

Independence Township police save two lives in three days

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For the second time in less than six months, Independence Township police officer John O'Neil found himself last week shocking the life back into a resident.

His save Tuesday came three days after fellow township police officer Christopher Prell revived another person with CPR.

First-aid calls are a part of everyday life, but two CPR saves in three days, **"That's a first,"** Independence Township police Chief Dennis Riley said. In both instances, Riley credited the officers' response times of less than four minutes.

"When you're talking about any kind of case where someone's not breathing, that's the crucial time for any kind of success in reviving that party," the chief said.

Independence Township police have automated external defibrillators in every car and receive training to shock a heart back into a functioning state.

"So when we do get those calls, with the proper equipment and training, I'm hoping that the odds of reviving someone are better," Riley said.

O'Neil was on patrol Tuesday when a call came in for an unresponsive woman. He found Mary Jane Forte, 63, of the first block of Ridge Road in Independence Township, slumped on her couch without pulse. She wasn't breathing.

O'Neil, 38, and Forte's son moved a coffee table and placed her on the floor. Her son became **"excited,"** O'Neil said, so the officer told him, **"You got to step out of here."**

He then placed the AED pads on her chest. The machine analyzed her condition and told O'Neil to shock her. He shocked and then started chest compressions.

Paramedics arrived, found a heartbeat and transported her to Morristown Medical Center. She remained in the hospital Friday, O'Neil said.



Independence Township police officer John O'Neil stands Thursday in the township committee's meeting room with the automated external defibrillator he used to save a life Tuesday.

O'Neil, who is approaching his ninth anniversary on the force, was in a similar situation in July. He used the same AED to revive a man in cardiac arrest at Stone Barn Automobile Restoration on Route 46.

The patrolman said Independence Township police are required to undergo one training day every two years at Hackettstown Regional Medical Center for instructions on AEDs, oxygen and CPR.

"I'm glad we get training every two years on it and go over everything," he said. **"You can't put a price on someone's life."**

Prell's save came Jan.28, when he responded to a call on Petersburg Road and found Charles Davis without a pulse and not breathing. Prell immediately began to administer CPR. For seven minutes, he pumped the man's chest.

The medics arrived and transported Davis to Hackettstown Regional Medical Center. The medical staff attributed Davis' survival to Prell's efforts, police said.

Prell did not return calls for comment, nor did Forte or Davis.