

'It was a miracle that I was there'

Equipped with skills taught by OSF, woman saves life of man in cardiac arrest

For decades, Lester Lindsey has been a mainstay at the Original Pancake House in Champaign, Illinois.

"I pour coffee, help the waitresses and hostesses, bring out food," Lindsey describes.

"I make sure everybody's happy," he adds warmly.

But on October 6, 2023, just steps away from the restaurant, Lindsey would have a life-changing moment. He says one minute, he was in a vehicle with his cousin. The next, he was waking up in the hospital.

In between, a good Samaritan who happened to be across the street saved Lindsey's life, thanks to skills learned at OSF HealthCare and an alert from a smartphone app that OSF brought to Champaign.

"I'm very grateful," Lindsey says.

Lindsey's boss, Original Pancake House owner Eric Faulkner, can fill in the gaps of that day.

He says Lindsey's cousin Charles picked him up from work. As they were driving away, Lindsey was laughing and joking, but suddenly slumped over and became unresponsive. Charles pulled into a shopping center parking lot and asked someone to call 9-1-1.

That's where Shannon Walter enters the story.

A program manager at the Champaign Park District, Walter got some of her cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training at OSF. She was across the street getting lunch when she got an alert on her phone: someone close by needs CPR.

"When I pulled into the parking lot, I could see somebody pulling somebody who was unresponsive out of a vehicle and onto the ground," Walter says.

That was Lindsey, who was in cardiac arrest, where the heart is not able to pump blood properly.

Walter quickly explained she was CPR-certified, observed Lindsey wasn't breathing and did chest compressions for around three-and-a-half minutes until first responders arrived.

"I believe that is what saved his life and his brain function," Faulkner says.

Lindsey agrees.

"She's an angel," he says. "It makes me feel really blessed. I'm glad she was there."

Lindsey and Walter's twist-of-fate encounter shows the importance of a couple life-saving things you can do in just a few minutes, says [Kurt Bloomstrand, MD](#), medical director for East Central Illinois Emergency Medical Services, an OSF organization that trains first responders and CPR instructors.

One, learn CPR. It's the missing link between when 9-1-1 is called and when first responders arrive. Dr. Bloomstrand says for cardiac arrest outside a hospital, the chance of survival is around 10%. With bystander CPR and use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), the chance increases fivefold.

Dr. Bloomstrand says good Samaritan laws exist to protect people who give first aid.

"You're not going to hurt the person. You only have an opportunity to help them," he says.

If you don't have time for a CPR class, just remember this: push hard and fast on the center of the chest at 100 to 120 beats per minute. Appropriately, that's the beat of [Stayin' Alive by the Bee Gees](#). Or if you prefer a more contemporary beat, think of the chorus of [The Man by Taylor Swift](#).

"It's important to never be caught in a situation where you don't know what to do," Walter says.

Two, download the PulsePoint app, the app Walter used to jump into action. PulsePoint is a nationwide app that OSF brought to the Champaign area. It's active in nearly 5,000 other communities. Dr. Bloomstrand explains that when a 9-1-1 call is made for cardiac arrest, the dispatcher sends the information to first responders. If PulsePoint is active in that area, the information – scrubbed of specifics to protect privacy – *also* automatically goes to the app. The app then sends an alert to PulsePoint users that CPR is needed and if an AED is nearby.

The fine print for the alerts: the emergency must be in a public place, and the bystander must be within one-fourth of a mile. And within the app, you must turn on CPR alerts and let the app track your location always, not just when you are using the app. That's necessary to know anytime CPR is needed near you.

"This is how you, as a lay person, can be a hero, a lifesaver and help somebody in need," Dr. Bloomstrand says.

Lindsey, meanwhile, is going through rehabilitation at OSF. He also got a pacemaker, a small device that creates electrical currents to keep the heart beating at a normal rhythm.

"I feel wonderful," he says, adding that he hopes to be pouring coffee for customers again soon.

If you would like to learn in detail how to perform CPR or use an AED, there are several options, including visiting the [American Heart Association](#) website, or calling your local hospital to see what training is available. There are two versions of the PulsePoint app for download to your smartphone. [PulsePoint Respond](#) alerts you to cardiac arrest, and [PulsePoint AED](#) allows you to catalog AEDs around you.