This page was exported from - The Auroran
Export date: Fri Mar 29 15:03:13 2024 / +0000 GMT

Heart attack survivor honours heroes, highlights value of training



By Brock Weir

Aurora's Brian Johnson promised himself he wouldn't get emotional, but when you're honouring four people who helped save your life, sometimes it is important to let it all out.

Mr. Johnson, a retired Toronto Fire Fighter, appeared before Council last week to publically thank three men and one woman who happened to be in the right place in the right time last fall to save his life after Mr. Johnson collapsed after a squash game at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

?It has been almost two years since I retired as a fire fighter from the Toronto Fire Department after 31 years,? said Mr. Johnson. ?During my time down there we ran a lot of medical calls, thousands, and during that time when we ran these calls we often had to do CPR. Our success rate from doing CPR was very low and that rate is actually about five per cent.

?That rate is not indicative of a lack of training, or through a lack of effort, but it is the timeframes associated with a patient having an incident. In my time there, and in my retirement, I never thought I would be on the receiving end of a 911 call.?

That changed on October 6 when Mr. Johnson finished off his squash game. While talking to another man while looking to see where they happened to be in the squash standings, Mr. Johnson fell to the ground with no vital signs.

?I was not breathing and I had no pulse,? he said, paying tribute to firefighter Brian Erskine, police officer Greg Payne, pediatric nurse Branka Asadi, and squash pro Howard Ceto. ?If it wasn't for these four individuals I have come here to [honour] tonight I probably wouldn't be here this evening, through their coordinated effort, by calling 911, getting CPR, locating a defibrillator and being able to shock me back to life, and also expediting my trip to the hospital.

?A few days after that, I ended up having a quadruple bypass. My cardiologist told me I was extremely lucky as there was a very small percentage of me actually making it through this. She also told me because of how quickly they were able to revive me that there was no permanent damage to my heart. I couldn't have had my incident in better hands. To the four of these people, I would like to extend from myself and my family, a very warm and sincere thanks for the help and the courageous efforts that evening.?

After the five individuals received a resounding standing ovation from Council and the crowd inside Council chambers last week, Council members asked for a rundown of measures in place at Town Facilities, such as the leisure complexes, to aid in situations like these.

Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, said staff on both the Parks and Recreation as well as the Operation side of things at the complexes are trained in first aid, CPR, and defibrillators, money which Mayor Geoff Dawe said was ?well spent.?

Asked by Councillor Wendy Gaertner on whether this training extends to those working the service counters, Mr. Downey said full time staff are trained, but not part-time.

?When an incident occurs, primarily the aquatics staff are responsible for the response,? said Mr. Downey. ?We have now extended our training to actual user groups, so there are some user groups who are receiving that training [for an incident]. It is critical that we deal with these as quickly as possible. Every minute that passes, the percentages go down, so we want to make sure that we respond extremely quickly and make sure we have done as much as we can before the 911 medical staff arrive.?