

CPR: Soccer player makes life-saving play on Hamilton field



CPR - Gary Yokoyama, The Hamilton Spectator

Grade 11 Aldershot high school student Josh Selway 16 performs chest compressions during the official launch of the ACT (Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation) High School CPR and Defibrillator training program for Halton Region.

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By Joanna Frketich

Joe Sterrazza was supposed to be driving a Hamilton Street Railway bus on the night he almost died of a heart attack. But his shift was called off, so the west Hamilton dad headed to his weekly soccer game with friends at Mountain Sports Complex.

On the way, he picked up Bruno Bombardieri, who was also supposed to miss the game on Jan. 23, 2013 but changed his plans at the last minute.

Halfway through the game, Sterrazza, a fit 40-year-old, collapsed on the field with no warning. He had no vital signs after collapse. Bombardieri immediately came to his rescue, performing CPR for an agonizing 12 minutes until paramedics arrived with an automated external defibrillator.

"You have a very good friend," Sterrazza remembers a doctor saying after he was saved. "She told me straight out, 'If he wasn't there, you wouldn't be here.'"

Other players felt so helpless that one organized a CPR training session so they'd never be caught not knowing what to do in a life-and-death situation again.

Sterrazza is telling his story now to illustrate the importance of a national foundation bringing its CPR and defibrillator training program to Halton's 28 high schools in the public, Catholic and French boards.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation has already provided about 95 per cent of Ontario's secondary schools with \$5,000 to \$7,000 each to buy equipment and train teachers to be life-saving instructors.

Halton is one of the last areas in the province to get the funding that will see more than 7,000 students trained each year.

"Our goal is that every young person graduates from high school with the skills and knowledge to save a life," said Sandra Clarke, executive director of the foundation. "If a bystander starts CPR quickly and can use an AED quickly, it can increase the chances of survival by up to 75 per cent."

Hamilton schools got the CPR training program in 2008 and about 6,600 students take part each year. Grade 12 student [Shane Tabone](#) saved his dad with the CPR he learned at Sherwood Secondary School in 2015.

But Hamilton doesn't have the defibrillator training yet. Clarke says it will be added in the near future.

"It's creating a culture of life-saving," said Clarke. "We have had [so many rescues](#). We have students stepping out in all kinds of emergencies."

Sterrazza doesn't remember having a heart attack.

"I had no signs and I never felt anything," he said. "I was playing soccer and I made a pass and then I woke up at Juravinski Hospital.

He couldn't believe it when doctors told him he needed quadruple [coronary artery bypass surgery](#).

"I never thought in a million years this could happen," he said. "I exercised regularly, ate well and played soccer every week."

When he was told his life was saved by a fellow player, he knew right away it had to be Bombardieri. The business department head at Ancaster's Bishop Tonno's Catholic Secondary School regularly recertifies his life-saving skills.

"To this day, I tell him all the time, 'How do you thank someone for doing what you did?'" said Sterrazza.

He marvels at the series of coincidences that led the two friends to be on the field together that night.

"God forbid it would have happened while I was driving my bus," said Sterrazza. "It was meant to happen at that moment with both of us there."

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<http://www.thespec.com/news-story/7255788-cpr-soccer-player-makes-life-saving-play-on-hamilton-field/>