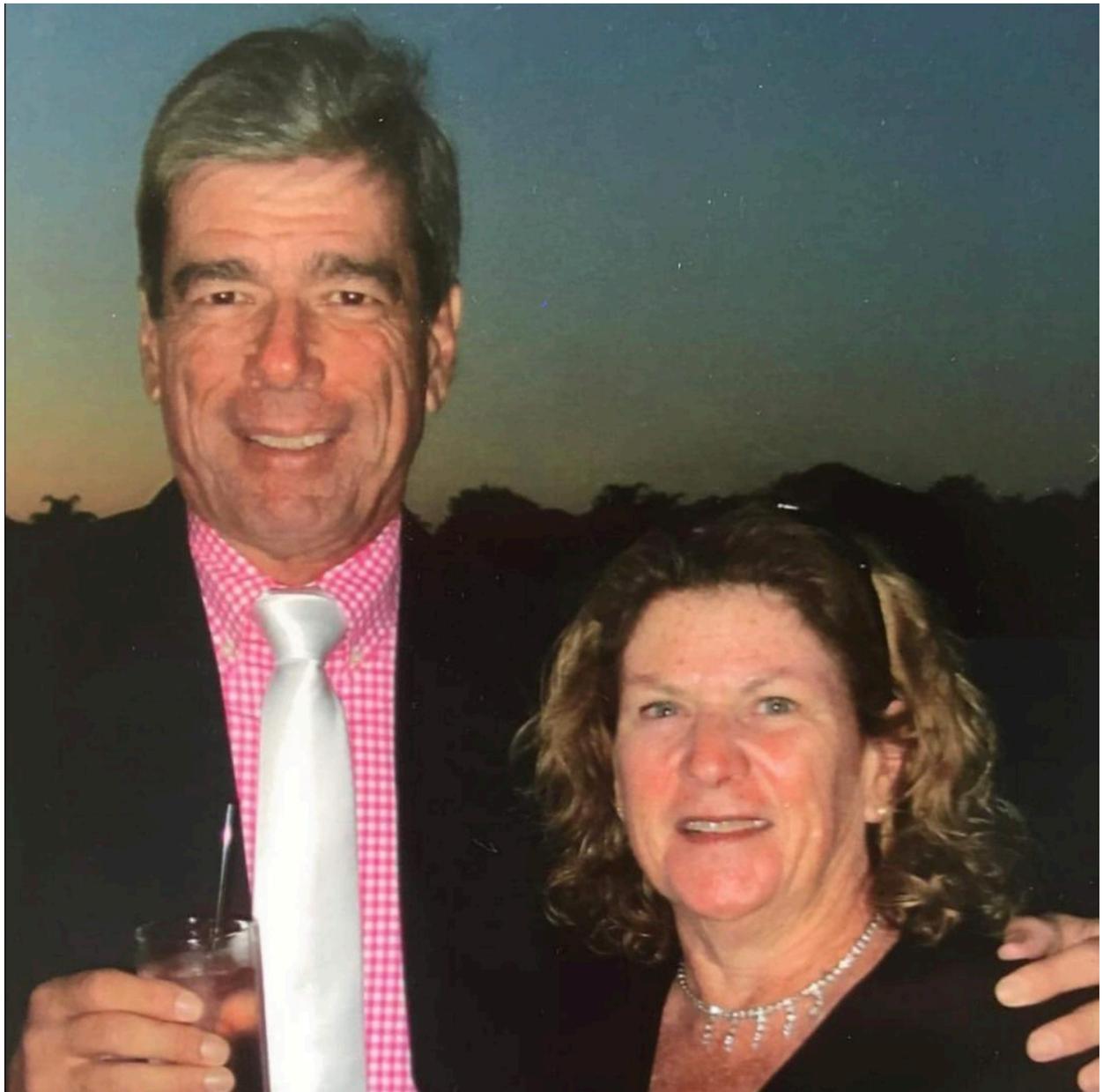




CAPE COD TIMES

CHAMP Homes residents, staff credited with saving Melrose man's life

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Geoff Spillane - Cape Cod Times

HYANNIS — It is being called a “Miracle on School Street.”

