

**PUBLIC SAFETY:** Lightning bolts for cardiac arrest heroes

# Firefighters thanked by people they saved

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
sbolan@yrmg.com

There are roughly 11 people involved in saving the life of a cardiac patient and that's before they reach the hospital.

"These are the ones that slip away into the night after the incident," said Sarah Vanderzee, manager, office operations for the Central East Pre-hospital Care program, which is operated out of Oshawa's Lakeridge Hospital.

*'Surviving a cardiac arrest, the odds aren't very high, nationally.'*

Those 11 people include the person who called 911, firefighters and EMS workers as well as police, who sometimes attend emergency medical calls.

York Region survivors and emergency personnel were brought together in Markham Wednesday for a survivor day celebration.

More than 560 first responders were honoured for their part in saving the lives

of 49 York Region residents who suffered a cardiac arrest. This is the seventh annual such celebration in the area.

Last year, five Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire and Emergency Services firefighters were involved in two cardiac arrest events and were recognized for their efforts.

"It's not just one thing one firefighter did," Rocco Volpe, the deputy fire chief, told The Sun-Tribune.

The local firefighters — who received a lightning bolt pin, which represents the life-saving shock given by a defibrillator for their efforts in these two incidents — were Todd Balazs, Chris Leonard, Michael Lombardo, Gord Ridout and Trevor Wawryk.

"As much as it's an event for the patient and families, it's something these rescuers would like to have closure on, too," Ms Vanderzee said.

There are times survivors of medical and structural fire incidents seek out, on their own, the firefighters who helped them.

"It's positive reaffirmation. It helps and it works," said Rob McKenzie, the fire chief.

Across the country, up to 40,000 cardiac arrests occur annually, which works out to

one incident every 12 minutes, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's website.

"Surviving a cardiac arrest, the odds aren't very high, nationally," Ms Vanderzee said.

When an automated external defibrillator and CPR are used, the person's likelihood of survival is increased by 75 per cent or more, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's website.

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For every minute delayed in utilizing the defibrillator, the survival rate decreases by 7 to 10 per cent, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's website. After more than 12 minutes of ventricular fibrillation, the survival rate is less than 5 per cent.



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

Stouffville firefighter Michael Lombardo is thanked by a man he helped save at a ceremony Wednesday. The man asked to remain anonymous.

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