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By following the golden rule, Cleveland employees save colleague's life

October 29, 2009

Several years ago, when a fellow AT&T employee collapsed and died in the office, senior training manager Kevin Green swore he would never let that happen again and became CPR-certified.

In mid-August, the certification paid off. Working under pressure with Doris Engler, service representative, Green helped save the life of service representative Wally

Espada.

From left, Doris Engler and Wally Espada

Employees in the Cleveland customer relationship center had found Espada slouched over her desk — they didn't know it, but she had suffered two heart attacks. She wasn't breathing and didn't have a pulse; her face and lips were blue. Engler rushed over to the scene to begin CPR, initially handling both the

breathing and chest-pumping.

When another employee entered the room where Green was conducting training and asked if anyone was CPR-trained, Green ran into the sales office and relieved Engler of the chest-compressions she was performing on Espada.

"In CPR training, they teach you that you have to react and not panic," Green said. "You have to do something."

Espada did not regain consciousness while Engler and Green performed CPR, but the two didn't stop until paramedics motioned them out of the way. Their efforts kept Espada breathing until she was shocked with a defibrillator to restart her pulse and rushed to the hospital.

"You guys saved this lady's life," paramedics said. "She's not supposed to be here right now."

Espada endured three heart attacks total: two in the office and a third the next evening while in intensive care. Doctors told her children they did not expect her to live.

But she did.

Though she suffered memory loss around the time of the heart attacks, Espada has pieced together the events from her fellow employees' stories and is counting her blessings. Beyond the efforts of Green and Engler, Espada expressed gratitude for sales representatives Jasmine Alexander, Kari Roberts and Michelle Lowery, and senior manager James Tench, who each stepped forward to provide comfort, call for help and administer prompt aid. Everyone in the office played a role in saving her, she said, each playing his or her part with perfect timing.

"I did what I would expect anybody else to do for me," Engler said later.

After Espada recovered, her daughter sought out Green to thank him for saving her mother's life, which brought the event home for him. Until then, he hadn't considered that he'd saved the life of someone's mother; he'd simply thought of it as helping someone in need. One of Green's students later pointed out that the event served as a reflection of the main lessons Green teaches in class: treat people like they want to be treated and take care of our customers.

"I saw this team effort, how it unfolded, and had these people not had the skills that AT&T had instilled in them, it wouldn't have worked," Espada said. "How would they have come together in time?"

Espada recently returned to work and sent an email to her "Angel friends at AT&T" expressing her gratitude and joy for what she said is a chance "to live, to laugh and to love just a little bit longer."

Green said the message brought tears to his eyes. "This event helped to reinforce my career here at AT&T, as far as I'm concerned," he said. "You treat people as you want to be treated, and that day Wally was my customer."



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