

'Keep Hope Alive'

New training video on donation available for first responders

BY TRACY BRYAN

What happens after emergency response professionals in the field have carried out all possible heroic efforts, and still a life cannot be saved?

That may be the time when emergency response professionals are able to give *other* heroes a chance to save lives—through donation.

Those opportunities are now more possible than ever, thanks to a groundbreaking online educational/training video, "Keep Hope Alive," produced by Sierra Donor Services (SDS).*

Katherine Doolittle, senior public education coordinator at SDS, realized the need for donation education for first responders during a conversation with her husband, Jim Doolittle.

FIRST RESPONDERS' DECISIONS

Jim, a retired fire captain, personally knew crewmembers of a Sacramento, Calif., fire truck involved in an accident with a small car carrying two passengers. The passengers didn't survive, but one went on to become an organ donor and save five lives.

The decisions first responders make in the field with neurologically traumatized patients—who do not have the viability of survival—can make all the difference in whether or not those patients are able to be donors.

"We discovered," Doolittle said, "that the vast majority of first responders had received little or no training on donation. "That was alarming," she continued, "as a large percentage of potential donors are transported to the hospital by first responders."

Thus was born the idea for "Keep Hope Alive," which SDS designed and produced to instruct emergency response professionals on how to manage the fatally injured.

The resulting instructional video is available—free of charge—on the Donate Life California website.

POSITIVE REVIEWS

In July, Donate Life America helped to launch the video, which was received enthusiastically by its initial audience.

One of the first teachers to show the video to an EMS class remarked: "Brilliant! The best produced educational video I have seen on donation.

"My EMS class," she continued, "said it was 'excellent.'"

Sacramento firefighter paramedic Rob Walters was at the fatal accident that Jim Doolittle mentioned to his wife, and Walters treated the patient who went on to become a donor.

Soon after, Walters returned to Afghanistan to serve as a combat medic. He said he used what he learned from the accident about the positive impact of donation, and he continued to provide the same care to severely neurologically injured soldiers.

Some of those soldiers, too, went on to become donors.

"It's never a good feeling for any first responder when we lose a patient," Walters said.

"But knowing that others were helped, other lives were saved," he continued, "makes the outcomes of loss more bearable. ▣"

Tracy Bryan, APR, is director of public relations at Sierra Donor Services in Sacramento, Calif.

ONLINE To learn how first responders can help those waiting for a lifesaving organ transplant, visit donatelifecalifornia.org/firstresponders. The video includes 1.0 hours of continuing education credits, and the website is set up to accommodate classroom teaching.

*Golden State Donor Services/Sierra Eye and Tissue Donor Services has recently changed its name to Sierra Donor Services (SDS). SDS is a regional organ and tissue donor recovery agency that provides a full range of services and products to communities in California and northern Nevada.

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