

Rocky Hill Police And Father And Daughter Recognized For Saving Woman's Life

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Three Rocky Hill officers and one civilian were all recognized Monday for saving the life of a woman who had suffered from cardiac arrest while driving.

ROCKY HILL – The stars were aligned for Francine Lavigne-Teague on April 29, 2016.

Riding along Elm Street with her husband Bill on a routine trip to CVS shortly before noontime, she began complaining of chest pains. Suddenly, at the Cromwell Avenue intersection, she went into full cardiac arrest.

Frantically, Teague jumped from his vehicle and rushed over to a police cruiser stopped in front of him at the light. The officer, Cherie Dery quickly notified dispatch and maneuvered her vehicle to block oncoming traffic. She then grabbed a medical bag and automated external defibrillator (AED) and hurried to the patient.

The officer pulled the 63-year-old woman, who had stopped breathing and had no pulse, from the vehicle to administer first aid. A young cardiac care nurse, Evanna Burgwardt, who was inside the nearby Starbucks, saw the commotion and rushed over to assist.

Burgwardt, 25, who had come off a 12-hour shift at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center just hours before, began chest compression as Dery administered oxygen. Two off-duty officers, Sgt. Joseph Phelps and Officer Jonathan Lammers arrived and, as Dery continued the oxygen, Burgwardt and Lammers alternated compression while Phelps applied the AED patches. The shock was applied and a normal heart rhythm restored.

Dr. Kent Burgwardt, an emergency room physician and Evanna's father, happened onto the scene and assisted paramedics in stabilizing the patient, who was transported to Hartford Hospital

Fully recovered from the ordeal, Lavigne-Teague and her husband attended the town council meeting Monday night at which the actions of Evanna Burgwardt and the three officers were publicly recognized.

"It was nice it had a happy ending," said Burgwardt, who saw Lavigne-Teague for the first time since the incident. They held hands during the ceremony.

Burgwardt recalled she was so busy working on the patient she never saw her father arrive, but heard a familiar voice. "I looked up and it was my dad so I said 'Hi Dad.'"

"This was a potentially tragic incident with a miraculous outcome," Police Chief Michal Custer said. "The efforts of all involved were instrumental in the patient's life being saved and her full recovery."

"They were my angels," said Lavigne-Teague, who said she has no memory of the event.

"We're just so grateful to everyone," said her husband.