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Hockey's 'guardian angel'



Art Jones holds up a heart defibrillator that he has used twice -- the latest on Thursday in which he saved a player's life. (DAVE THOMAS/Toronto Sun)

Etobicoke hockey arena senior operator Art Jones is being hailed as a hero for shocking people.

Twice.

On two occasions Jones saved the lives of middle-aged players with emergency heart defibrillators.

The first time was about three years ago at the former Lakeshore Lions Arena; the second was last Thursday at the new MasterCard Centre for Hockey Excellence.

"He was a guardian angel for these guys," local Councillor Mark Grimes said Monday, while visiting the sprawling arena on Kipling Ave., south of the QEW.

Grimes has asked Emergency Medical Services Chief Bruce Farr to formally commend the 20-year city employee.

"He's a truly remarkable guy ... a real hero," the Ward 6 councillor said. "Doing this once is great, but twice!"

The city oversees 600 public access defibrillators in arenas, schools, community centres, fitness facilities and offices.

Toronto paramedics respond to about 2,000 heart attack calls yearly and, with vocal and illustrated instructions, the \$2,000-\$3,000 devices can be applied easily after someone collapses.

Neither of the two heart attack sufferers showed any signs of trouble before they collapsed on the ice, Jones said.

"They're both in their early 50s and non-smokers," he said.

He can't recall the first man's name, but Jones said "he's back playing hockey" and they regularly chat. "He just went down on the ice, but a couple of the guys are city workers and realized what was happening," he said.

Doug Clancy, then manager of an arena at Erindale College, joined him doing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, but they feared "we were going to lose him."

Jones, who trained on the defibrillator about one month earlier, fetched the portable unit and got the victim's heart beating with one jolt before paramedics arrived.

Friends were preparing to do mouth-to-mouth and chest compressions Thursday, but Jones intervened. "He's going to be okay," he said.

Grateful at the recognition, especially from arena regulars, he stressed "it's important for people to realize the units are there, and to get training. Seconds count. If you can save a life, that's what it's all about."

For information about Toronto EMS first aid, CPR and defibrillator training, call 416-392-9833, or email emscpr@toronto.ca.