



Quick thinking NMU golfer saves woman's life

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MARQUETTE, Mich.—One Northern Michigan University women's golfer woke up on the morning of Friday, Jan. 26, anticipating a day just like any other. By mid-afternoon, senior Avery Rochester (Marquette, Mich.) had learned lessons that only experience can teach.

Rochester and other members of the women's golf team were participating in a community Zumba class in preparation for their spring season scheduled to begin the first week of March. During the class, a community member collapsed, causing those in attendance, including Rochester, to spring into action. Rochester first determined that the individual was not breathing and did not have a pulse and then directed others to alert 9-1-1 and retrieve the automated external defibrillator (AED).

While the AED was being retrieved and emergency medical responders (EMS) were en route, Rochester and another individual began administering CPR. After two sets of compressions, the AED was used and then CPR was continued. By the time EMS arrived, the AED had enabled the person's heart to reestablish an effective rhythm and the person was breathing on their own.

"In the moment, I was calm on the outside, but not so much on the inside," Rochester said of her actions. "After EMS got there, the situation really sunk in, and I was really glad to have my teammates there to support me."

Rochester described a moment during CPR where she heard sobbing behind her. When she turned to look, she witnessed two of her teammates consoling a bystander. While Rochester was directly involved in performing CPR and administering aid, helping at the scene was a group effort according to assistant coach Alex Palmer, who was participating in the class with the team and was the one to call 9-1-1. Palmer said after the situation had calmed, his first call was to head coach Bob Bastian where he described the efforts made by the entire team.

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"Everyone found a constructive task at the time," Palmer noted of all Wildcat golfers in attendance. "Whether it was Baylee (Dunmire) consoling other individuals, Caro (Els) running up and grabbing Avery when it was over, or other members of the team following instruction; it made the situation go as well as possible considering the events that occurred."

As an athletic training student at NMU, Rochester is required to have various certifications that include CPR and AED training. While her training and education have prepared her to react appropriately in this type of situation, it is difficult to understand the importance of that training until put into action.

"Later that night, I was meeting some teammates for dinner and I was looking around thinking 'what would I do if there was an emergency?'" Rochester said. "I have to think about those things more often and in more detail now."

Her newfound insight is one Rochester believes should be a societal concern. Exact numbers differ depending on the organization, but less than 20 percent of the U.S. population have proper CPR certification. AED certification is equally important but also rare. The American Red Cross reports that every minute that passes without defibrillation on an individual in sudden cardiac arrest decreases their chance of survival by seven to 10 percent.

Feeling so strongly about the need for certification, Rochester brought up the issue with the University Athletic Council and her coaches in an attempt to get as many NMU student-athletes as possible certified in these techniques.

"We had an Athletic Council meeting where we talked about the situation that occurred and someone asked how important these certifications are," Rochester said. "Not only is it extremely important to have the certifications, but it is extremely easy to get them."

Concerned with whether anyone could have helped had she not been there, Rochester would like to see as many student-athletes as possible get certified. While Rochester's bravery played a key role in her actions, the training she received prior allowed her to remain focused in a traumatic situation, ultimately saving a person's life.

Northern Michigan University offers a number of certification and training opportunities to students and community members, including for CPR, first aid, and AED use. Certification courses are currently scheduled for at least once a month, January through May, and cost \$70 for NMU Recreational Sport members, \$80 for non-members. For more information, visit the NMU Recreational Sports Office visit 126 PEIF Building or call (906) 227-2518.

Online certification and training in CPR, first aid, and AED use is available through the American Red Cross for \$25 per course.

The university, as an institution, has dramatically increased its own AED support, recently going from having eight AEDs to 37 strategically placed throughout campus and in NMU police vehicles. The large AED purchase was a health and safety commitment that President Fritz Erickson, Director of Public Safety and Police Services Mike Bath and Director of Athletics Forrest Karr felt was critical to the well-being of students, employees, and campus visitors. They hope to see the number of individuals qualified and ready to use them in life-saving situations, such as the one the golf team faced, continue to increase.

The NMU Board of Trustees plans to recognize Rochester and her teammates for their heroic actions at an upcoming meeting.
