

## From Tragedy Springs Opportunity To Save Lives

by JASON BUSCH

Updated: September 30, 2011

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Bob Roy served as an assistant CPR instructor during a mass CPR training Dec. 5, 2010 in San Diego...

More than 300,000 Americans die every year from sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). Travis Roy was one of them—but he didn't need to be.

The same could be said for many of those 300,000, if only bystanders had access to AEDs or were certified in CPR. For Travis' father, Bob Roy, that's become his mission.

"That was my motivation, because quite frankly he would have survived that day had there been an AED on campus, like there is now," Bob says.

Travis Roy collapsed at his middle school in Murrieta, CA, on May 20, 2005, just three weeks shy of his eighth-grade graduation. He suffered a sudden cardiac arrest caused by hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), a previously undiagnosed heart condition marked by an excessive thickening of the heart muscle.

"When you lose your circulation like you do with SCA, you lose about 10% of your ability to survive for each

minute (that passes)," said Bob. "That gives you about 10 minutes roughly. (Travis) went 23 minutes without circulation before paramedics got to him with their AED."

Once paramedics arrived, they were able to restart his heart with their AED, even after 23 minutes had passed. Because of that, Bob is certain Travis' outcome would have been different had the school had an AED of its own.

Travis was flown to Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego. He was blind, completely paralyzed and couldn't speak, chew or swallow. After four weeks in the ICU doctors told his family there was nothing more they could do, so Travis was brought home, where he died a week later.

### Carrying Out a Mission

After Travis died, Bob took it upon himself to see that such a tragic event wouldn't happen to another family.

He worked systematically, beginning with Travis' school and working his way out to neighboring school districts in Temecula, San Jacinto and beyond. Appearing before school boards, Bob has kept his message simple.

"It's basically just been telling Travis' story," said Bob, "and once you educate the educators about how critical the timeline is for sudden cardiac arrest, and once they realize that paramedics aren't (always) going to get there in time, they tend to be a little more receptive to trying to find a way to budget for it.



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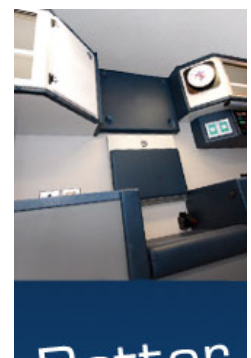
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They can understand that it happens to more adults than children, and there are a lot of adults on campus.”

To date, Bob’s distributed nearly 120 AEDs in schools throughout Riverside and San Diego counties. Many have adopted a 3-2-1 format, in which three AEDs are placed in every high school, two in every middle school and one in each elementary building. And they’ve proven so popular, many coaches are now taking them to away games, leaving the school buildings short, and making some districts consider budgeting for additional units.

Bob also noted that Murrieta’s school nurses are now trained as CPR instructors, which saves the district money on training for its teaching staff.

He’s also worked with local EMS agencies to put on CPR classes in the community, and he recommends other EMS agencies that want to try getting AEDs placed throughout their communities start with their local schools, where the message particularly resonates

### Challenges Remain

Despite his successes, there have also been barriers to Bob’s efforts—largely financial.

“A lot of school districts I’ve talked to (since the financial crisis hit in 2008) really want to do it but they’re having a hard time just keeping teachers on staff right now,” said Bob.

He’s also gotten familiar with the roadblocks of state government.

“There was a bill, an Assembly bill that didn’t get too far this last session, called AB63. They wanted to mandate AEDs in all high schools. But that didn’t get out of committee, so we’re going to reintroduce it next session. I’m probably going to wind up in Sacramento testifying before a committee and hopefully we’ll get it out of committee and to the general floor this next time.”

### 100 Beats per Minute

Hip-hop music may seem like a strange ally to Bob’s cause, but he’s hoping it helps him reach more people.

He recently saw a **video** created by the Center for Healthcare Education in Riverside, Calif., which depicts students in a CPR class and features the rap song “That’s CPR” by Andrew Nielsen, who performs as MC Lars.

“I thought it would be great for younger audiences to try to pique their interest in learning CPR,” explained Bob. “(The Center) didn’t have an authorized release to use it, so I just sent an e-mail to the artist, and told him the situation with Travis and our foundation and (asked) if he’d mind if we used it. He was very responsive. Within a couple of days he responded and said absolutely, go ahead.”

The song has a tempo of 100 beats per minute, which not coincidentally is the compression rate the American Heart Association recommends CPR be performed at.

Bob says it’s not just young people who should be inspired by the song, which advocates learning CPR and has also been used by the American Heart Association. He’s hoping the song will resonate and more people will take the time to learn the lifesaving measure.

“I remain eternally optimistic,” said Bob. “Travis has taught me a lot.”

### Sudden Cardiac Arrest by the Numbers

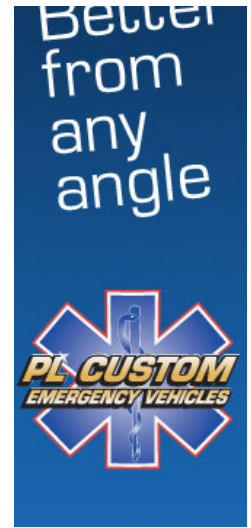
In recognition of National Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month throughout October, here’s a look at SCA by the numbers:

- SCA is the leading cause of death in the United States, claiming an estimated 325,000 lives each year. That’s nearly three times greater than the combined number of deaths from breast cancer, prostate cancer, automobile accidents and house fires.
- SCA kills 1,000 people a day, or one person every two minutes.
- It is estimated that 95% of victims of cardiac arrest die before they reach a hospital or other source of emergency help.
- In cases where CPR is performed and an AED is used prior to paramedic arrival, the rate of survival increases from 5% to as much as 50%.
- Wisconsin, Idaho and Utah have the highest percentage of cardiac arrests.

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