

# Lexington sixth-grader near death before 'miraculous' recovery

## Boy had no pulse after collapsing during basketball game

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MANSFIELD -- It's a miracle Troy Wolf is home playing video games, according to his family and physicians.

The 12-year-old had no pulse for at least 10 minutes after collapsing Dec. 18 on the basketball court at Central Elementary School in Shelby. Troy's parents, Tom and Kathy Wolf, and his sister Brittany, 17, were at the game when he fell to the floor.

Troy, a sixth-grader at Lexington's Eastern Elementary School, was lucky. He had two physicians and a Mansfield firefighter at his side within moments.

According to Richland County officials, five people in the gym called emergency 911 on cell phones as physicians began CPR.

Dr. Gregory Vigesaa, 50, a Mansfield cardiologist, performed chest compression on Troy while Dr. Daniel Burwell, 44, a Mansfield family physician, did rescue breathing. Firefighter Don Gross, 47, assisted with the breathing apparatus. All three men had sons playing in the game.

"He was face down," Tom Wolf said of his son. "Greg and I both turned him over and he was in seizures. Greg said at that point, 'I got no pulse.' Dan Burwell jumped in and began doing breathing. At the same time Don Gross was also at the side of me. Then paramedics got there.

"After the second use of the pads (the defibrillator), Greg told the paramedics to turn it up. ... On the third try, his heart took off."

Troy was rushed to MedCentral/Shelby Hospital and then flown to Children's Hospital in Columbus, where he underwent heart surgery to repair an undetected, extremely rare congenital heart defect. Part of his heart was not getting enough oxygen.

Troy returned to school Monday.

"We see a lot of little boys fall and get hurt. This was entirely different. It was apparent there was something terribly wrong when he went down," Vigesaa said.

While others say it was the presence of the two physicians that saved Troy, Vigesaa credits the quick delivery of CPR and God.

"He did not have a pulse. In a little boy you refuse to believe this boy does not have a pulse," Vigesaa said. "When that realization



Jason J. Molyet/News Journal

**Troy Wolf hopes he will be cleared to play basketball again after collapsing during a game.**

### Physician says every school needs defibrillator

LEXINGTON -- Mansfield family physician Daniel Burwell wishes every school had a life-saving defibrillator.

The device saved Troy Wolf, a 12-year-old Lexington boy, after he collapsed and his heart stopped during a basketball game Dec. 18 at Shelby's Central Elementary School.

"I know they are expensive. But I'd like to have them in as many gyms as possible," he said of the AED (automatic external defibrillator), which is a portable device.

The unit analyzes the heart's rhythm and, if needed, allows a rescuer to deliver an electric shock to a victim of cardiac arrest.

That shock, called defibrillation, may help the heart re-establish a beat. AEDs are simple enough that, with

took effect, I knew he was extremely sick and was in the full cardiac arrest. He did not have a heart attack. He had a lethal arrhythmia."

Neither Vigesaa nor Burwell had ever performed CPR on a child.

"We all put our own sons in his place. ... It was extremely sobering at times," Vigesaa said. "It was a good Christmas.

"Absolutely, it was a miracle. And the good thing about it is a bunch of 12-year-old boys saw the miracle and it also impacted their families."

During the CPR, Vigesaa said he thought, "If this little boy is going to come back, it's going to be the work of God.

"When we saw his rhythm return, we knew God had performed a miracle," he said. "The fact that he has fully recovered mentally is a testament to what He has done."

Burwell recalled how Troy was taking his last breath.

"I have never run out so fast on an emergency like that," Burwell, the team physician for Ontario High School, said.

He believes fate put him there.

"I am glad I could help. It's the scariest thing I have ever had to do," he said.

Burwell also believes a lesson to help others can be learned from the experience.

