

Off-duty nurse jumps into action to help man having medical emergency

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A local woman is praising the quick actions of an off-duty nurse from Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC), who assisted a man experiencing a medical emergency at a Tim Hortons in Orangeville last month.

Shelburne resident Bella Carter was sitting at a table in the Tim Hortons on the morning of July 18 when she watched off-duty nurse, Heather Swayze, step in to assist a man experiencing a medical emergency.

"I had finished a meeting and I turned around to see a man on the ground and he's bleeding out of his head," recalled Carter. "She was in action right away helping him."

Swayze was in the Tim Hortons waiting for the brakes on her vehicle to be changed when the medical emergency occurred. Speaking with the Free Press, Swayze said she was standing up to throw away her coffee cup when she was alerted to the medical emergency.

"I heard a big thump and I looked over and a gentleman had collapsed at the front counter."

From there Swayze jumped into action and began administering first-aid to the man.

"I checked his pulse and he was having a seizure so I put him into the recovery position. As I put him over, I found there was a big pool of blood under him because he had quite a big laceration on the back of his head," said Swayze.

While yelling for someone to call 9-1-1, Swayze, who was wearing a shirt over a tank top, ended up using her own shirt to apply pressure to the wound and stem the bleeding.

"I didn't know if he had a neck injury or any broken bones so I just stayed still until the ambulance came," she explained.

Swayze has been a nurse at Headwaters Health Care Centre (HHCC) since April of 2023, where she works on the medicine and surgery floor.

Swayze received her practical nursing diploma from Conestoga College in 2018. Her first job in nursing was in Dufferin County as a palliative and end-of-life nurse. She spent two years working at Matthews House Hospice in Alliston before moving to Headwaters Hospital.

Swayze is currently a part-time student at Toronto Metropolitan University, where she is completing a bachelor's degree in nursing to obtain her Registered Nurse (RN) license.

Speaking with the Free Press, Carter recalled the emotions of witnessing the medical emergency.

"I was paralyzed in my space and I think everyone was really scared, but the fact she sounded so confident and very calm I think not only comforted the patient, but all of us there," she said.

Carter reached out to the Free Press to share with the community the action and initiative taken by Swayze to assist the man in distress.

?She exemplified to me, what a good citizen should be and she didn't even think twice about acting,? said Carter.

Swayze humbly described her actions as simply part of her training as a nurse.

?It's just my natural intuition because that's what I do for a living. I feel that the empathy and the compassion that I have is ingrained in me,? said Swayze.