is grateful and feels fine. He spent five days in the hospital following the heart attack and doctors found no obstructions or other problems with his heart during examinations.

“Wazi is on medication and he’s adjusting to that, but he’s been cleared for normal activities, except driving,” said Lee Dover, his wife. “I’m very grateful to the staff of Deerfoot Lodge and the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad for all they did.”

Wazi Dover said he spent a lot of time after being released from the hospital talking with those Deerfoot Lodge staff members who were present the day he suffered the heart attack.

“It affected them more than it did me,” he said. “I was there, but out of it for the most part, but there were those who were severely impacted by what happened.”

Dotti said the important lesson for him once Dover had been flown off and taken care of, was to take care of the bystanders who administered CPR.

“It really impacted these guys,” Dotti said. “Once the adrenalin dumped, a lot of these guys were bawling.”

“I spent four or five days just sitting down with the guys one-on-one asking the guys how they were doing and a lot of them had tears in their eyes,” Dover said.

“Survivor’s guilt,” said Rescue Squad Chaplain Justin Kingsland. “You get three types of reaction during situations like this – fight, flight or freeze. There are some who step forward, there are those who step back, and those who freeze. Everybody reacts differently, and those who don’t step forward feel guilty that they didn’t.”

“It was a tough thing for some of those guys,” he said.

Kingsland, a British Army,

Special Forces, and SAS veteran, said those who chose to take a step back or to freeze, actually assisted in the situation by getting out of, and staying out of, the way.

“You don’t need 30 people trying to administer CPR,” he said. “Everybody did the right thing here and they need to realize that.”

GCRS says “Thank you”

For their efforts, the Glenville-Cashiers Rescue Squad said, “Thank you,” to the Deerfoot Lodge staff in their action during a time of emergency.

“This plaque is a token of our appreciation for what you did,” Stewart said as he presented Director Nick Dotti with the plaque. “It took the combined effort of everyone involved to get Mr. Dover to the proper medical care as quickly as possible.”

It’s good to have a story like this have a happy ending.

“It’s amazing what they did,” Dover said.