

Emergency Care When Minutes Count



Dawn Prihar was having a hard time catching her breath. It was the second episode of shortness of breath she had that week. She also had pain in both of her arms.



Dawn thought she was having an asthma attack. The 45-year-old mother of two drove herself three blocks to The Good Samaritan Hospital Emergency Department. Looking back now, she realizes how lucky she was.

“I never even considered that I was having a heart problem,” said Dawn. “The symptoms for men are so well documented, but women’s symptoms can vary. I was clueless.”

Dawn isn’t alone. Heart disease is the number one killer of women in the U.S., but many women still do not recognize the signs of a heart attack when it happens to them. That’s one of the reasons that the Good Samaritan Health System is a proud participant in the American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women™ campaign during the month of February. Go Red for Women™ encourages awareness of how heart disease affects women.

Dawn does not remember what happened after she became unconscious in the emergency department. According to the doctors who treated her that night, Dawn went into cardiac arrest. She was taken to the Cardiac Catheterization Lab where it was determined she needed open-heart surgery. The next thing Dawn recalls was waking up and her mother telling her that she had just had quadruple bypass surgery.

Dawn admits she did not know about The Good Samaritan Health System Cardiac & Vascular Center until she woke up there after surgery. But she continues, “I can’t say how grateful I am that the center was there!”

The Good Samaritan Hospital is the only health care facility in Lebanon County that performs open-heart surgery. Many residents will never need cardiovascular surgery, but knowing that a leading heart program is located right here in Lebanon is a comfort.

“The nursing staff is fabulous,” said Dawn. She recalled each person by name; from surgeons, cardiologists and physicians assistants, to the cheerful cleaning staff that brightened her days recovering in the cardiovascular unit. When she was released she recalls telling Dr. John Darrell, “Thank you for saving my life.”

Since her surgery in October, Dawn has made changes in her lifestyle. She now eats a diet low in fat, salt and carbohydrates to keep her cholesterol, blood pressure and diabetes in control. For exercise, she walks as much as she can.

Dawn celebrated her 46th birthday in November describing it as the birthday that almost didn’t happen. “I’ve been given another chance,” said Dawn. “I’m not going to waste it.”

Dawn is just one of over 400 patients who have received open-heart surgery at The Cardiac & Vascular Center since it opened in April 2005. When every minute mattered for Dawn and many others, The Good Samaritan Hospital was there to save lives.