

POSTED ON Saturday, December 05, 2009 AT 11:12PM

GO Advanced Search

If you shop 'til you drop, have CPR providers nearby

BY ROSS COURTNEY
YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

YAKIMA, Wash. -- There's no good place for a heart attack.

And between the child-ren's clothing racks and a display of computer printers in the West Valley Walmart hardly would have been Ellen Davis' first choice.

But just as the 69-year-old grandmother and substitute teacher collapsed while shopping on Black Friday, along came a registered nurse, a firefighter and a police officer. They all knew -- and regularly practiced -- CPR.

"I would have probably died," Davis said. "If I would have been home I would have probably died. If I had been driving I would have probably died."

Instead, she was released Thursday from Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital and is recovering at home with no apparent ill effects save a sore chest, her family said.

"She's doing wonderful," said her brother, Bob Cory. "We are eternally grateful."

Her rescuers are surprised she survived.

"I thought she was gone, to be honest with you," said Sgt. Mike Henne of the Yakima Police Department. He was working an off-duty shift providing security to the store.

Tara Prescott, a labor and delivery nurse at Memorial, said "I had statistics rolling through my head. I thought there was no way, no way she was going to make it."

About 95 percent of all sudden cardiac arrest victims die before they get to the hospital, according to the American Heart Association.

That didn't stop them from trying.

Davis, who said she had no previously known health problems, fell over shortly before 6 a.m. Nov. 27 with a basketful of toys for her grandchildren.

Ed Vertrees, an off-duty firefighter for the Army's Yakima Training Center shopping with his daughter, arrived first and began chest compressions.

Then came Prescott, shopping with her parents and aunt. She pushed through some employees trying keep the crowd back and began rescue breathing.

Henne arrived seconds after that, took over compressions and helped tilt Davis' neck to open her airway.

Still, Davis was not breathing, her face was turning blue and she had no pulse.

They asked for an automated defibril-lator, a portable device used to shock a heart back into rhythm. The store didn't have one that the employees knew of.

Not knowing what else to do, they continued CPR for roughly 10 minutes until an ambulance arrived and whisked Davis away to the hospital.

Prescott continued shopping. Henne continued his shift. It's unclear what Vertrees did next -- he didn't return phone calls for this story.

That doesn't surprise Cory, Davis' brother, who used to work with Vertrees at the Training Center. He called Vertrees a quiet man who wouldn't like being labeled a hero.

"He'll put out this fire and then go prepare for the next one," Cory said.

However, all three rescuers visited the hospital during the weekend and met Davis' family. Vertrees left a get-well card.

Henne said he'd performed CPR before, but usually on gunshot victims. None of them had ever lived, he said.

He still found Davis' survival hard to believe.

"I just had to see it for myself," Henne said.

Davis remembers none of it.

She recalls shopping and eyeing the computer printers. Next thing she knew, she woke up about 3 a.m. Saturday with a ventilator tube down her throat and her wrists restrained. In her sleep, she had been tugging at the tube.

She recalls thinking, "This is a really weird dream."

Doctors put a stent in her heart to prevent blockage. She will take time to recover. She will miss a grandson's Dec. 12 wedding in Salem, Ore.

But she expects life to return to normal and when it does, she and her family plan to somehow try to express their gratitude.

"They will definitely be thanked," Davis said.

Buy YHR Photos




3 photos  View the gallery



ANDY SAWYER/YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

Ellen Davis relaxes at the Zillah home of her brother, Bob Cory Thursday, Dec. 3, 2009. Davis suffered a heart attack while shopping at the West Valley Walmart on Black Friday and a nurse, off-duty firefighter and off-duty police officer gave her CPR until medics arrived.

Links

 E-mail  Print  Comments



Subscribe Today
Get 2 Weeks Free!



Advertisement

TWO HOT *phones* FOR THE PRICE OF ONE.

For a limited time at U.S. Cellular,[®] get a phone of equal or lesser value free when you buy one of six select phones.

Get a phone ▶

> Play again



More 'Local'

1. Families of two single moms need clothing and other basics
2. 'A dying breed' of survivors marks Pearl Harbor anniversary
3. Yakima's Christmas parade warms hearts on a frigid night
4. How did you fare? Quiz answers here
5. Outlook is grim: New approach will be tried in gang-ridden community
6. If you shop 'til you drop, have CPR providers nearby
7. Single mom plagued by health issues

More Stories: [Today's News](#) | [This Week](#)