

Press release

Tireless lifesaver David scoops award

For most of us, the weekend is a time to relax and unwind.

But for community first responder David Ireland, it is a time to help save lives in his neighbourhood.

In the past two years, the 48-year-old has responded to more than 300 emergency 999 calls on behalf of the East of England Ambulance Service (EEAS).

And this week the security specialist from Haddiscoe picked up an award from the service for his dedication to helping his community.

David was named community first responder (CFR) of the year, no mean feat considering there are now more than 1,750 volunteers giving potentially vital basic life support in the east of England.

Each Friday evening he picks up the Loddon response scheme's car and books on duty with the EEAS' emergency control centre in Norwich.

"I'll go out any time of the day or night – I'll drop whatever I'm doing and just go," said David, who even dropped everything on Christmas Day to help a man who was having a heart attack.

"Six or seven weeks later he saw me at the fire station getting the response car and thanked me for helping to save his life. I found that very touching."

Because he lives in the community he serves, David knows many of the people he responds to.

"When I see people I've helped, maybe someone who's had a stroke and they're now walking around, I look at them and know that I've made a difference to them," added David, who said he was "humbled" to have won the award ahead of the three other finalists.

"When I look at the plaque I know my name's on there but I think all the responders' names should be there.

"I feel really privileged but also humbled that it should be me. When I heard the other guys' citations being read out I thought 'he's a diamond' and I would not have felt at all bad if it had been one of them. But I've got a smile from ear to ear and I honestly didn't think I'd ever get something like this."

Rob Lawrence, chairman of the service's strategic responder group, paid tribute to the volunteers.

"Looking back at first response over last year, our volunteers have achieved some amazing results," he said.

"Collectively they attended more than 16,000 calls and successfully used defibrillators to resuscitate 29 people who had suffered a cardiac arrest.

"They have literally touched the hearts of those around them in their moment of need."

David was nominated for the award because of his dedication to covering the rota, his readiness to volunteer to support and mentor new recruits to the group and his tireless fundraising and commitment.

Alan takes Suffolk award

For more than a year Alan Rushbrooke ran the Bungay CFR scheme single handed.

And this week he was rewarded for his efforts when he was named Suffolk responder of the year.

The 42-year-old has raised more than £5000 to set up and run the scheme since it started in November 2006. And until recently, he has been the sole responder and fundraiser, typically making himself available to ambulance control for about 10 hours a day.

On his very first call he helped an ambulance crew treat a woman who had suffered a cardiac arrest; she is still alive today.

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A printer at Clays in Bungay, Alan said his employer and family had been very supportive. "I couldn't do it without their support, and this is just my way of giving something back to the community," he added. "I've accepted this award on behalf of everyone who responds."

Bob Hewes triumphs in Essex

Bob was at the inaugural meeting of the Four Parishes group, and volunteered to take on the job of co-ordinator - he has continued in this role for nearly four years and during this time has overseen the growth of the group to nearly 20 volunteers.

Although he had no previous first aid experience he quickly took up the challenge and became an active member alongside his co-ordination duties. In the early days he took on a large portion of the duty times, often covering three full 24 hour slots per week. More recently he has contributed to the search for new members and his drive and energy has built a highly motivated team, who regard him as a good friend and trusted colleague.

It was really fitting therefore that Bob should be the first member of the group to participate in a successful resuscitation towards the end of last year, This was quickly followed by a second. In each case Bob was the first on scene at cardiac arrests, delivered the initial shocks, carried out CPR until ambulance staff arrived and supported their efforts on scene. The Four Parishes went live in August 2004 and has been called out 275 times, currently getting up to 15 calls a month.

David Chaplin tops in Cambridgeshire

David Chaplin, from Sawston in Cambridgeshire, helped set up a new CFR scheme in the village in September 2006.

At the outset he was one of only five volunteers, and kindly offered to be the group's coordinator too. With no previous medical background, David has thrown himself in to the Magpas CFR role with enthusiasm and dedication. He does more weekly on call than most others, and is always accommodating with the rota and organisation.

His very first call out was to a patient who had suffered a cardiac arrest and, although this was a totally new experience to him at the time, he managed the situation with professionalism.

Six months later, David was called to another cardiac arrest in Sawston where a man had collapsed in the street. David was on the scene very quickly and started resuscitation with the help of a neighbour. Shortly afterwards the ambulance service arrived and David stayed to assist them. Due to the team effort of all involved, happily the patient was successfully resuscitated and was taken to hospital and in time, was discharged home.

Notes to editors:

Volunteers, operating on a rota system, are given full training in basic life support and taught how to use the simply operated defibrillators. They are alerted by mobile phone and text message, on phones provided by the ambulance service, to certain types of 999 call (chest pains, choking etc) which occur close to their homes.

An ambulance is also always dispatched but, because of the responder's proximity to the location, they will usually arrive on scene first and start treating the patient. The ambulance crew will then take over treatment, often with continuing assistance from the responder.

Anyone interested in becoming a responder should contact responderadmin@eastamb.nhs.uk or telephone 01284 731802.

Ends

For more information please contact Adrienne Watts or Matt Ware on 01603 422729
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