

North Bay Nugget
Thursday April 26, 2007



Tim Morris; Gilles Villeneuve; Glen Arthur, 55, was still recuperating at North Bay and District Hospital, Wednesday, after collapsing at Pete Palangio Arena Saturday during a Big Brothers hockey tournament. Some quick-thinkers grabbed the arena's portable defibrillator and used the device to shock Arthur's heart. gord young, the nugget

Photo: Gord Young

Devices real life savers; Incidents underscore need for public defibrillators

Gord Young

Local News - Thursday, April 26, 2007 @ 08:00

An Arnprior man who collapsed while playing hockey in North Bay last weekend says he owes his life to an invaluable piece of medical equipment and the community program that made sure it was on hand.

Glen Arthur, 55, is certain he would have died Saturday had there not been a public access defibrillator and a group of fast-acting bystanders at Pete Palangio Arena after he collapsed on the bench when his heart stopped beating during a Big Brothers hockey tournament.

"If it wasn't there and those people hadn't jumped into action, I wouldn't be here today," said Arthur, from his hospital bed at North Bay and District Hospital's critical care unit.

Arthur, director of recreation for the Town of Arnprior, has nothing but praise for the local program spearheaded by the North Bay Professional Paramedics Association and District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board that ensured the medical device was on hand.

And he hopes his experience will boost local efforts, as well as those in his own community, to have defibrillators placed in more locations.

The Lifeline program, which relies on local sponsorship, was launched two years ago and is responsible for purchasing and installing 17 defibrillators at various locations across the district - including every arena. Its organizers also hope stories such as Arthur's will help expand the program by demonstrating the critical role the devices can play in saving someone's life.

And they are holding up his ordeal as the second such incident in the area within the last two weeks in which a person collapsed while playing hockey and whose life was saved by a public access defibrillator.

Another man's life was saved a little more than a week ago after one of the devices was used under similar circumstances at the Sturgeon Fall Recreation Centre.

It was the first time Gilles Villeneuve, who works at the local hospital repairing and maintaining such equipment, actually had to use a defibrillator in a real situation. And the patient happened to be a teammate and lifelong friend.

Villeneuve said people shouldn't hesitate in an emergency to use one of the devices because they are simple to operate and are equipped with an automated voice that provides instructions based on the patient's vital signs.

Tim Morris, among those who rushed to save Arthur, said it was like having a doctor at their side telling them what to do. Morris, who performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, was a spectator at the game who bolted to the scene when he spotted the commotion behind the bench. Bret Foisy, an off-duty paramedic, and Moe Bedard, the tournament organizer, were also on hand.

"If the arena didn't have that defibrillator . . . we never would have saved his life," said Bedard.

Arthur was scheduled for transfer to a hospital in Ottawa Wednesday where doctors are expected to install a device in his chest to prevent another such attack.

He can't remember feeling any pain or losing consciousness at the arena. And Arthur thought he may have been the victim of a practical joke when he awoke to find that his goal-tending equipment had been stripped away and a group of people including his teammates were staring down at him.

He said it took his group of rescuers little more than two minutes to get his heart beating normally - a period of time that could have meant death or brain damage before paramedics arrived.

Defibrillators have come in handy in the city in the past.

In 2003, a man suffered a heart attack on the fourth tee at Highview Golf Course in Powassan. A staffer grabbed the course's portable defibrillator, jumped in a golf car and headed for the tee, using the paddles to shock the 70-year-old man's heart.

The man was taken to hospital by ambulance.