



February is American Heart Month which makes it a great time to be reminded of the importance of focusing on our heart health and creating an awareness of making wiser choices that will help us lead healthier and more fulfilling lives. The bad news about heart disease is that it causes more deaths in the United States than all types of cancers combined.<sup>1</sup> The good news is that there are a variety of lifestyle changes that can prevent the disease. Among them are to eat healthy, get more active and stay at a healthy weight. The Rec Center has a variety of programs and services available to equip our members to make improvements in these three areas. Our goal is to help our members Move Better, Fuel Better and Live Better. (See end of article for more information on these programs and services.)

Timothy Stevens, a Rockwell Collins employee and Rec Center member is an advocate of promoting heart health because of his own personal experience. Mr. Stevens has had quadruple heart bypass surgery. At one point in time, Timothy had a pacemaker, but that has since been replaced with a defibrillator/pacemaker which is designed to handle a cardiac event such as he experienced at the Rec Center. Timothy's fitness journey started about five years ago. At his doctor's suggestion, he worked under the supervision of a registered dietitian to lose 80 pounds. To maintain his weight loss, his dietitian recommended that Timothy start an exercise program. Initially, Mr. Stevens evaluated the benefits of either purchasing home equipment or joining the Rec Center. He now knows he made the wisest choice. He has allowed us to share his story.



Have you ever felt like you were definitely in the right place at the right time? According to Rec Center member Timothy Stevens, that was exactly the case on March 2, 2016. Mr. Stevens had just completed his usual one mile run/walk on the Rec Center High Court track. After completing his mile, he sat down to record his workout data in a notebook he carried with him for that purpose. The next thing Mr. Stevens remembers is waking up with staff around him.

"I was in the right place at the right time, by the grace of God."  
- Timothy Stevens

Prior to his cardiac event, Timothy had not been experiencing any symptoms that concerned him. No shortness of breath. No chest pains. No pain or tingling in his arms. He felt fine. As Mr. Stevens was recording his workout data, he lost consciousness and went to the ground. A Rec Center member, who is a cardiac nurse, responded immediately. Staff member Jeff Havel was just leaving work when he saw the incident and promptly stepped in to help with CPR and use of the AED. Jeff, an EMT and Rec Center ACSM Exercise Physiologist, is in charge of the staff CPR training program which allows all Rec Center staff members to maintain current CPR/AED certifications.

According to Mr. Stevens, what saved his life was that he was at the Rec Center where there was an AED available and the staff members are trained to use it. According to Jeff Havel, "It's all about time. In a cardiac emergency, a quick response time greatly increases the chances of a positive outcome."

When choosing a fitness center, safety should be one of the main considerations. Is the appropriate medical assistance available if the need should arise? We all tend to think that emergencies are going to happen to other people. That is not always the case. Several years ago, an apparently healthy man in his upper 30's experienced a similar event. Don Kearney didn't look like someone you would consider to be at cardiac risk. He's run six marathons, six half-marathons, four triathlons, plays on an adult hockey league and works out several times a week. However, as he was leaving the Rec Center, he

"The Rec Center did a great job with their medical response. I am forever in debt to the Rec Center staff."  
- Don Kearney

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collapsed in the entryway. Staff members saw him go down and immediately grabbed the AED and rushed to assist him. Again, the quick response and the use of the AED allowed Don to live. [Click here for Don Kearney's testimonial.](#)

In addition to the Rec Center being a safe place to work out, it's noteworthy that Rec Center members watch out for one other and do what they can to alert the staff to emergencies or step in to assist when possible. In Mr. Stevens' situation, it was a member who was the first to come to his aid.

Following heart surgery, as he went through the cardiac rehab program at the hospital, Mr. Stevens could watch his progress in relation to others around him and was thankful for his overall good fitness level prior to heart surgery. Mr. Stevens attributed his quicker recovery rate to the fact that for two years prior to his cardiac event, he had been working out four days a week.

When asked about his motivation to return to the Rec Center after completing cardiac rehab, Mr. Stevens replied, "The Rec Center is great! They have a wide variety of quality equipment and staff to instruct you on how to use it. It's a great place!"

Upon completing cardiac rehab, Mr. Stevens' therapist suggested that he adjust his fitness routine by reducing his cardiovascular activity and adding in resistance and weight training. To help make this adjustment to his workout routine, Timothy began working with personal trainer Joe Enabnit. According to Mr. Stevens, "Joe pushes me to try more. He changes it up." This keeps his workouts fresh. In addition, Timothy feels that working with a personal trainer reduces the likelihood of injury due to the trainer carefully observing and correcting the client's form.

In regard to overall fitness and heart health, Timothy's advice to others is to "find a physical activity you enjoy and do it! Don't be afraid to try something new. If you enjoy an activity, you're more likely to continue." In addition to his workout regimen at the Rec Center, in nice weather Timothy enjoys biking outside. His advice to co-workers and new employees is, "Get up. Get out. Get active!"

The Rec Center's mission statement is -

*"Empowering our members to lead healthier and more fulfilling lives."*

Check out these pages on the website for information on fitness and nutrition services that can help you take steps to improve your heart health, and lead a healthier and more fulfilling life.

- Registered Dietitian Nutritionist
- Personal Training Services
- Fitness Services (fitness programming, fitness assessment, etc.)

1. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion <https://healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/health-conditions-and-diseases/heart-health/heart-health-conversation-starters>. (Accessed on January 11, 2018).