

13-year-old reunited with men and women who saved his life



By Brock Weir

September 15 started out like any other ordinary day for Luke Pignatelli.

The 13-year-old was just a few days into Grade 9 at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, but this was no ordinary Thursday. The last thing he remembers is talking to his brother Andrew's friend about something random but the blanks of what happened next have had to be filled in by his family, friends, and the men and women who saved his life.

"We were just doing fitness testing because it was the beginning of the year," says Luke, a student with a passion for geography. "I was told I was just doing a fitness test and I just kind of dropped."

Shortly thereafter, Central York Fire Services (CYFS) received the 911 call. When they arrived at the school they found the boy with no palpable pulse.

Using CPR and an automated external defibrillator, firefighters were able to revive Luke before members of York Region Paramedic Services took it from there, providing lifesaving care as they transported him to hospital for treatment.

On Tuesday afternoon, Luke, along with his mother, Nicole, father Paul, Andrew and sister Kiera, were able to formally thank the men and women who worked so hard to save his life.

"Not all the calls we respond to have such a happy ending," said CYFS Chief Ian Laing at the reunion. "We could not be more proud that the actions taken that day were able to save the life of this very special young man. The work the fire fighters do every day is heroic, but there is no work more heroic than saving the life of a child."

"Despite the actions of fire fighters and emergency service personnel take every day, events like these are life-changing not just for those who need our help but those that respond to the call as well."

These words were echoed by Paramedic Superintendent Terry Chomski.

"We respond to hundreds of calls every day throughout York Region and it certainly is a great chance to see one of our calls that had a very successful outcome," he said. "We would like to have all our calls end this way and when they do it gives all our staff a great feeling for the work that we do, all the studying we do, and it is great to see it actually pay off in a real life situation."

On hand to meet Luke and his family were lifesavers Andrew Burdette, Lucas Chew and Darryl Noble of the CYFS, and paramedics Andre Bourrie (Acting Captain), Paul McPhail, Ryan Minke and Laura Rimmer.

"There aren't a lot of words to express how the Pignatelli family has for the actions of the fire department and the paramedics on September 15," said mom Nicole Pignatelli. "Our family is so grateful they acted quickly, they were caring, that they saved our son's life and he is here with us today. Thank you. Thank you very much."

Looking back to September, Luke recalls a few things from the following Saturday and Sunday, particularly the presence of his parents for the eleven days he was in hospital.

"I remember them making jokes to lighten the mood because I am a pretty easy going kid, at least that's what I've been told, so I don't get stressed easily," he says. "This is kind of cool to meet the people who saved my life. I am just grateful to have had them."