

Defibrillator scores an ace

●Tennis club's new AED proved itself as a lifesaving device only days after its purchase as a club member suffers a heart attack.

By Jessie Brunner

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Mo Conter hoped she would never have to use the defibrillator that the Palisades Tennis Club recently bought, but nine days after being trained on the machine, she was delivering electric shocks to a heart attack victim.

With the help of two club members who performed chest compressions and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, Conter, the club's activities director, saved longtime member Bill Rosener's life.

"I can't believe the timing of what happened," said General Manager Terri DeLong, who facilitated the purchase of the machine and the requisite training. "We're all really close to Bill, and I can't stop thinking how fortunate we were to have the defibrillator at that time to, as I understand it, save his life."

Since being released from the hospital on Tuesday after quadruple bypass surgery, Rosener, 75, is relaxing at his Newport Beach home and will soon start physical therapy in hopes of returning to the courts in a couple of months.



SHOCK OF A LIFE LINE: Bill Rosener of Newport Beach survived a heart attack thanks to the tennis club's AED and a staffer trained on using the device.

"My arteries are only a week old now, so I may have to play in a lower age division," he joked. "I was just incredibly lucky that they recently got the defibrillator and the training at the club, and that the paramedics got there in nine minutes.

"If you have to have a coronary problem, plan to have it where I did."

While playing his regular noon tennis game at the club on June 13, Rosener suffered a heart attack as he knelt to fetch a tennis ball, hitting his head and falling unconscious to the ground.

Club staff and other members responded immediately. Bud Brandt and Dr. Donald Spitz, who were playing on a nearby court, ran over to deliver CPR while Conter rushed to retrieve the brand new automated external defibrillator (AED).

Though she was anxious on the way over, her adrenaline and the ease of the machine calmed her nerves.

"When I got there it was a bloody mess, but I just got out the pads and put them on him," Conter said. "I'm not the big hero, it's the AED because it's so user-friendly."

Doctors at Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian told Rosener that four of his arteries were 95% blocked, leaving him wondering how he's been getting along so well.

Club owner and longtime friend Ken Stuart said Rosener is "as fit as can be," though several family members on his mother's side have experienced heart problems.

After losing two members this year — one to a heart attack and another in a traffic accident — Stuart was amazed by and thankful for the fortuitous timing.

"We are like a family here, so when we had these two deaths, it pretty much shocked the core of the club," he said. "To have something happen to Bill, we just couldn't take that."

At DeLong's urging, Stuart made the decision to buy the AED and training — about a \$4,000 venture — after the state introduced Section 104113 in the California Health and Safety Code.

The law mandates that every health club — a facility used for physical exercise, fitness training or body building — have an AED on site, and at least one employee who has been trained on the machine must be on duty at all times as of July 1.

Dr. Richard Haskell, the medical director of cardiology at Hoag, supports the rule, adding that public places such as senior centers, shopping malls, airports and stadiums should also be equipped with the device.

"You should put it where there are the most people that are most likely to have a problem," he said. "It's pretty easy to use. You just have to understand where to put the patches and how to turn it on."

Though AEDs have been available to the public for the past five years, Haskell does not recommend that individuals purchase the machine for personal use because it is expensive and unlikely that they would have it with them when an

emergency situation arises.

Those at risk might want to instead consider an automated implantable defibrillator.

Rosener also had some medical advice to dispense following his heart attack.

"Don't procrastinate. If you need to get a physical, get it," he said.

Back at the Palisades, Rosener's tennis buddies and the staff are eagerly awaiting his return.

"Saving someone's life is just the best thing you could ever do, besides giving birth," Conter said. "I did nothing more or less than any other employee would have done."