



News Release

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Columbus Community Hospital nurses help save coach's life at baseball game

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – An ordinary June evening in a Humphrey, Nebraska, ballpark turned into an extraordinary event.

Shawn Korth was on the field, helping coach his nephew's team from Lindsay, Nebraska, as usual. In between plays, he walked toward the outfield to talk to the centerfielder, gave the player a high five, then suddenly collapsed.

The temperature was in the 90s, so some spectators thought Korth might have fainted from the heat.

Kailie McDermott, Korth's fiancée, was at the game and yelled out his name. When the coach didn't move, she reached for her phone and called 911. McDermott knew Korth's medical history of heart problems and was sure something was wrong.

Korth, 28, was born with congenital heart issues. He has undergone multiple heart surgeries for aortic stenosis — a narrowing of the aortic valve — and an aortic valve with two leaflets instead of three. His most recent surgery in April was to replace his pulmonary heart valve.

McDermott ran out onto the field. Joining her were nurses from Columbus Community Hospital who happened to be at the game. The quick action by the registered nurses — Joy Hemmer, Becky Gleeson, Adrian Tasa — and other healthcare professionals saved Korth's life. They helped assess the situation and administered CPR to Korth before an ambulance arrived.

"I thought he passed out because it was a really hot day," Gleeson said. "When we got out there, that is when we noticed he wasn't breathing."

Katie McPhillips, a nurse at Bryan Heart in the Healthpark Medical Office Building at the hospital, did a sternal rub to wake Korth. He came to for a moment before he was gone. She and the others couldn't find a pulse.



Hemmer, Gleeson and other health care workers started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Minutes seemed to pass like hours. Tasa helped console McDermott as she watched. CPR continued until an ambulance arrived. Then, emergency responders took over and used an automated external defibrillator on Korth before rushing him to the CCH emergency room. Gleeson drove McDermott and Korth's family to the hospital. Meanwhile, those who stayed behind at the ballfield began praying.

Korth was transferred to an Omaha hospital, where medical professionals told him he went into ventricular fibrillation, an irregular heartbeat that can be fatal. However, doctors weren't able to determine what caused it. Korth did have surgery for an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator, a device placed in the chest that can deliver a shock if a dangerous heart rhythm is detected.

Korth stayed in the hospital for a week before coming home to Lindsay on June 14. That same day, he attended a baseball game to show everyone he was OK. He even coached third base for one inning.

He is still recuperating, and it will be a few days until he can get back into a routine. He is getting ready to celebrate his birthday on the Fourth of July, and then marry McDermott on July 17.

The severity of what happened is on his mind. Korth said if he was at home or working on his farm, he knows he wouldn't have made it. But, instead, CPR kept the blood flowing through his body until the defibrillator shocked his heart.

"When I was leaving the hospital in Columbus, I thanked the doctor," Korth said. "The doctor said he just put the bow on top. It was all the people at the game who saved my life." The nurses said it was divine intervention that they and the other health care professionals were at the game.

If Korth were to express anything to those who helped that evening, it would be gratitude. "I just want to thank them," he said. "I own them my life. Without them, I wouldn't be here."

Cutlines:

IMG_3320: Columbus Community Hospital nurses and other health care professionals saved a man's life at a youth baseball game in Humphrey June 11. Pictured from left are registered nurses Joy Hemmer, Adrian Tasa and Becky Gleeson.

Korth: Shawn Korth, left, pictured with his fiancée Kailie McDermott, spent a week in the hospital after collapsing due to ventricular fibrillation at a youth baseball game in Humphrey



June 11. Columbus Community Hospital nurses at the game and others helped keep him alive using CPR until emergency responders arrived.

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