



Mike Conlin, left, with his rescuers, from left to right, nuclear security officers Julie Metcalf, Ben Sipe and Alvis Bernardi.

# QUICK-THINKING SECURITY TEAM SAVES MAN'S LIFE AT DARLINGTON

"I'm proof that your training does work."

That was the heartfelt message 61-year-old Mike Conlin delivered Jan. 4 at Darlington Nuclear Generating Station to the 20 or so OPG security and emergency staff who helped save his life.

Just two months earlier, on Nov. 3, Conlin was heading home to Peterborough from his contractor job as an electrical supervisor at Darlington Nuclear when he suffered a massive heart attack behind the wheel of his minivan.

Conlin remembers feeling lightheaded but not much else as he made his way along Holt Rd. before passing out.

Following behind him was Julie Metcalf, an off-duty nuclear security officer who was also heading home that late afternoon.

"I thought he was having car problems at first," Metcalf recalled as she saw Conlin's minivan veer off the road, narrowly missing a stop sign before settling in a ditch with the wheels still running.

Metcalf stopped her car and jumped into action. When she reached Conlin's minivan, she found him gasping for air. She reached into the minivan's open window to put the vehicle into park and recline Conlin's seat before calling 911.

"I checked his vitals and found he still had a faint pulse. I ran to the passenger seat and kept talking to him, assuring him help was on the way," she said. She then began performing CPR.

Two other nuclear security officers, Ben Sipe and Alvis Bernardi, arrived shortly after to pull Conlin out of the vehicle and Sipe continued to perform chest compressions. A defibrillator was also used to help restart Conlin's heart.

Eleven minutes after the heart attack, Clarington EMS arrived on the scene to take over, but it was the actions of these early responders that saved Conlin's life.

"If Julie hadn't stopped and taken the five minutes to help, I wouldn't be here today," Conlin said at the lunch gathering at Darlington Nuclear, a chance for the man and his family to meet and thank his rescuers in person. "From the bottom of my heart, I thank all the responders who came and helped."

The chest compressions actually broke a couple of Conlin's ribs, but he said that's because Sipe had performed CPR correctly. His cardiac surgeon, Dr. Subodh Verma, who performed quadruple bypass surgery on Conlin at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, said the early CPR kept the blood flowing to his heart, preventing it from being damaged.

Troy Brady, Shift Emergency Response Manager at Darlington Nuclear, said the incident illustrated perfect timing and training all coming together. He and a group of OPG firefighters were coming back to the site when they saw the scene unfolding on the road and stopped to assist.

"This was a textbook example of the chain of survival," he said.

For Sipe, it was the first time he had to perform CPR in a real-life situation. "We have to absolutely be ready," he said. "When the situation arises we have to do the right thing right away."

Rita Conlin, Mike's wife, said while the experience has been emotionally overwhelming, she's amazed at how everyone came together at just the right time to save her husband's life.

"Everybody says there are angels looking over him, and this group were those angels," she said.

Now recovering from surgery, Conlin says he's already made some changes since his first heart attack. That means no snow shovelling and adopting a healthier diet. "I'm taking it easy for now, not going overboard."

