

July 26, 2016, by Mary Ann Redeker

## Braving the storm

A perfect storm happened on Thursday, June 2, at the Emporia Recreation Center.

A group of men were playing pingpong in the community room, when one of them suddenly collapsed.

When program supervisor Amanda Gutierrez heard the commotion, she sprung into action.

"I heard our office manager, Stephanie Dreasher, say to someone, 'You want me to call an ambulance?' That made me think I needed to get up out of my chair and see what was going on," Gutierrez said. "I saw that a couple of the guys who normally play pingpong were in the room, so I peeked my head in and could see the gentleman lying on the ground."

Dreasher said the incident started when one of the men who was playing pingpong came to her and asked her to call 911.

"He's kind of a funny guy who likes to tease so I asked him if he was serious," Dreasher said. "He said, 'Call 911, we need an ambulance!' Amanda was coming out of her office and went in the room to see what was going on."

Gutierrez said if the story was to be told correctly, she had to recognize retired doctor Kendall Wright, who was in the room with the man when she arrived.

"Dr. Wright was with the patient," she said. "I asked him, 'What do you need from me?' and at that point, I didn't know what was wrong. I didn't know if the man fell, passed out or what. Dr. Wright asked me if I had a stethoscope. I told him I didn't, but I had an AED (automated external defibrillator) machine. I ran and got the machine and by the time I got back, he had started compressions. I went ahead and cut the gentleman's shirt off and applied the pads and turned the AED on.

It analyzed his heart beat and said, 'shock advised.' So I went ahead and shocked him and took over compressions from Dr. Wright. I did about two rounds of compressions and shocked him twice with that AED. Then we could tell he had a heart rate. We could tell he was trying to breathe. We had oxygen on him the whole time. Emergency medical services got there and I said to them, 'He's all yours.'"

Dreasher said she credited Gutierrez with saving a man's life.

"Amanda totally kept her cool," she said. "It was amazing because the guys in that room were older guys. One of them was a doctor and he was doing the resuscitation, but it just wasn't going quick enough. So Amanda jumped in and said, 'Let me try!' She immediately got the guy breathing. She knew how to work that AED and she did not panic. I'm the person who panics, but she was so calm through the whole situation."

Gutierrez contributed her calmness to Wright.

"I'll be honest — it was so good to have Dr. Wright there," she said. "I knew what to do and I was doing it — but somehow — he was my confidence. There were times that the gentleman was trying to take a breath and I was wondering, 'Should I keep going with the compressions?' and Dr. Wright said to keep going, so we did. We kept up with the compressions



Mary Ann Redeker/Gazette Amanda Gutierrez, program supervision at the Emporia Recreation Center, demonstrates the art of CPR Monday morning at the center. Gutierrez, who recently saved the life of a man who went into cardiac arrest at the center, stressed the importance of knowing CPR and how to use an AED machine.

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until the AED machine told us that a pulse had been found and to stop compressions.

"I think my training took over. I know that because I teach CPR so often and it was so familiar to me. I knew what I was supposed to do. I wasn't nervous or scared because I knew it."

When the former aquatics supervisor left ERC, Gutierrez stepped in to teach CPR classes.

"I'm a certified CPR instructor and I have taught many classes on this," she said. "I have taught many people how to administer first aid and CPR. I teach it so much that, honestly, I didn't worry about it and didn't stop to think because I do teach it so much. I had only practiced on a mannequin before and this was my first real run. It's kind of cool to say, 'I'm 1 and 0!' My adrenaline was going quite a bit and it was a good experience because this man survived. Had he not, it would have been a completely different experience."

Gutierrez said she hasn't seen or spoken yet to the man whose life she saved that day.

"When he gets healthy and comes back to the rec center, I'll pop in and see him and say, 'hello,'" she said. "I've seen his wife a couple times, though. She was very appreciative. She even asked if I had ever had to do that before and I told her no — that I had taught it but never actually performed it before.

"She and I both realized then it was the perfect storm. His pingpong partner was a retired doctor. He was at the rec center. We had an AED machine. If something like that was going to happen, he was in the best possible spot. It just all worked out — not that you want to see that happen to anyone, though."

Gutierrez said she credited the staff at ERC with the success story, as many people contributed to the life-saving effort.

"Stephanie was on the phone with the operator at EMS the whole time," she said. "Barb Rourk (wellness supervisor) and Dillon Stoddard (wellness coordinator) did a good job securing the scene and letting EMS know where we were. Melanie Dreasher (office manager) and Amy Becker (accountant) were the go-between for what was going on in the room. More than anything, I was proud of the teamwork of our staff. It wasn't just me or Dr. Wright; I feel like it took a team who worked together for a great success story."

Melanie Dreasher said the experience was breath-taking and said a lot about how the staff came together.

"Thank God Amanda was here," she said. "She was amazing. She saved that man's life. I felt so helpless that day, but we had Amanda, who was doing all those things to help Dr. Wright and the man who was in crisis. I was about ready to cry, but she was so calm. It was amazing to see how quick everyone responded and came together to save a life."

Gutierrez said while she was calm during the storm, she had a moment later in the day on her way home from work.

"I stopped in at church to offer up a prayer of thankfulness and gratitude for the positive outcome and the continued recovery of the gentleman," she said. "I was thankful for being put in a position to help someone else and to make a positive difference. I don't think you can go through an experience like that and not feel the presence of God leading you on."

Gutierrez said she was grateful for the AEDs the rec center had previously purchased and for the opportunity to know and teach CPR.

"It proved to me just how important knowing CPR is and knowing what steps to take," she said. "Time is critical, as all of this happened in less than 10 minutes from that first phone call to EMS. Time is critical in knowing what to do and having the confidence to do it. Doing something is better than doing nothing. It's scary — and that's what I tell my classes — but you've got to do something. There's someone walking around out there now because I jumped in and did what I had to do."

American Red Cross CPR, First Aid and Life Support training through the Emporia Recreation Center will be offered this fall at the center. For more information, sign up online at [www.emporiarec.org](http://www.emporiarec.org) or stop by the rec center front office between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday - Friday.

Newman Regional Health occasionally holds a day-long American Heart Association First Aid Adult/Infant/Child CPR class in the Continuing Education Classroom. Preregistration is required by calling 343-6800, ext. 2521. Cost is \$45 for First Aid and Adult and Child CPR, and \$50 if participants wish to include infant CPR.

Flint Hills Technical College offers a one credit hour course through the Health and Safety program. Learn more at [fhct.edu](http://fhct.edu).

The American Red Cross has a video demonstrating the proper technique at [www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/be-red-cross-ready/hands-only-cpr](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/be-red-cross-ready/hands-only-cpr)

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