Recent CPR certification and fast action by residents and staff members of CHAMP Homes, a faith-based organization that provides housing and skills for homeless youth and adults, likely saved the life of a Melrose man last week.

On the morning of Aug. 7, George Dakin, 63, was walking from a parking lot to the Woods Hole, Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority’s terminal to catch a ferry to visit his daughter, Jodi Dakin Loughlin, and family on Nantucket.

He never made it to the dock.

The retired architect, whose wife was waiting for him at the ferry pier, collapsed on a sidewalk outside of 75 School St. on the CHAMP Homes campus.

Dakin, who had no history of major heart issues, suffered a 100 percent blockage of the left anterior descending artery, commonly referred to as “the widow-maker heart attack.”

“He was face down,” said Mark Adams, facilities director for CHAMP Homes, who was working outside and was the first to arrive at Dakin’s side. “I ran to him, but he was not breathing. As far as I was concerned, he was already dead.” Adams immediately started performing CPR on Dakin, as other members of the CHAMP Homes community sprang into action.

As one resident rushed inside to place a 911 call, Linda Backus, a life skills specialist for the organization and Austin Davis, a CHAMP resident, continued taking turns doing chest compressions with Adams.

Adams and Backus had just received CPR certification at the Brewster Baptist Church two months earlier, while Davis was re-certified during the same class.

“We thought the staff should have it (CPR training) and some of our program participants went, too,” said Denene Shimkus, director of programs at CHAMP Homes.

While the heroic life-saving efforts continued, five other CHAMP program participants gathered near the scene to pray for Dakin. Another staffer, Elise Terry, calmed Fred, Dakin’s wire-haired dachshund.

“It was a miracle, an absolute miracle,” Backus said during an interview at CHAMP Homes on Tuesday. “This simulation we received during training played out. I thought he had died.”

Davis also thought Dakin had died, but said “we’re trained not to stop.”

Michael Medeiros, EMS supervisor for the Hyannis Fire Department, was impressed by the bystander CPR efforts in the minutes before the ambulance arrived.

“We are extremely happy that citizens are learning CPR and utilizing those skills,” said Medeiros. “I would definitely call them heroes.”

After Dakin was brought to the hospital by the department, and did not appear to be responsive, the group from CHAMP Homes retreated to the building’s chapel.

“We thought he (Dakin) had left us,” said Shimkus. “It was super emotional.”

The somber mood turned joyful the next day when Dakin Loughlin, and her mother, brother and sister visited CHAMP Homes to let the group know that George Dakin had survived.

“When she told me her father was alive, it threw me into chaos,” said Stephen Metcalf, who was one of the people praying on the sidewalk.

Dakin was scheduled to be released from Cape Cod Hospital on Tuesday.

“They saved my life,” Dakin said in a telephone interview on Tuesday morning. “For the staff and residents to get (CPR) instruction and react like that is a remarkable contribution to the community. They did the pre-first responder work that kept me in a position to get to the ER.”

Dakin Loughlin, who was told her father only had a 7 percent chance of survival, had high praise for the treatment her father received from the moment he took ill to the time he arrived at the hospital.

“There’s a lot to be proud of at that hospital,” she said, commending cardiologist Richard Zelman and his work to teach EMS responders and medics how to prep critically ill patients for the catherization lab.

“I just want to say the philanthropic investment serving the demographic at CHAMP Homes pays off to all in the long run,” she said. “By investing in people, like the folks at CHAMP Homes, your dollars come back tenfold in their contributions to the community. We were the recipients.”

After a recuperation period at home, George Dakin said he plans to return to the Cape in the coming weeks to meet the people who helped save his life.

Elizabeth Wade, executive director of CHAMP Homes, is credited with calling Dakin's survival a "Miracle on School Street."

"Our motto is 'Places of Hope, Built on Faith,'" Wade said. "I think we lived up to that."