

2016 MERIT AWARD WINNERS

Merit Award Winner: Mike Elchuk

I am pleased to nominate Mike Elchuk for the Merit Award. I heard through our local athletic therapy community that Mike Elchuk had performed outstanding emergency care service for a young hockey player in our community. I approached Mike to inquire on what happened because I thought he would be eligible for the CATA Merit Award. After a short period of time listening to his story, I knew he would be eligible. I asked him to send me an email with all the details.

Below you'll find his account of the experience.

On Friday, April 3, 2015, at our Okotoks Oilers Jr. A spring camp, one of our young prospects, Austin Leduc was hit from behind in a corner of the rink. Austin fell backwards on the ice, landed on his back, and remained in the supine position.

He immediately started yelling, "I can't move! I can't move!"

I ran to Austin and immediately knelt behind him and blocked his C spine. I was there within 10 seconds of the hit. Some of our current players were being the "refs" for the session, so I got one of them to go get my assistant for the camps, Rob Leatherdale. But as the player went off the ice to get him, the gate right beside us in the corner was being opened by Austin's parents. Both parents were understandably quite upset and the mother knelt down beside us to take her son's hand. Austin reported not being able to move any of his body parts or feel any sensation (his mother's touch on his hand). There was a gentleman standing in the gateway as soon as it was opened as well, so I asked him to please call 911.

This all happened within the first 30 - 45 seconds after the hit.

I kept talking to Austin, monitoring his responses (breathing, sensation) basically until the ambulance arrived, which was within 10 minutes of the hit. After the initial shock of the situation wore off, his mother calmed down quite a bit, and was very reassuring to Austin. From my position, I could see that his feet could move quite easily within 3-4 minutes, and sensation came back to every part of his body within 5-6 minutes. (He could feel his mother's touch on both hands, fingers, etc.).

By the time the ambulance arrived, Austin could not only feel everything, but could move everything (feet, arms, - but with just little motions as I instructed him it was best to not move at all), except he could not close his hands. Once the EMT's arrived, they took over the situation, one taking over the blocking of the C spine, the other instructing us on what to do to help prepare Austin for transport.

Myself, two of our hockey players, and the mother, all assisted in boarding Austin, with the EMT in control of C spine dictating every movement (counts, etc). Once Austin was on the board and strapped in (immobilized), we all lifted him and carried him to the transport cart, which was just off the ice surface. From the time of incident to the loading of Austin onto the ambulance, roughly only 15 -20 minutes had passed.

As awful an injury as this was, it went as smoothly as it possibly could have. It turned out that Austin had compressed his C3 vertebra, and had surgery the following day to have it removed and have his C2 and C4 vertebra fused. From what I've heard since, he was only in a halo for a day or two, then in a collar since then. Again, hearing from other sources, he was released from hospital after 4 or 5 days, and the only thing he is still having trouble with is movement of his left forearm and hand, but I don't know the extent of that.

I think the biggest thing I did in this situation was managing to keep everyone calm throughout the ordeal, especially Austin who never really panicked after I arrived on the scene and started talking to him.

I understand why we would want to get this story out there to show the importance of having a certified Athletic Therapist on teams, no matter what level or what sport, because these types of situations can happen anywhere.

Merit Award Winner: Dylan Durward

My name is Darryl Gomes, and I am the assistant Certified Athletic Therapist on staff at Seneca College. I would like to nominate Dylan Durward for the Merit Award offered by the CATA for his efforts performed on Tuesday September 29, 2015.

On that particular day, Dylan was overseeing the women's volleyball practice as part of his student placement duties at Seneca College. Towards the end of the practice, one of the players was experiencing breathing problems. She had been sick for the past few days, and was experiencing a lot of congestion along with difficulty breathing. She was pushing through the practice, but was having a lot of trouble catching her breath. She was coughing heavily off to the side of the court when Dylan noticed her predicament.

Dylan approached the athlete and started to diagnose the problem through some standard interview questions. He took his first set of vitals when the athlete went from a standing position to her hands and knees, and eventually into the fetal position. At this point, Dylan radioed me to come down to the gym as he determined the situation was escalating. After assessing the situation, we activated our EAP. Dylan started taking more sets of vitals, performed a secondary survey, and helped to prevent shock by covering the athlete with a blanket (while receiving oxygen) while he reassured her. While many of her teammates were panicked and frantic, Dylan remained grounded and performed his job in a calm manner. When EMS arrived, one of the paramedics complimented Dylan for taking three sets of vitals as well as doing a good job of handling the situation.

Dylan's ability to fully perform his duties in a life-threatening situation was appreciated by the athlete, the team and the staff at Seneca College.

Merit Award Winner: Josée Ostrosser – Certification Candidate

It is my honour to nominate Ms. Josée Ostrosser for her actions taken January 1, 2016 on Invermere Lake, B.C. Josée is a second-year student in the Bachelor of Athletic & Exercise Therapy (BAET) program at Camosun College. Please note that at this time Josée had only her Standard First Aid and CPRHCP and had just completed her first of two emergency care courses that provide Camosun College students with the opportunity to acquire their First Responder certification – fortunately the first course had covered cardiovascular emergencies.

