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# Learning from Tim's Health Problems

## Steven C. Bahls, President of Augustana College

When he was 15 years old, our son Timothy survived a frightening medical emergency. On January 25, 1999, while playing tag at a Boy Scout meeting, Tim's heart stopped suddenly, and for no apparent reason. Two scout leaders – one of them, a physician – kept him alive with cardiopulmonary resuscitation until a paramedic squad arrived and rushed him to Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, where we were living at the time. The first days of uncertainty were terrifying for us, but 11 days later he came home, very much himself; and more, in fact, thanks to the implantation of a small defibrillator designed to shock his heart back to normal operation if need be. Fewer than four percent of Americans who experience this type of "sudden cardiac arrest" survive the event, but with the defibrillator in place, the outlook for Tim has been and continues to be good.

I thought I would use this web-based format to share with you some of the valuable lessons I've learned as a result of my son's experience:

- First and foremost, our family has learned the power of prayer. When we arrived at Children's Hospital, Tim's situation was grave, and it deteriorated the first night. But my wife and I never gave up hope. We were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support and prayers from the community of Capital University, where I was then serving as dean of the Law School. We believe that miracles do happen and that God answers prayers.
- Everyone should know CPR. Tim owes his life to Scoutmaster John Fenimore and Assistant Scoutmaster Dr. Jeff Innes. They knew how to administer CPR and responded immediately and heroically to a critical situation. Would you know what to do if someone's heart stopped beating?
- Defibrillators save lives. The Columbus Fire Department used a high tech, portable defibrillator to shock Tim's heart back to normal rhythm. Today's automatic defibrillators require little training to use. They take a reading of the heart rhythm, determine the need for a shock and administer it if needed.
- In the midst of this crisis, my family had the opportunity to revel in the rich diversity that is on display every day in our country. From the quick-thinking scoutmasters to the head of the paramedic squad -- from Tim's attending physician to his cardiologist and neurologist -- people of many different races, ages, nationalities and faiths all contributed their talents to a common goal. We were united in our shared faith in the power of healing. Our family is eternally grateful to these professionals from so many diverse backgrounds who worked together to save Tim's life.
- The lasting lesson I will take away from this experience is one I hope you will consider, and that is the importance of leading a balanced life. For many of us, time is our stock in trade, and often we feel pressured to work unreasonably long hours. Too frequently, we don't spend enough time maintaining healthy personal relationships. But every now and then, life has a way of reminding us of what is important. Don't wait for a crisis to be reminded of the importance of balance in your life.

Today? Tim lives in Wisconsin, where he and his wife, Mag, are busy caring for our grandchildren, Kirana, Asha and Jivan.



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