



State trooper receives Lifesaving Award for reviving fellow first responder who suffered massive heart attack

August 31, 2017, by Shelbie Harris



Trooper Spencer Knudsen received the Idaho State Police Lifesaving Award for using a portable defibrillator to save the life of a Bannock County Search and Rescue member who suffered a heart attack at the scene of a triple-fatal wreck this past Father's Day.

Idaho State Police Trooper Spencer Knudsen responded to a triple fatality head-on collision on Father's Day that was so horrific a member of the Bannock County Search and Rescue team almost died at the scene after suffering a massive heart attack.

But as soon as the responder, who did not wish to be identified, collapsed to the ground, Knudsen immediately retrieved an automated external defibrillator from the trunk of a nearby patrol car and was able to save the man's life by successfully restarting his heart.

And on Thursday, Knudsen received the Idaho State Police Lifesaving Award for his heroic actions. Trooper Ryan Mattox, who was not present Thursday, also received a Lifesaving Award for helping the fallen responder.

"I shocked him once and we got a heartbeat back and we continued CPR measures before we loaded him up and met the ambulance halfway between the crash site and Portneuf Medical Center," Knudsen said. "My training kicked in and all I did was do what I had to do."

Knudsen was one of the first responders to a head-on collision on U.S. Highway 30 near McCammon that claimed the lives of Pocatello siblings Eric, 15, and Lauren, 13, Neibaur, as well as Nampa resident Jay Lanningham, 70.

[Continue](#)

Other Neibaur family members were traveling in a convoy of vehicles in front of and behind the vehicle with the Neibaur siblings. While other first responders tried to extricate the victims from the wrecked vehicles, Knudsen consoled the Neibaur family and directed traffic away from the crash.

One of Knudsen's supervisors, Sgt. Mike Winans, was present with him at the scene of the crash and nominated him for the award. Knudsen said Winans beat him to the scene by about 30 seconds.

"When I showed up at the scene I didn't know where Winans was but he was supporting the neck of the only individual who lived," Knudsen said, referring to a girl in Lanningham's vehicle. "It was up to me to shut the highway down and start directing the county guys where to go. Then I could start talking to witnesses and try to put together a short timeline of what happened."

Knudsen continued, "Then a helicopter landed on scene and it added another different dynamic to it. But after we dealt with the family and tried to console them after they lost two of their kids and had to watch as we were extricating them from the vehicle it was a lot to take in."

Knudsen said he had worked at other crashes with the Search and Rescue team member who had the heart attack, including a wreck that occurred the morning of the triple fatal.

Knudsen said the man's heart attack definitely came as a surprise.

"But everyone there was able to help and we were able to do the job that we are asked to do," Knudsen said.

So far that was the first time Knudsen had to revive a fellow emergency responder with a defibrillator.

"That was my first and only time so far but who knows how many more there may be," Knudsen said.

Receiving the award was humbling for Knudsen who said that any of his fellow colleagues in the room when it was presented to him were also deserving of recognition for the work that they do.

"Having such a great agency like this to recognize something that I see as a team effort is awesome," Knudsen said. "It's humbling to have a captain and a sergeant that came to me the next day and said they wanted to nominate me for the award and I'm honored for it, but it was a team effort."

Knudsen said the Lifesaving Award is one that no law enforcement officer actively seeks out when they go to work every day.

Nonetheless, when the award was presented to him, Knudsen said he couldn't help but get a little emotional.

"I was choked up a little bit today because I had my wife and kids there, some of my command staff and a lot of guys that I work with on a day-to-day basis," Knudsen said. "As a law enforcement officer, we are still human beings and a lot of people don't recognize that."

When officers put on the uniform people think they turn into "Robocop," Knudsen said, but that's just not how it works.

"We get emotional too, just like anybody else does and I will always remember Father's Day of 2017," Knudsen said. "My only thoughts that day was that when I get off work I got to see my kids. It was a such a tragedy that compounded a lasting memory that I'll never forget."
