Seattle father saved by new app that alerts volunteers to rush in and give CPR

October 3 2016, by Jonel Aleccia, The Seattle Times

Doug Stine's ribs were still pretty sore Friday, but that didn't stop him from getting out of his hospital bed at Harborview Medical Center and hugging the stranger whose smartphone app saved his life.

"If it weren't for you, I wouldn't be around," Stine, 36, told Dr. Matthew Gittinger, the UW Medicine emergency physician who performed what officials say is the first documented rescue triggered by PulsePoint, an alert system activated in Seattle in June.

Stine, 36, of Pacific, Wash., was riding with colleagues on Aurora Avenue North about 9 a.m. last Monday when he collapsed and began turning blue, signs of cardiac arrest.

His buddies at Lamar Advertising called 911, setting in motion the new system that turns ordinary people willing to perform CPR - not just medical professionals - into emergency responders.

Three blocks away, Gittinger was at home, reading emails and drinking coffee. His phone buzzed with a PulsePoint alert. He took one look, slipped on his shoes and dashed out the door.

"I told my wife, 'I'm going to see if someone needs CPR,'" he said.

Stine's co-workers had started cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and a passing motorist also stopped to help. But Gittinger was able to relieve them and keep Stine's blood circulating until fire engines arrived two or

three minutes later.

"With this, every second counts," Gittinger said.

The incident illustrates exactly why officials with the Medic One Foundation and the Seattle Fire Department agreed to activate PulsePoint in Seattle this summer, said Dr. Michael Sayre, a UW Medicine professor of emergency medicine.

It doesn't take an ER doctor to save someone's life. It only takes someone willing to step up, he said.

"This really relies on having someone within a block or two of an emergency," Sayre said. "It makes a huge difference."

Seattle became one of the latest cities in Washington and across the nation to join the PulsePoint network, which was started in 2009 and now has more than 800,000 active users in 28 states and Canada.

The app works by interacting with emergency dispatch systems to scan for medical codes indicating cardiac arrest. When the code, known as Med 7, comes through, the app immediately alerts local volunteers who have downloaded the app.

Sayre and other organizers hope to get 15,000 so-called "citizen responders" to download the app, but so far, fewer than 3,000 have done so.

The app has been activated about 130 times in Seattle since June, but a rescue like Stine's is still "relatively rare," said Richard Price, the former San Ramon, Calif., fire chief who started PulsePoint.

"As the footprint of the app spreads throughout the rest of King County

and to the surrounding counties, adoption of the app will grow considerably, and remarkable stories of survival like this one will follow," he said.

Stine is a father of three who has Emery-Dreifuss muscular dystrophy, a disorder that affects the heart. He had a pacemaker implanted more than a decade ago. That device was functioning fine, but he still went into sudden cardiac arrest caused by ventricular fibrillation, when the heart beats fast and erratically.

The last thing Stine remembers, he was getting dressed for work on Monday. He awoke in the hospital with sore ribs from the compressions - and learned that he was alive thanks to the PulsePoint alert.

"Rumor has it I was dead, and because of this (app) I can go home to my three little ones," said Stine, the father of Bailey, 10; Micah, 5; and Parker, 7 weeks.

His wife, Erin, 32, was grateful.

"He is a miracle; he shouldn't be here," she said.

Stine had never heard of the PulsePoint app before, but he said he's certified in CPR and plans to become a new user.

"It blew my mind," he said. "I'm definitely putting it on my phone."

—-

HOW TO SIGN UP FOR PULSEPOINT

- Download the PulsePoint app on an iOS or Android device.

- Agree to the app terms.

- Select "Yes" to opt-in and receive notifications if you are CPR-trained and willing to help.

- Allow PulsePoint to access your location.

- Receive alerts for emergencies occurring within a quarter-mile.

Sources: MedicOne Foundation and PulsePoint

©2016 The Seattle Times
Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.