

From 5.6.08

Hey guys,

You guys are so right in saying that you never know what is going to come through the door. That happened to me Friday afternoon when I had to administer the AED and CPR to a man who collapsed from a heart attack. It was absolutely insane! The man clutched his chest and fell to the ground. He was not breathing and had no pulse. I put the AED on, administered one shock, continued with CPR and after the 2nd cycle, I literally saw the life come back into this man. A few minutes later, he was able to speak, knew who his wife and daughter were and was able to move all 4 limbs. EMS came about 15 minutes later and took him to JFK Hospital where I think he made a full recovery. Just wanted to say thanks for all the training and education because it paid off big time! Now I understand the saying that Athletic Trainers are Life Savers - Literally!

Lauren McAlister , ATC (MSU '05)

From 10.2.08

Hey guys,

Just wanted to share a few things with you.

First, about 3 weeks ago, on another Friday afternoon, (exactly 19 weeks) after the incident, I met the man whose life I saved. I was standing out on that cool and rainy day, at our boy's soccer first game when 2 little boys came up to me asking if I was the athletic trainer for Metuchen High School. I thought to myself, "What could these 2 little boys want from me?" So I replied, "Yes, of course", and then I heard the best thing ever. "Oh, you are the one who saved our granddad's life. He is in the stands, and he would like to meet you after the game."

So after the game, I gathered up my equipment and started driving towards the stands, when I hear many voices saying, "Look, look, there she is", and one of the women (who I recognized as his daughter) said, "He is right here" and pointed to him. We met at the bottom of the stands, and everyone is crying, and the man just hugged me. He is a completely different man than the one I remember only 4 months ago. He kept saying there wasn't a day that goes by that he doesn't think about me and that I am his guardian angel. The funniest thing is, there isn't a day that goes by that I don't think of him. His family told me that wife had suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome at first [she was there], and was almost completely recovered and the

man had just gotten his driver's license back. Then I asked his daughter how old the man was, and she said that they were celebrating his 80th birthday on that Sunday. "Wow!", what a story. Doctors probably take this for granted, but it was the most amazing thing to meet the person whose life you 'saved.'

Secondly, if you get a chance, I have attached one of my senior athletic training student aide's essay to UConn. It was her account of what happened that day. When I read it, it literally brought me to tears. So when people think that we are 'just' athletic trainers, they couldn't be more wrong. We are educators, and most importantly, role models, and can have an effect on people that you wouldn't even dream of. Out of all the articles and such about that day, this was by far, the most rewarding piece to read.

Hope you all are doing well and hope to see you in the near future.

Lauren

ESSAY by Claire Hampsey

"911. Please state your emergency."

"Hi. My name is Claire Hampsey. I am a student athletic trainer at Metuchen High School. A man has just collapsed next to the track and needs immediate help."

"Is he breathing?" asked the dispatcher in a voice of uncanny calmness.

"No."

"Does he have a pulse?"

"No."

"Okay miss, please hold on. I am transferring you to a local emergency unit."

It is times like these in which one's true character is revealed. When faced with an emergency, will you chose to turn and run or will you muster up every drop of courage to save someone? Up until the afternoon of May 2,

2008, I thought in a crisis I was the type to take off running. However, that event made me see through my own thick, fainthearted façade to change my outlook on life.

“Metuchen emergency unit: what is your emergency?”

“A man has just collapsed.” I said in an adrenaline-powered voice. “He is not breathing. He has no pulse. We are on the track behind Metuchen High School. Please get here as soon as possible.”

“Is there an AED available for use?” asked the dispatcher. And by then, my attention darted toward the door, from which, Ms. McAlister, the athletic trainer, shot like a bullet, defibrillator in hand.

“Yes.”

Ms. McAlister has been a role model to me ever since she joined my school's faculty a year ago. She has inspired me to become an athletic trainer. She has taught me not only about human anatomy, but she has also taught me how to help others and how to react quickly in emergencies. Seeing her respond quickly and in such a selfless way really made me see a whole new perspective on life. Since that day, I have become more alert, more confident, and more equipped to take on the world. Now I feel as if I have the courage to do exactly what she did on that brisk, spring afternoon.

It wasn't until she attached the AED pads to the man's barren, still chest that I caught my first real glimpse of him. His lifeless body lay beside a fence at the finish line. He looked as white and fragile as an egg. His lips stood agape, revealing naked toothless gums. At that moment, I knew that this was real. I was no longer inside a classroom practicing CPR on a “Little Anne” plastic dummy, taking every shortcut I could. A dummy doesn't care

if you do it right or wrong. It has no family, it has no memories, it has nothing to lose. But there, corpse-like, was a real man with a real family standing over him.

What if Ms. McAlister hadn't taken her training seriously? What if she were ill-prepared? What if she weren't there at all? I had recently become CPR certified, but I was never taught how to stay calm in a crisis. Could my confidence bear the weight of a situation as dramatic as this? All of these questions plagued my thoughts as she knelt beside the man, waiting for the AED to finish analyzing his nonexistent heart beat.

"Shock advised" A robotic, feminine voice broke through the bright green machine. Those two words, words I thought I would never hear, were now pulsating through my eardrums. Just two weeks prior, while becoming certified, I had scoffed at the simulated situation. But now I stood just feet away from a scenario far from simulated.

"Shock delivered" This time there was no need for the machine to speak. Its deed was obvious. It sent a surge of electricity straight to his heart, jolting his chest inches off the ground. But because there was still no pulse, Ms. McAlister placed one hand on top of the other and began compressing the man's chest: Once, twice... thirty times, pushing all of her strength down onto the man's sternum. Then, two breaths were quickly puffed into his hollow mouth. This pattern continued for multiple rounds until a true miracle occurred.

Like winds sent from the Heavens, oxygen rushed back into the man's lungs. Pigment flooded his skin and his heart beat on its own. Seeing this was like watching life re-enter his body. But the strongest memory I have of that day was seeing his eyes roll forward and stare back at his wife's panic-

stricken face, completely oblivious to what had just happened. That image and that feeling of success will stick with me forever.

Both a person and an event helped to mold me into who I am today. Because of May 2, 2008, I now know the answer to all those “what if” questions. And because of everything I have learned from Ms. McAlister I feel more confident than ever and I believe I do have what it takes to save a life. This confidence is very important to me as I follow my dream to become an athletic trainer. That day taught me to never give up, to always stay positive, and to always be prepared. What I learned that day is priceless and I am truly thankful that I was there to witness and assist in every way that I could.

Lauren McAlister, ATC, is a 2005 graduate of the athletic training education program at Montclair State University. She is now the athletic trainer at Metuchen HS.

Claire Hampsey is now a senior (graduating in 2009) at Metuchen High School and plans to pursue athletic training in college.