

Lifesaving Good Samaritan Credits CPR Skills to Innovative Alameda County EMS Program

By AC Health Communications Team

ALAMEDA COUNTY, CA - It took just a few moments for the instincts to kick in for Udhav (Udi) Sharma.

After witnessing an unresponsive man gasping for breath and shaking, Sharma was right back in his seventh-grade classroom, remembering the CPR skills he learned at Hopkins Middle School.

What had started as a regular day for Sharma, ended quite differently at the 24-Hour Fitness gym in Hayward: it took on an extraordinary turn when he saw the collapsed man in the locker room. While others sat stunned, Sharma leapt into action, gently turning the man on his side while assessing the situation, the man appeared lifeless.

“His lips turned a color of blue I had never seen before, and I realized that this gentleman was in cardiac arrest,” said Sharma. “So, I started doing compressions to try and resuscitate him. At that point, I’d yelled for someone to get an AED (Automated External Defibrillator), so we could shock him if needed. CPR went on for about eight minutes with one shock from the AED before the Fire Department/Paramedics arrived.”

Due to Sharma’s heroics and not being afraid to get involved when a stranger was in dire need of help, the paramedics were able to stabilize the man, who was indeed in cardiac arrest.

“It wasn’t even like I had time to tell myself, ‘Do something,’” said Sharma. “Something was happening in front of me, and I had to act. There were a few others who helped assist me. I’m just glad we were able to make a difference.”



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Udi Sharma

Sharma, a native of Fremont, first learned CPR skills through an innovative CPR in Schools initiative developed by the Alameda County Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMS). The CPR7 program that Sharma participated in introduced lifesaving resuscitation skills to 7th graders throughout the county.

“There were few programs like this when we first started, Chicago and Denmark, we were pretty much in uncharted territory,” said Mike Jacobs, paramedic of 40 years, coordinator for Specialty Systems of Care at Alameda County EMS, and one of the architects of

the CPR7 program. “The intended goal of this program was to increase community awareness regarding Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest (unresponsive, abnormal/no breathing, heart stops pumping effectively) and participation in performing bystander CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). We know every minute without CPR after collapse, a victim’s chance of survival drops about 7-10 percent. And if we could create the next generation of engaged citizens, we could conceivably make a real difference.”

Fortunately for the man at the 24-Hour Fitness, one of those students was Sharma. Even though he learned those skills nearly a decade ago, the 21-year-old Sharma felt comfortable administering CPR.

“I remember when we first took these courses, it was during a really bad wildfire season,” said Sharma, who is now hailed as a Good Samaritan. “We were outside, and I really didn’t want to be there. But my PE teacher at the time, who was a former football player, told us how he had saved a teammate’s life once by administering CPR. That really stuck with me. It really helped me focus on learning the skills.”

Sharma said the incident at 24-Hour Fitness has motivated him to redouble his focus on becoming a doctor. After taking a two-year break, he’s set to enroll back at UC Riverside in September, where he will be studying pre-med.

“This has definitely inspired me—I feel like I was meant to do this,” said Sharma. “It brought me back to my roots and convinced me that I can make a career out of this.”



Photo Credit: Courtesy of Udi Sharma

For Jacobs, hearing the tale of a CPR7 student saving a life was an emotional moment.

“This one really hit home for me,” said Jacobs. “I’ve spoken with many survivors and rescuers over the years, but it’s very special when the rescuer is a local kid who was taught in our hometown CPR in Schools program. I couldn’t be prouder of Udi.”

February is American Heart Month as well as [Happy Heart Month](#) in Alameda County. With that in mind, Jacobs is excited to call for community action and more awareness regarding Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA). More than 350,000 people suffer from OHCA annually in the US, with only a 10% survival rate, according to the American Red Cross. Jacobs says this is truly a community concern that needs community involvement and support. “Don’t be afraid to get involved and try to make a difference.”

To learn more about CPR and other life-saving resuscitation skills, visit <https://cpr.heart.org>, <https://www.redcross.org> and <https://ems.acgov.org>

Learn more about Alameda County Health at Health.AlamedaCountyCA.gov.

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