

Local restaurateur ?living proof vaccines do work?



The scariest part wasn't necessarily the tubes coming out of his body, but the cries of people in the hospital near him screaming out their loved one's name as they gasped not just for breath but life itself.

These are the sounds that reverberate through Sam Saberi when he recalls his fight against the Delta variant of COVID-19 just a few short weeks ago.

The co-owner of Tina's Grill was an otherwise healthy 37-year-old when he first started feeling ?a little off? on a Monday night. It didn't seem like much; just a headache and cold sweats around 8 p.m. By 3.30 a.m., however it was very much a different story.

?COVID took over my whole body,? says Saberi of what he felt just a few hours after testing positive. ?It attacked my lungs, my heart, and I had a fever of 41. All the liquids in my body were drained, I was dehydrated, I was dry-heaving. I rushed to the hospital and when I got there they put me in the ER right away and into the ICU on oxygen.

?It was the worst pain and the worst sickness I have ever felt in my life. It attacks you. It takes over your whole body super-fast and I didn't know what to do. Doctors said it was the worst case of COVID-19 he had seen in a month and said the reason why I am alive is 100 per cent because I am fully vaccinated.?

And that is why Saberi is sharing his story: to encourage all residents, if they can, to step up and roll up their sleeves.

?I was 100 per cent healthy and I haven't had a cold or flu in over four years,? he says, adding he suspects he contracted the virus little over a week before he experienced his first symptoms when he was in the emergency room to be treated for an infection.

?This is the first time I had been sick in four years and it hit me so hard and so fast that I was trying to call out to my parents in the middle of the night.?

His mother put on a mask and goggles before tending to her son and Saberi says she knew right away it was COVID. His father rushed him to the hospital immediately and ensured that not only was their home sanitized, but the McClellan Way restaurant shut down for several days to ensure all employees were tested multiple times before re-opening to customers.

Even after Saberi was COVID-free and released from the hospital, he stayed home a further two more days just to be sure and do his part to help stop the spread.

Given how hard COVID-19 has hit the restaurant business, Saberi says it was a hard decision to come forward with his story but, at the end of the day, if his story can inspire others, that will do a world of good.

‘It was hard for me to share this at the beginning, but it is something I think people should know: the vaccine does work well and I am living proof right here,’ he says, noting he was initially sceptical about the shot. ‘I didn’t know if it was working, but I said I was going to do it because the doctors were saying to do it. My cousin is a surgeon at Toronto General and they told me to 100 per cent do it. I got it done and after COVID hit me like that and how I survived, I am 100 per cent supportive of the vaccine no matter what.

‘People have their own beliefs. I don’t judge them for it. I won’t look down upon someone who doesn’t want to get vaccinated because it is their body, but if it was up to me, I would recommend it 100 per cent. Everyone has their own beliefs, I won’t judge them for it, but the fact is it saved my life. [When I shared this on Facebook] everyone supported me, everyone was thankful for it and for me sharing my story, but on Instagram there were a couple of anti-vaxxers. That’s their choice and I understand it. I don’t want a mandate, everyone has their own choice, but I highly recommend they do it.’

By Brock Weir
Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter