



# Lucky to be alive

Saved by a Philips HeartStart defibrillator,  
the sky's the limit for Matt McKenna

Wendy McKenna watched as her 15-year-old son, Matt, did flips off the diving board at their local pool club. She was surprised he had so much energy after spending four days at an intensive lacrosse summer camp. Wendy had just settled back into her lounge chair when suddenly a friend sitting next to her leaned over and said, "Wendy, I don't think Matt's feeling well."

She looked across the pool and saw Matt on his knees. He was doubled over with his head almost touching the cement. Alarmed Wendy ran over to her son and started shaking him, asking him what was wrong. He didn't respond. She rolled him on his side – his face was blue; she knew immediately that he wasn't getting any oxygen.

Wendy began yelling for someone to call 911. A family friend came to Wendy's aid. After quickly determining that Matt wasn't breathing and had no pulse, the friend began cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Matt was in sudden cardiac arrest (SCA).

SCA is an electrical malfunction of the heart typically associated with an abnormal heart rhythm known as ventricular fibrillation. It is a condition in which the heart's electrical impulses suddenly become chaotic, preventing blood flow to vital

organs. Victims collapse and quickly lose consciousness, often without warning. Unless a normal heart rhythm is restored, death follows in a matter of minutes. The current national survival rate for SCA is less than seven percent<sup>1</sup>, mainly due to lack of timely defibrillation. Some communities that have implemented early access defibrillation programs have achieved survival rates greater than 40 percent.<sup>2</sup>

The pool manager shouted at the lifeguards to get the defibrillator. Mike Mierzwa, one of the lifeguards on duty, sprang into action. He ran for the defibrillator, grabbed it and ran back toward the growing crowd of people. Kneeling beside Matt, Mike opened the Philips HeartStart Automated External Defibrillator (AED) case, and began following the defibrillator's voice instructions. He placed the pads on Matt's chest and waited while the machine analyzed his heart rhythm. The HeartStart detected ventricular defibrillation and advised a shock to the victim. Mike pushed a button and delivered a shock to Matt's heart. The AED analyzed Matt's heart again and registered a normal rhythm. Although his heart was now beating, Matt could not breathe on his own, so the family friend resumed rescue breathing until the ambulance arrived.

Just days earlier Mike and the other lifeguards had gone through training on the newly purchased HeartStart Defibrillator. Philips partners with recognized training organizations to provide customized instruction, including CPR and AED training.

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- 1 American Heart Association. 2010 Heart and Stroke Statistical Update. Dallas, Texas: American Heart Association, 2010, pg e13.
- 2 American Heart Association. 2004 Heart and Stroke Statistical Update. Dallas, Texas: American Heart Association, 2004.

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MAR 2012