



# GARY DORR: CARDIAC ARREST SURVIVOR COMPLETED CARDIAC REHABILITATION

## Million Hearts® in Action

[ Strategies for Achieving Million Hearts® Goals ]



A five-mile walk. It was Gary Dorr's regular routine, three to four nights a week, in his home gym space. At 62, Gary found his treadmill time to be relaxing and rejuvenating after a long day of teaching and coaching.

What wasn't routine one evening was a feeling of indigestion coming up his throat as he was wrapping up the five miles, with just a few minutes to go.

"I was thinking about what I had eaten earlier, and that I would finish up the next three to four minutes," he said.

Then Gary was thrown off the treadmill due to a heart attack.



**Not only did the cardiac rehab program provide education and counseling on behavior change, it provided Gary and his family with much-needed emotional support, which was key to his recovery.**

"The sound and the crash was awful, I knew something was very wrong as I ran downstairs and called 911. Thank goodness our daughter was home," his wife Debbie reflected.

Not only was their daughter Shannon home but she quickly called her boyfriend, Beck. Beck was already enroute to their house and as a certified EMT, Beck immediately began compressions until the fire department arrived. Beck's quick response helped save Gary, and as an EMT he was allowed to enter the emergency room, which helped keep the anxious family informed as the hospital worked to keep Gary alive.



Pictured here with his wife and cherished family, Gary says heart health is now a family activity with walks, healthy eating and education about warning signs.

Gary awoke a day later following surgery for an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator that detects atrial fibrillation. The entire Dorr family is grateful for Beck and his proximity that day and the local fire department's Explorer Post 300 awarded Beck the National Lifesaving Award recently.

Gary also awards the cardiac rehabilitation process with life-saving support.

"I thought it was funny at my first visit when they asked me to walk for six minutes. I thought, piece of cake, I had been routinely walking more than an hour. What I quickly learned was just how much support I needed."

Gary completed the thirteen-week rehab course, attending three days a week and varying his workout with the recumbent bike, treadmill and light weights. The program provided a rich education about lifestyle changes, a heart healthy diet and adjusting his salt intake, as well.

Not only did the cardiac rehab program provide education and counseling on behavior change, it provided Gary and his family with much-needed emotional support, which was key to his recovery. "I recently ran into one of my counselors and just had to hug her and thank her for helping me through my journey. It was a pretty scary time for me and my family," Gary described.



During a recent gathering with high school friends, Gary found he was sharing openly about his experience and gave them some advice:

- Enjoy and appreciate friends and family every day.
- Watch your blood pressure
- Make sure you get a routine physical.

Gary follows his own advice. He spends quality time with family, self-monitors his blood pressure and regularly visits his doctor.

*In the photos:* The Boy Scouts of America and the local Abraham Lincoln Council Recognized Springfield Fire Department Post 300's Beck Loken for his actions which helped save the life of Gary Dorr. Explore Loken received both local and national awards for his life saving actions.