

## Community hall's defibrillator saved Durrus Frank's life

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BY JACKIE KEOGH



AFTER choir practice, Denise Hickey walked into the main community hall in Durrus, where her dad, Frank, had been playing badminton, and saw him stretched out on the floor receiving CPR.

'He was out of it,' said Denise, who recalled how she looked on as his friends administered CPR for about seven minutes while Sarah Elliot ran to the local supermarket to retrieve the defibrillator.

'One blip and he was back,' Denise told The Southern Star following a recent get-together in the same community hall to raise awareness about CPR and highlight the value of every community, throughout West Cork, having access to a defibrillator, as well as plenty of people who are trained in how to use it.

Denise, her sisters Siobhan and Muireann, and their mother Fíona, all say they are so glad to have Frank back to full health after suffering a cardiac arrest.

'We were always nice to him,' said Denise, 'but we are nicer to him now! We don't take him for granted and we don't take each other for granted either. We take each day as it comes.'

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Frank (62) recently posed with his badminton buddies – Anthony Good, Tony Doyle and Sarah Elliot – holding up the life-saving piece of equipment.

Frank told The Southern Star that he remembers a feeling of exhaustion and then keeling over. He said he doesn't remember much but knows for a fact that his friends – which includes Thomas Kay who is missing from the photo – who were 'amateurs with regard to CPR, but became a real life-giving team that night.'

Frank said he is 'so grateful' to the community for fundraising to provide the life-saving piece of equipment and he said would have 'no hesitation in urging every community – big and small –to have their own defibrillator.'

'Today, life is good. It is different. I have a different outlook.'

The public information meeting in the hall coincided with Franks' birthday.

It took place on July 17th last and his friends surprised him with a cake. Frank said that helped to make it special. 'But every day now is special,' he added.

'Now, there is a heightened sense of beauty in everyone and everything.'

Emergency first responder Garry Minihane was invited to address the meeting and demonstrate a good CPR, or cardiopulmonary resuscitation, technique.

He addressed the crowd and praised Frank's friends and badminton buddies for their quick-thinking and life-saving response.

Garry said that after Frank went into cardiac arrest – the signs of which were that he was non-responsive, had no pulse and wasn't breathing – his friends followed the correct procedure by dialling 999 and asking for an ambulance. Then they ran to get the nearest defibrillator, which was in a box outside the supermarket in Durrus, and started doing CPR until they were in a position to shock him with the defibrillator.

Shortly afterwards, two ambulances arrived from Bantry and Skibbereen and they stepped in to stabilise Frank before bringing him to Cork University Hospital, where he received additional care.

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