TEAM EFFORT in CASA GRANDE

The following is a collection of information shared by those that took part in or witnessed the event. None of the following is actually written by anyone that was present during the incident nor is it to be considered absolutely accurate or factual.

On Friday, February 28, 2014 at approximately 0830 in the morning Bill A. was about to go home from work after receiving bad news about a job related issue he had been dealing with. As he was walking out of the garage bay where he works he let out a yell, “I am going to faint!” His co-workers originally assumed that he was joking around, as he often did, but immediately recognized the seriousness of the matter when Bill began to collapse to the floor. The manager of the facility (George S.) and his son (Chuck S.), also employed at the same garage, rushed to Bill’s aid and eased him to the ground preventing any secondary injury occurring from a fall. George rapidly assessed his friend and co-worker. He checked for any sign of normal breathing and shook and shouted at Bill hoping to help him regain consciousness. George then knew Bill needed more than just to be woken up. He yelled out to Ester G. (Office Assistant) to dial 911 for help. As Ester called on one phone line, Chuck dialed on another while trying to help his dad with his CPR efforts. Their friend was down, unresponsive and not breathing normally. They pulled together in the chaos to try to make a difference. Roberto L. (Co-worker at the garage) had gone outside in an effort to come to grips with the events that were unfolding.

The professional dispatcher that took this call that day was Melissa Engstrom. She has taken calls like this one before and after just a few questions she knew what she had to do. Her
recent training in guiding callers performing CPR was about to pay off. She explained the procedure and created a cadenced rhythm for the compressions being provided by George. The team was gaining strength and Bill’s survivability was increasing with each additional member.

As professional Emergency Responders we all trained to handle the worst and most dangerous situations. But we all know that every individual, whether a trained responder or not, handles every single call and every single circumstance differently. The next addition to the team came from unexplainable coincidence.

While outside catching his breath Roberto looked up to see a Casa Grande Police Officer happening by. He sprang into action and flagged the Officer down for help. Officer Jeremy Ybarra was patrolling the area when he saw a man frantically waving his arms trying to get his attention. He pulled over, listened to Roberto’s pleas and then approached George inside the building still performing Hands Only CPR on Bill, who was lifeless on the floor. Trained and prepared, Officer Ybarra took over compressions noticing immediately the obvious fatigue presented by George and his son. Officer Ybarra pushed hard and fast on Bill’s chest and became yet another key member of the rescue team at work.

While Melissa was assisting the onsite personnel with their resuscitative efforts the Casa Grande Fire Department Engine Company 501 and Southwest Ambulance 501 were en route to the scene. The Engine Company arrived first and saw an unfamiliar sight. Adequate compressions were already being performed by a Police Officer first responder and community member laypersons. New protocols and procedures were hard at work and the professional Firefighters, EMT’s and Paramedics had a viable patient to work with because of it. They dropped their gear next to the patient and began performing Advanced Life Support skills, jumping into the mix of the other rescuers performing CPR.

A few minutes behind the Engine Company and Battalion Chief Frank Ricci with the Casa Grande Fire Department came Southwest Ambulance 501. Very trained in their support roles with the Firefighters they joined the team and were instrumental in the advanced care and rapid transport of Bill.

The Fire and EMS professionals worked tirelessly en route to the hospital. They followed their protocols and proved their training sound when they transferred care of Bill, who was then awake and speaking, to the Casa Grande Regional Medical Center emergency department staff. The staff there worked quickly to prepare Bill for yet another transfer. They stabilized and re-stabilized Bill as his condition fluctuated from bad to worse again and again. Finally, Bill was flown via helicopter to a facility in the Phoenix metropolitan area that specializes in treating his condition and he was rushed into surgery. While on the surgery table Bill continued to fight for his life, with everyone else doing the same, as he went into full cardiac arrest repeatedly throughout all of this and was repeatedly revived.
From the time George recognized the emergency all the way to the surgery recovery room Bill died again and again. There were many team players involved here and all played intricate and keystone roles in this story becoming one about perseverance instead of one about a young life lost. The stories all began when each of those community members first learned about, or trained in, CPR. The stories all started when our Public Safety professionals took their oaths of service and advanced their skill set to include proactive measures that mitigate life threatening emergencies. The stories started when all of the rescuers involved in this incident knew they could make a difference and became a part of a team that truly did.

Bill is recovering well and gives appropriate praise to his faith and all those that joined the team that day.

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