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Thankful for Life Saving Emergency Medical Help

By Cathy Tyson



From left: Office of the Sheriff Captain Mark Williams, Lafayette Officer Debra Williams, survivor Jim Engelhardt, Lafayette Officer Jacqui Dennison, Lafayette Community Service Officer Cathy Surges, Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen. Photo Jimmy Lee

CPR. Surges-Moscato grabbed the automated external defibrillator while officers Jacqui Dennison and Debra Williams continued with CPR, then the defibrillator was activated three times until Engelhardt was revived.

Engelhardt shared with the audience that when he was "a young pup" he played professional baseball with the California Angels. At every game, he'd hear the National Anthem - his favorite song. Recently, post-heart attack he was at a Stanford football game, heard the National Anthem and just started to lose it. "I'm so glad to be alive - every time I hear that song, I'll be thinking of you (the responders who saved his life). Thank you for all that you did," he said, adding that he has so much to be thankful for - a lovely wife, kids, grandkids, Christmas, Thanksgiving, the Giants and A's.

The city officially recognized and honored all those involved in this gentleman's survival: The Lafayette Police Department's Dennison, Williams and Surges-Moscato, Contra Costa Fire Protection District Crew Captain Beaty, firefighters Palant, Smith, Nelson, Hern and Ingram, and American Medical Response paramedics Gomez and Caluya.

Engelhardt concluded in a note sent to Lafayette Police Chief Eric Christensen, "I'm doing great, eating healthier, walking three miles a day again, enjoying the A's and the World Series, Stanford Football games on idyllic fall days and looking forward to the holidays with my family."

"Needless to say, I am really glad to be here," said Jim Engelhardt, referring to his near-death experience at the Art & Wine Festival in September. He was at a recent City Council meeting to personally thank all those involved in his survival, with a special shout out to Contra Costa Fire personnel - "Nice job on the old chest."

In poignant remarks, Engelhardt summarized just what it means to be the recipient of life saving measures after his cardiac arrest. "I spent 29 years in law enforcement and fire - unless you have been on the other side, you can't know how proud you deserve to be." Clad in blue uniforms, officers from various departments that played a role in his life saving event lined the Community Hall of the Lafayette Library and Learning Center for the ceremony that honored them for their service.

"At the hospital, the doctor said, 'you are damn lucky.' There's a less than 10 percent chance of survival in the best of circumstances," said Engelhart of the 98 percent blockage of his heart's main artery.

Contra Costa County Emergency Medical Services Nurse Pam Dodson commented, "the stars aligned," that so many community safety personnel just happened to be at the Art & Wine Festival at that moment.

Lafayette Community Services Officer Cathy Surges-Moscato and Sergeant Dan Nugent responded to the scene immediately, where some bystanders were already giving

Reach the reporter at: cathy@lamorindaweekly.com

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