

## Live To Run Another Day

Aug. 15, 2023

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**Mikaela Hess, BSN**, professional staff nurse, Emergency Department, UPMC Hamot, and **Austin Boesch** were all smiles after the Presque Isle Half Marathon in Erie. About eight rather tense minutes from that day will remain etched in their minds, though.

Austin, who recently completed the Student Nurse Intern program at UPMC Hamot, and Mikaela were among the runners who provided life-saving assistance to another participant, Greg Woodman. Not quite four miles into the 13.1-mile race, Greg collapsed suddenly after suffering cardiac arrest.

Initially, some of the other runners weren't sure what had happened, but Austin could see Greg wasn't breathing and didn't have a pulse.

He knew not to panic, despite the urgency of what was an almost "surreal" scene. He quickly began chest compressions and remained focused and calm.

"You put everything off to the side and do what needs to be done in the moment," said Austin, who will graduate from PennWest Edinboro in December with a bachelor's degree in nursing, at which time he will be a full-time staff member in the hospital's Trauma-Neuro ICU.

Mikaela was trailing Greg and didn't see him collapse on the crowded course. She too immediately knew something was wrong.

All told, Mikaela remembers at least a half dozen other runners taking turns administering compressions before Greg could be rushed to the UPMC Hamot Emergency Department.

"With a cardiac arrest, chest compressions are the immediate priority to maintain blood flow," she said.

There was certainly no way Austin or Mikaela, or the other runners who administered CPR, could have expected to find themselves in the middle of an urgent situation on a summer Sunday morning.

"You fall back on your training," she said. "We all knew we did the best we could."

Greg's heart was able to be shocked back into rhythm with automated external defibrillator. Later, at UPMC Hamot, he had two stents placed and is, remarkably, no worse for wear.

Watch the WJET TV story on the emotional reunion between Mikaela, Austin and Greg. (<https://www.yourerie.com/news/local-news/state-college-man-reunites-with-hamot-nurses-that-saved-his-life/>)



Fortunately, Greg was surrounded by other individuals, including several with extensive medical training, and not running by himself. Often, though, "ordinary bystanders" are the first on the scene of a crisis situation, such as a vehicle accident, heart attack, or uncontrolled bleeding.

UPMC introduced the Minutes Matter community initiative to encourage people to be more prepared in the event of an emergency. Minutes Matter focuses on providing access to basic emergency information and education — that can be used in common, life-threatening emergencies — until trained emergency professionals arrive.

Learn more about this initiative (<https://minutesmatter.upmc.com/why-minutes-matter/>) and some of the inspiring, life-saving stories, like Greg's.