

Biker riding through Ontario beats the odds after sudden cardiac arrest thanks to friends, first responders

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ONTARIO, Wis. (WKBT)— It started like any other bike ride through the Driftless Region. But it quickly took a wrong turn when a biker suddenly collapsed near Ontario. But together with his friends and first responders, he's on the road to recovery.

It may be the 'Canoe Capital of the Kickapoo,' but with its winding hills, it's also the perfect place for experienced bikers.

"We were biking around a 70-mile route around the Kickapoo River Valley," said Brad Feltz, who is from Germantown, Wisconsin. Feltz and his friends stopped for a pit stop in Ontario before hitting the road again. But part of the way up a hill, he hopped off his bike to walk. His friends behind him followed his lead. "They instantly got off their bikes to walk and then they looked ahead and within that moment I had completely collapsed on the roadway," said Feltz.

While the world faded to black, the group raced to help. "They were able to call 911 immediately and then another biker started CPR," said Shawn Feltz, Brad's wife. Vernon County Sheriff's Deputy Jake Johnson and Wisconsin DNR Conservation Warden Shawna Stringham heard the call. They were out on patrol and responding to another call a few miles away. "We were lucky to be in the area because that's not always the case," said Stringham.

Within minutes they were on the scene. "The individual was unresponsive and he was turning blue," Stringham said. His already slow pulse came to a stop. "I did chest compressions while Deputy Johnson got the AED and the oxygen," Stringham said. Not all law enforcement carry these with them, but the Vernon County Sheriff's Office invested in the AED kits years ago. "I've had to use mine a couple of times a year usually ever since we've had it. But I've never had an outcome like this," said Johnson. The quick response was critical. "After that first AED shock, he started breathing and we switched him to oxygen," Johnson said. That's when backup arrived. Multiple agencies were called to the scene to help. EMS took him away before he was flown to Gundersen in La Crosse, where he laid in a medically induced coma for a few days.

It was all so odd because, in the past, Feltz has competed in marathons and triathlons. He's in really good shape. "But Sudden Cardiac Arrest can happen to anyone at any time," explained Feltz. It was an electric issue that caused him to collapse. His heart had gone into a fatal arrhythmia, according to Shawn Feltz. It's estimated that only about six to 10 percent of Americans who go into sudden cardiac arrest outside of a hospital setting survive. Brad beat the odds. "It's just amazing. A miracle," Shawn Feltz said. Now that he's back on his feet, they credit,

in part, his fast-acting friends. "A lot of people have taken CPR [classes], but how many of us have the confidence to do CPR when it's needed," Brad Feltz said. They want people to brush up their training and are advocating for more AEDs to be around the community. That way when they're needed, they can be used quickly. It was a message that Stringham took to heart. She said the day after the incident, she put in a request to get an AED kit for her car, just in case.

The Feltz family is thankful for Deputy Johnson and Conservation Warden Stringham for responding so quickly, which likely saved his life. They're grateful for all the first responders who did their part that day so Brad can have so many more. "For me to be here three and a half weeks later and to talk to you is pretty incredible," Feltz said.

For his work, Deputy Johnson has been nominated by Patrol Sgt. Luke Sellers for the Sheriff's Department 'Life Saving Award' to be presented at an April awards banquet. ONTARIO, Wis. (WKBT)– It started like any other bike ride through the Driftless Region. But it quickly took a wrong turn when a biker suddenly collapsed near Ontario. But together with his friends and first responders, he's on the road to recovery.

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