



News Release

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Century Alum Helps Save Life at Maplewood Community Center

Paramedics save lives. A case in point:

On Saturday, Jan. 29, Maplewood paramedic Paul Everson, an alum of the Century College Paramedic Program, arrived at the Maplewood Community Center to work out at about 7:45 a.m., a bit earlier than usual.

Everson was talking at the front counter when suddenly a person came running in and reported that a man was unconscious and not breathing in the weight training/workout room.

Everson dashed to the area and found Tom Kivel lying on the floor. He had no pulse.

Kivel, 59, a Woodbury resident who lived in North St. Paul for 23 years, is a regular at the Community Center. Warm and gregarious, Kivel is a fine athlete who starts his workout on many days before 6 a.m.

In addition to working out religiously, he also plays golf, rides bikes and does in-line skating. Trim and fit, Kivel is well known around the Community Center. His wide grin and friendly humor have won him many friends.

On that fateful Saturday, Kivel had checked in at the Maplewood Community Center at 7:25 a.m. and then began an aerobic workout that involved alternating running up and down the Community Center's internal stairway with doing push-ups and stomach crunches. He was on the floor doing stomach crunches and watching the clock when everything "suddenly went black."

Everson, 49, who did not know Kivel, ran into the workout room, dropped to his knees and began doing CPR compression on Kivel's chest. He was soon assisted by Donna Boyd, the center's massage therapist, who knows CPR and offered to help with the breathing part of the procedure. Another center worker ran and got the AED, and Everson used it to shock Kivel two times.

Minutes later, other Maplewood paramedics arrived, six more shocks were administered, cardiac drugs were given, a breathing tube was inserted and an IV was started. People at the Community Center watched anxiously from the second-floor track area as these actions were taken. Kivel was then whisked off to St. John's Hospital in Maplewood. He had suffered cardiac arrest, but his heart was beating again. He was alive.

At the hospital, the decision was made to drastically cool down Kivel's body to reduce swelling to the body and brain. Few hospitals in the country have the special expertise to use this process. On Sunday, Kivel was still not conscious. But on Monday, he came around and started talking and responding to people. Kivel's wife, Debbie, his three children – Troy, Kris and Autumn – and his extended family members were overjoyed. He was later transferred to St. Joseph's Hospital in downtown St. Paul, and was discharged after a total hospital stay of six days.

Kivel now has a defibrillator implanted in his chest in case his heart stops beating. He has no heart damage, feels good and is incredibly grateful for the help he received. In a recent interview at Century

College, where he met Paul Everson for the first time since the incident, Kivel said it is hard to put into words how he feels about his near-death experience. A spiritual man, he says simply, “I was lucky. I was in the right spot at the right time. If I had been driving, golfing or rollerblading, I might never have come back.”

For a time in the hospital, Kivel said the thought occurred to him that his life was over, and he was in some kind of transition. “I saw people, but they couldn’t hear me,” he said.

Everson said this is the first time in 23 years that he has saved a life while off duty. “I am glad I was there and could help,” he said.

A 1980 graduate of North High, Everson became interested in becoming a paramedic after working as a volunteer firefighter for the City of Maplewood. He started his training in the Paramedic Program at Century in 1990 and began working for the City of Maplewood in 1993. He currently serves as a shift captain.



Photo: Paramedic Paul Everson and Tom Kivel