

East Haven mayor honors those involved in helping woman in cardiac arrest

February 23, 2017, by Sam Norton

EAST HAVEN >> On Jan. 31, nursing student Christine Fitzgerald was sitting at a corner table in Chili's Restaurant Bar & Grill eating dinner before her shift as a server started. Across the restaurant, medical student Tariana Ortega was eating dinner with her children.

Both Fitzgerald and Ortega noticed a female customer turn a shade of blue.

Fitzgerald didn't expect her instincts to kick in that quickly, she said. She rushed over to the table to ask if the woman was choking. "At that point, she was turning blue and I had to get her onto the floor and start CPR," Fitzgerald said.

Once Ortega noticed Fitzgerald was performing CPR, she not only lent a helping hand, but she instructed another bystander to call 911. It was the first time the pair had performed CPR on a real, live victim, they both said.

Earlier that morning, Fitzgerald said she had begun to question her ability to perform as a nurse.

"I talked to my professor that morning about being emotional throughout this process of being a nursing student (saying) 'I don't know if I am going to be able to go into my role correctly,' and she said, 'Trust me, when the time comes, you will step into your role just fine,'" Fitzgerald said.



East Haven Mayor Joseph Maturo Jr. awards Tariana Ortega and Christine Fitzgerald with Certificates of Recognition Thursday for performing lifesaving CPR on a woman at Chili's Restaurant Bar & Grill in January. Sam Norton — New Haven Register



East Haven Fire Chief Douglas Jackson presents American Medical Response Paramedics Brittany Aldrich and Russell Olson and Paramedic Supervisor Michael Turcio with Certificates of Recognition Thursday for treating a patient who was in cardiac arrest at Chili's Bar & Grill in January.

The East Haven Fire Department received the 911 call at 5:30 p.m. indicating a patron at Chili's was in cardiac arrest. That day, a winter weather advisory from the National Weather Service was issued for Greater New Haven.

"At the time of this call, travel was very difficult with a snowstorm in progress and multiple motor vehicle accidents occurring," Mayor Joseph Maturo Jr. said during a press conference Thursday. "The communications center dispatched Rescue 1 only to this call as Engine No. 1 was already committed on another call where a motor vehicle took down a utility pole."

[Continue](#)

The on-duty crew — Firefighter EMT Fred Parlato and Firefighter Paramedic Chris Guilfoil — responded, Maturo said. “Since this incident occurred at a shift change, the crew of Firefighter EMT Wayne Palmer and Firefighter Paramedic Matt Hall, who were just relieved by Parlato and Guilfoil, determined they would respond with them to give them the adequate personnel necessary for the call. East Haven volunteer Firefighter Steve Brunelle Jr. from Co. No. 1 also responded directly from his home,” Maturo said.

Upon arriving on scene, Maturo said emergency personnel found high-quality CPR being performed by Fitzgerald and Ortega.

After taking over CPR from Fitzgerald and Ortega, the crew deployed the Lifeline ARM Automated Chest Compression device. The device mechanically delivers compressions which allows the first responders to treat the patient’s other needs. The device, which meets American Heart Association standards, measures the size of the victim and their chest resistance. Once the chest resistance is measured, the device can begin giving compressions, officials said.

The device was only in service for two weeks before it was deployed for the Jan. 31 call, Maturo said.

The female patient was later taken to Yale New Haven Hospital by the American Medical Response team and Paramedic Supervisor Michael Turcio, who assisted the Fire Department with direct patient care.

The start of CPR before the East Haven Fire Department arrived helped save the female victim’s life, Maturo said

Fitzgerald, Ortega and all of the first responders received Certificates of Recognition by Maturo Thursday at fire headquarters for the lifesaving rescue.

Maturo said he hopes Fitzgerald’s and Ortega’s actions inspire other individuals to learn lifesaving techniques.

“It’s an honor to be able to have these civilians be able to perform some type of assistance prior to the 911 emergency medical people getting there. We implore anyone out there to take a class in CPR or take a class in lifesaving abilities. You might not be able to use (the skills) your whole life, but that one time you might be able to use it, you might be able to save somebody,” Maturo said.



PJ Norwood was live.

February 23 at 11:09am · 🌐

East Haven Firefighter's, AMR and bystanders receiving awards for a cardiac arrest save

