Woman saved by umpire Joyce 'so thankful'

PHOENIX -- In his 24th season as a Major League umpire, Jim Joyce has been called a variety of names on the diamond. But to one D-backs employee, Joyce simply goes by "guardian angel."

On Aug. 20, Jane Powers, a D-backs food-service employee since 1998, went into cardiac arrest in the bowels of Chase Field hours before the day's scheduled game.

Luckily for the 50-year-old, Joyce, who was scheduled to work the contest behind home plate, was nearby and performed CPR until paramedics arrived at the scene and transported her to the hospital where she spent the next four days recovering.

Nearly four weeks later, Janie was back at Chase Field on Friday, visiting the man who saved her life and reflecting on the experience that changed her life.

"It was an ordinary day for me," Powers said. "I went downstairs to our main kitchen and right outside there is where the umpires meet. So while I was doing my pre-shift, I leaned over to one of my friends and said, 'I really don't feel too well.' And at that point, I collapsed in complete cardiac arrest."

While Janie doesn't remember much between when she fell and when she awoke at the hospital, she does remember one thing.

"I remember his voice, distinctly," she said. "I remember him saying, 'Janie, hold on, hold on.' I think that's what kept me going."
Even though Joyce helped keep her alive along with security personnel and other first responders, Janie wasn't out of the woods when she finally got into an ambulance some 20 minutes after first collapsing.

On her way to Good Samaritan Hospital, Powers flatlined twice, needing resuscitation each time.

Once doctors finally stabilized her, they determined she didn't suffer a heart attack but instead an arrhythmia that caused her heart to stop working. To combat future problems, Janie had a defibrillator inserted into her chest to shock her heart if it should encounter the same situation again.

"I'm good, knock on wood," Janie said. "They say I'm good. No clogged arteries. I do get out of breath and tired quickly but those are the only two symptoms I have. To think four weeks ago I wouldn't be sitting here if it wasn't for Jim Joyce."

While she was in the hospital, Joyce visited her and the pair kept in touch even though the umpire left town for his job. Before Friday's game in which Joyce worked at second base, the two had lunch together to catch up.

"We keep in contact," Janie said. "A message both of us want to bring home is how important CPR is and will always be. It's amazing how many people don't know. I didn't know it until this happened. One life really matters. I was within the minutes of dying if it wasn't for Jim Joyce."

Still trying to get back to full strength, Janie will return to work at Chase Field later this month on Sept. 29. This time, however, she will be equipped with the memory of how a complete stranger helped keep her breathing.

"I know I have a purpose here now and I know that purpose involves Jim Joyce," Janie said. "I'm just so thankful for him."

Tyler Emerick is an associate reporter for MLB.com. This story was not subject to the approval of Major League Baseball or its clubs.