At approximately 2:00 pm on New Year's Day at Invermere Lake, Josée was at a friend's cabin where friends and family were playing ice hockey on the frozen lake. As she was not much of a skater, she had taken off her skates and was sitting by a fire on the ice. The temperature that day was -20°C. Although she didn't see what happened, she heard people start to yell and heard her friend Liam scream, "somebody call 9-1-1."

Josée and her best friend Dani, a third-year nursing student at Red Deer College, ran over to the commotion. They saw Liam's dad (Neil) lying on the ice convulsing. Josée originally thought that Neil was just having a seizure, and instructed Liam to support his dad's head from hitting the ice. When Josée got closer, she could see that something else was very wrong. Her friend Dani immediately checked and could not feel a radial pulse. Josée opened his mouth and didn't see anything, and then felt for a carotid pulse which was very faint and erratic. His breathing rate was incredibly slow with one breath every 15 seconds. There was another girl on the phone with 9-1-1. She was very panicked and was not transferring the information that Josée was trying to tell her to pass along to the 9-1-1 operator, and so Josée just grabbed the phone from her and spoke herself. Josée told the 9-1-1 operator that the pulse was incredibly weak and that Neil was barely breathing. Dani then started with a round of 600 compressions, as instructed by the 9-1-1 operator, while Josée stayed on the line. Josée reported that there was obvious facial discolouration around the eyes and ears. Blood started to flow from Neil's nose, and there was fluid in his ears. Josée was unsure if it was cerebral spinal fluid or if it was just melted snow.

A couple hundred compressions in, Josée and Dani switched positions, with Josée continuing with compressions. As Josée was doing so, Neil began to vomit. Dani sort of froze and so Josée told her to turn his head and sweep his mouth with her fingers to get the vomit out of his mouth. There was no need to roll as they knew that their friend Tanner had lowered Neil to the ground. As Josée was nearing the end of the 600 compressions, the phone they were using to communicate with 9-1-1 died. Remember, they were out on a frozen lake, at (-20°C).

Josée reassessed ABCs, both breathing and circulation were now absent. Dani and Josée began 2- person CPR. Josée counted out her compressions and at 20 Dani went to give a breath. Josée elbowed her and finished her last 10 compressions. Josée yelled at Dani that she had to pull it together and said, "You know this, just breathe." Dani snapped back into action and attempted to give the first breath. The breath didn't go in. Neither of them had ever given breaths without

a mask before, but this was their friend's father and they were out on a frozen lake. Dani repositioned the head, opened her own mouth wider and attempted to give a second breath.

This breath went in.

They continued to do a couple of rounds of CPR this way, although they really weren't counting. They then switched and Dani began the compressions while Josée gave breaths. Josée was not sure if Dani had been holding a modified jaw thrust while giving breaths, because Josée didn't even think of that until it was her turn to breathe. Josée held a modified jaw thrust as she gave breaths. As Josée was doing so, Neil began to vomit again. Again, they turned his head and scooped the vomit out and kept on going. Switching every couple of minutes, they did CPR for about 30 to 35 minutes until EMS arrived. While performing CPR Josée told anyone who wasn't helping or involved to go inside, because it was distracting them and it was just very cold outside. Josée remembered thinking to herself, "this guy is probably going to die here" and she didn't want anybody who didn't have to be here to see that.

Neil had lost bowel control and there was a lot of blood and vomit around. Josée knew that this was probably a pretty traumatizing image to see for the bystanders. Josée reported that she sort of had tunnel vision so she didn't acknowledge any of that herself at the time. Josée felt that she had very limited education, but everything that she had learned led her to believe that with all of the symptoms she was seeing that Neil wasn't going to make it. When EMS arrived, there were only about five people still out on the lake. Dani and Josée continued with two rounds of CPR before EMS took over. EMS immediately got the AED on Neil and he was shocked twice before his pulse returned.

When it said shock advised and the paramedic said, "clear," Liam didn't hear or understand and was still holding his father's head. Dani had to smack Liam's hands away seconds before the shock was delivered. Josée had to suggest EMS put in an OPA, which seemed odd to her. Although Josée recalled that one of the EMS attendants looked quite young and shaken by the scene – so perhaps this was a first for her as well. Neil was taken away in the ambulance and Dani and Josée went inside to clean up - they hadn't realized that they had Neil's blood on their faces. They drove back to their friend's cabin and just sat down in a room together not really saying anything. They got a call about an hour later that Neil had made it into the hospital, and into the operating room, but had passed away in surgery.

Neil died of a massive brain aneurysm. Josée later learned a couple of things about Neil:

Unless Neil had been in the operating room at the time of the aneurysm rupturing there was no way he would have survived.

Neil had been long time childhood friend of her own father. In speaking with Josée upon her return to classes for the winter semester, she recalled wondering how it was possible that out on a lake full of very nice cabins that there was no one more trained than she, a second-year Athletic and Exercise Therapy student and her friend Dani, a third-year nursing student.

Josée also recalled that Dani had been thrown off by the environment. Dani was used to practicing in a mock hospital room, not outside in the wide open or “field of play”.