

Police save man's life

Officers revive co-worker after a cardiac arrest
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"I remember nothing about it, but from what I can only piece together after the fact, I was in the right place at the right time." - Mark Murphy, who went into cardiac arrest on Jan. 28



John Dugan/The News-Gazette

Mark Murphy, second from left, listens as Champaign Police detectives, from left, Mark Huckstep, Robert Rea and Don Shepard tell him the story of their efforts to save his life when he collapsed at work on Jan. 28, after going into cardiac arrest.

By STEVE BAUER

News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN - Going to work may have saved Mark Murphy's life.

Murphy, a 52-year-old polygraph examiner for the Illinois State Police, was revived by Champaign police detectives using cardiopulmonary resuscitation and an automated external defibrillator after his heart stopped Jan. 28.

Murphy will have a celebration lunch Monday with the Champaign officers who saved his life.

"I didn't have a heart attack," Murphy said. "I was aware that I had a big, fat, lazy heart, but I was under a doctor's care and was taking medication. There was no running or major stress or anything. The heart just stopped. It was cardiac arrest."

Murphy had already changed his diet and cut back on cigarettes and coffee. He was taking a prescription medicine that gave him a good pulse rate and blood pressure.

"This came out of the blue," he said. "I don't think this was a predictable event."

Murphy, who has been a polygraph operator for 24 years, is assigned to the state police office in Springfield, but his office is actually a room on the second floor at the Champaign Police Department, where the investigation division is located.

Murphy has no memory of what happened; he only knows what others have told him. He and Champaign detectives are convinced, however, that he was in the right place at the right time.

Murphy had a cold and called in sick the day before. His wife, Deb, tried to convince him to stay home that Friday morning, but he said he had to go in to work.

Champaign police Detective Don Shepard happened to be near the office fax machine when some documents came across for Murphy. He offered to take them to Murphy.

Shepard saw the back of Murphy's chair and Murphy's right arm hanging over the side, but thought Murphy might be pretending to be sleeping or kidding around.

Shepard said Murphy was unresponsive and cool to the touch. He said he saw Detective Mark Huckstep and motioned for him to come into Murphy's office.

Huckstep said he checked and Murphy had no pulse.

"He was chilled," Huckstep said.

Huckstep yelled to call 911 and for someone to get the automated external defibrillator from the nearby police conditioning room. Huckstep and Shepard rolled Murphy in his chair out to an open area in the Investigations Division and put him on the floor, according to Huckstep.

Meanwhile, Detective Bob Rea ran, and got the "defib" machine, which is programmed to automatically read a person's heart rhythm to determine whether a shock is needed to restart it.

Rea said he, like other police officers, is trained in CPR and using automated defibrillators.

"I know from my training that if they don't need a shock, it won't tell you to give one, so I was concerned when it said to deliver a shock," Rea said.

"Once we did - and it was just one shock - and his pulse started up, I was feeling a little better," Rea said.

Murphy's pulse was very weak, but it became stronger as Huckstep did chest compressions and Officer Robb Morris, Lt. Gallo and Sgt. Don Shelton did resuscitation breathing for Murphy until an ambulance crew arrived.

Shepard said all the officers worked quickly as a team to help Murphy. "I think our training helps you see and identify a situation and respond accordingly, then later you think about it," he said.

Huckstep had done CPR once before, as a security officer in the mid-1980s, but the incident with Murphy was more scary, he said.

"He was out," Huckstep said. "To see him on that Friday and visit him in the hospital over the weekend and, then, to see him walk out (of the hospital) the next Wednesday is a miracle. It makes you appreciate life."

Murphy agrees.

Murphy said heart doctors at Carle also told him he was very lucky. They implanted a small, internal defibrillator in his chest on Feb. 1. That will, hopefully, prevent the need for an external defibrillator being used again on him,

He said he feels good and hopes to return to work within a couple of weeks.

"I am extremely grateful," Murphy said. "I remember nothing about it, but from what I can only piece together after the fact, I was in the right place at the right time. Not everybody can rise to the occasion, but these guys clearly did."

You can reach News-Gazette staff writer Steve Batten at (217) 351-5318 or via e-mail at sbatten@news-gazette.com.