



NEWS RELEASE

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(Firefighters Host Celebration for Tualatin Teen Who Suffered Sudden Cardiac Arrest)

Sixteen-year-old Robby Richardson is not what anyone would picture when they think of sudden cardiac arrest. The tall, fit and handsome varsity lacrosse player from Tualatin High School leads a healthy lifestyle, gets good grades and has never shown any signs of heart problems. But in the late evening of June 29th, Robby's mother Susan would see her son's life flash before her eyes.

It had been like most other summer evenings for Robby, Susan and Robby's younger brother Hayden (age 13). Robby had returned home from an evening spent with friends and was going to have a late snack before going to bed. Susan was downstairs saying goodbye to visiting friend Bill Crist when they heard a loud crash upstairs. Susan and Bill raced upstairs to find Robby unconscious on the floor. Susan instructed Hayden to call 9-1-1 while she tried to determine why Robby had collapsed. Initially she thought her son was choking, but it was much more serious. Bill helped Susan by monitoring Robby's vital signs and checking his airway. Little did Susan know, that her high school CPR course would be vital in his survival.

Dispatcher Yvonne Harrel from [Washington County Consolidation Communications Agency \(WCCCA\)](#) took their distressed call for help. Harrel, who has worked in emergency services for over twenty years, gave Susan step-by-step CPR instructions while dispatching paramedics from Metro West Ambulance and Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue. Emergency room physicians would later tell Susan that the chest compressions she performed on her son prior to the arrival of emergency responders helped save his life.

When Metro West paramedics Bob Berdan and Charles Short arrived at the Richardson's home, Robby was ashen, still not breathing and did not have a viable heart rhythm. They were evaluating Robby's vital signs when firefighters from [TVF&R's Tualatin fire station](#) arrived and began life-saving measures. TVF&R's Lieutenant Dan O'Grady, firefighter paramedic Steve Boughey, firefighter paramedic Roger Houston and firefighter Chad Hashbarger collectively have decades of experience in emergency services, but rarely see someone as young as Robby experiencing a heart attack. Steve Boughey, who administered life-saving drugs and used the defibrillator to shock Robby six times, considered all the reasons that Robby could have collapsed and worried about the length of time Robby had been unconscious. "In my twelve-year career, I have never treated someone as young and fit as Robby for heart problems that were not caused by a trauma such as a car accident or fall, and it wasn't until Robby was in the ambulance that we were able to revive his heart".

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Robby was initially transported to [Legacy Meridian Park Hospital](#). Emergency room physicians were the first to suspect that Robby was suffering from [Wolffe-Parkinson-White syndrome](#), which can cause electrical disruptions in the heart. Though many people with this syndrome never experience symptoms, the rare cases like Robby's can result in sudden death. Knowing the complexities of the syndrome, doctors made the decision to transfer Robby to the Legacy Emmanuel's pediatric intensive care unit. The initial prognosis for Robby was bleak and there were concerns about the lack of oxygen to his brain. Family members were told that Robby had a 1 in 1000 chance of fully recovering and that surgery would be needed to try and correct the problems with Robby's heart.

Family, including Robby's father Bob Richardson and stepmother Theresa Farrell, stayed with Robby around the clock. Though Robby had started breathing on his own, he remained connected to monitoring equipment until the first surgery to try and fix his heart. Unfortunately the first four-hour [ablation](#) procedure did not correct the problem and the family remained nervous that Robby would not survive the ordeal without impairments. Their hopes for Robby's full recovery hinged on another ablation surgery.

Dr. Marc Le Gras of the Children's Cardiac Center of Oregon spent countless hours with the family and performed both of Robby's surgeries. Thankfully, Dr. LeGras' second attempt to correct the electrical problem with Robby's heart was successful, and he began to recover from the traumatic event.

Within days it became evident that Robby was going to defy statistics. Despite being "clinically dead" during the first phase of his ordeal, Robby was able to recognize family, respond to questions and demonstrate an ability to think clearly.

After a month, there is no sign that Robby endured such a life-changing ordeal, except for the unique insight of life's fragility. He is excited for his junior year of high school at Tualatin High. He looks forward to another season of varsity lacrosse and hopes to earn grades worthy of honor-roll status, as he has in the past.

For Susan, Hayden and other members of Robby's family, there is a firm commitment to sharing the message that CPR saves lives. "Our family has been humbled by this experience, and we feel strongly that this is a story that needs to be shared. We know now that anyone can experience sudden cardiac arrest and we want to encourage as many people as we can to learn CPR".

On August 22nd at 6p.m., emergency responders, dispatchers, physicians and family members will reunite at the Tualatin fire station, 19365 SW 90th Court, to celebrate the amazing recovery of Robby Richardson. Media are welcome to attend and interviews will be granted after the celebration.

All emergency personnel and family involved appreciate any effort to share the value of CPR training. To sign up for CPR classes, please visit: [CPR LifeLine](#)

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