

Angel from 2 doors down saves life

North Plainfield firefighter hears cardiac emergency call at home, then sprints to neighbor's house.

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NORTH PLAINFIELD - As her 79-year-old husband lay unconscious on the front porch, Emily Meyrick, battling asthma, was on the phone with a 911 operator when an angel tapped her on the shoulder.

That angel was borough firefighter Anthony Torlish, who came from two houses away.

Torlish was recuperating from surgery at home when he heard the call on his radio about 4:30 p.m., grabbed some equipment and sprinted toward the porch. He told Mrs. Meyrick to go inside while he helped her husband, Bill, onto his back.

"I was just very nervous and upset. I was really concerned," said Mrs. Meyrick, who remembered the open-heart surgery her husband had 31½ years ago. "I was thinking maybe he's gone, maybe he's gone. I couldn't believe it."

Torlish, 32, pressed his fingers against Mr. Meyrick's neck and felt nothing. He put his ear to his mouth and heard nothing. Meyrick's eyes were fixed and dilated, signaling cardiac arrest.

Torlish started cardiopulmonary resuscitation, trying to save the life of a neighbor he's known his entire life, a neighbor who hugged him after learning Torlish had received a state valor award for firefighters earlier this year.

Torlish used his radio to update responding rescuers, who immediately hooked up a defibrillator to Meyrick upon their arrival. The rescuers shocked Meyrick once, jerking his body and bringing him back to life.

On Nov. 16, Meyrick was taken to Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in Plainfield, where he is recovering after being in critical condition for 10 days. Mrs. Meyrick, 75, who visits her husband of 56 years regularly, said she's grateful for the rescuers, especially her neighbor.

"My husband would not be alive if it wasn't for Anthony," she said. "This really made me feel proud of our community."

Lt. Frank D'Amore, who helped revive Meyrick, said Torlish's quick actions kept circulating oxygen through Meyrick's body, which allowed others to save him and prevent any brain damage.

"There's a small window of time from when someone collapses from cardiac arrest ... What CPR does is extend this window," he said.

D'Amore, Torlish and another rescuer, Brian Martin, visited Meyrick at the hospital Wednesday for the first time since the incident.

"He's (Torlish) the greatest kid you'd ever want to be around," Meyrick whispered from his bed. "North Plainfield doesn't know how lucky they are to have men like this."

Torlish, who had been recovering from noncancerous lymph node surgery, pulled out some stitches during the Nov. 16 rescue, but said it was well worth it.

"Every day I'm proud to be a firefighter, the good days or the bad days, the best job in the world," he said.

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