"The biggest thing is to provide these AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators). I don't want the schools to be fearful about liability issues in having AEDs in the facilities," he said. "It felt like an hour (getting the defibrillator there) while it was probably more like a matter of 10 minutes. Time is of the essence. I remember leaving the gym, worrying if he would have any brain function left."

The building in which Troy collapsed has a defibrillator, but the unit apparently was locked in an office.

Members of the Shelby City Fire Department used their AED on Troy.

Dave Prather, 58, of Bellville, whose son was playing in the game, witnessed the medical emergency and how everyone helped save Troy's life.

"I saw the good part of the human element, besides the miracle," Prather said.

"All of us have heard the saying, 'It's as quiet as a church.' This was quieter. There was no coughing or throat clearing. All that was heard was crying and praying.

some training, almost anyone can easily use them. Units cost about \$1,900.

Members of the Shelby City Fire Department used their AED on Troy.

Some AEDs provide voice and visual prompts. The unit monitors a person's heart rate, but will not administer a shock if one is not needed.

Use of an AED to save someone's life is covered under Ohio's Good Samaritan law, which means the user of an AED is protected from litigation.

No defibrillator was available when Troy collapsed until Brian Finnegan and Steve Loveless, firefighters/emergency medical technicians from Shelby Fire Department, arrived.

Shelby fire Chief Scott Hartman said every school in the Shelby Schools district has such a defibrillator, donated by the Shelby Foundation and the Shelby Memorial Hospital Foundation. The defibrillator at Central Elementary apparently was in a locked office.

"No one knew it was there. It would have been extremely helpful to have had one," said Dr. Gregory Vigesaa, a Mansfield cardiologist who helped save Troy.

Shelby Schools Superintendent Chuck Speelman said the basketball game in which Troy was playing was not a school-sponsored event. An outside group rented the gym and they did not have keys to the main office. Whenever there is a school-related event, all personnel have access to the keys, he said.

"We're always looking at ways to improve safety," Speelman said.

Burwell, team physician at Ontario High School since 1991, said there is no law requiring defibrillators be on hand at high school sporting events.

"Ambulances go to football games, so you know you have the defibrillator

"The coaches of my son's team had the boys gathered around and they were praying. The coach from the opposing team had his team around him also," Prather said.

Troy said he misses playing basketball. He will have to wait for the results of a stress test that will be done in March or April.

All Troy recalls about that Saturday is driving to the game with his family and riding in the helicopter.

Troy was released from Children's Hospital on Christmas Eve.

His father said the family enjoyed a "quiet, joyous, reflective Christmas."


"Statistically, doctors (at Children's Hospital) said he shouldn't have survived," Tom Wolf said. "Doctors said it was a miracle."

He said he hasn't tired of telling his son's story because the incident has strengthened his family's faith in God.

Tom Wolf can't say enough about the people who came to his son's rescue.

"There will be forever a bond between our family and them," Tom Wolf said.

Vigesaa and Burwell agree.

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there," he said, adding that the Ohio High School Athletic Association requires a doctor at football games, but not at basketball games.

"It's done voluntary," he said.

At Ontario High School, the defibrillator is in the commons area on the concession stand wall, a convenient spot, Burwell said.

Hartman said the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Medical Services, issued a letter this month to all Ohio EMS agencies about defibrillators. It explained that Ohio H.B. 434 appropriated \$2.5 million and authorized each school district or chartered nonpublic district to require schools under its authority to have defibrillators.

Akron General Medical Center will administer the Automated External Defibrillator Program and begin placing AEDs in as many schools as possible. Funds are limited, so schools are encouraged to apply early.

For more information about the Ohio AED program, schools may call 1-(888)-644-6233 or check online at [www.ohioschoolaedprogram.com](http://www.ohioschoolaedprogram.com)

According to the Ohio Department of Public Safety, cardiac arrest kills about 440,000 people annually, including about 7,000 children.

Defibrillation is the most effective treatment, and survival rates can be greatly improved if applied within three to five minutes of cardiac arrest.