



Curley's life changes in a heartbeat

By SEAN CAMPBELL & HARALD TOLLERUP
HUB Staff

Teacher James Curley jogged through downtown Davis early on Nov. 19, his hair still damp from swimming close to a mile earlier in the morning at Get Fit Davis.

The Davis High French teacher had an active day planned: he had scheduled a nearly 35-mile round trip bike ride to Winters next.

Curley was with his running partners, Spanish teacher Tim Nelson and Sacramento neighbor Kai Chapman.

Nearing the end of his run, Curley crossed the railroad tracks at H and 8th streets. All of a sudden, he fell to his knees, gasping for air, flailing for an instant, then falling backwards onto the concrete.

He was unconscious.

Nelson, who was running a bit ahead of Curley, turned around and, within a minute, started cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Simultaneously, Chapman called to a woman across the street, borrowing her phone to call 9-1-1.

Nelson pounded on Curley's chest for five minutes until the ambulance arrived. The Emergency Medical Technicians used an electric defibrillator to restart Curley's heart. "At that point, I continued living," Curley said.

A long road to recovery

He was taken by ambulance to UC Davis Medical Center. During his two-day stay, Curley coughed up sludge as a result of tubes being put in his lungs to improve his breathing quality.

He remembered little about what happened on his run until his brother gave him the news. "James, you went into cardiac arrest. Tim performed CPR on you and he saved your life," his brother said.

At that moment, Curley was hit with the intense blow of his near death experience. "I haven't really figured it out yet," Curley said. "I am still left feeling confused and somewhat sad."

Soon Curley transferred to a hospital closer to his home in Sacramento. On the way out, laid flat on a stretcher, a cold breeze hit his face before he was carted into the ambulance.

At Mercy General, he continued to recover just 10 minutes away from his ultimate goal: home. Curley regained his memory. He underwent surgery to place a stent, a small mesh tube that kept his main artery open, where the blockage was that led to the cardiac arrest.

His physical recovery was slow. Successful CPR bruised multiple ribs. After five days at Mercy General, he finally returned home, suffering from extreme chest soreness and difficulty breathing, a side effect of living to see another day. As of Dec. 9, Curley has regained a routine and is able to walk around his neighborhood, no longer confined to bed.

Genetics weren't on my side

After Curley's father died from a heart attack when he was young, he understood the risk of heart disease in his future. His fears were heightened when his uncle died from a heart attack in 2020.

"Genetics weren't on my side," Curley said. "But some of my habits could have been improved."

Curley has been very active his entire life. He played soccer throughout high school and played rugby in college. After college, he continued to exercise through running, swimming, biking, weightlifting, hiking, yoga and any other ways he could keep active.

He isn't used to being sidelined.

Back to school soon

Curley is eager to get back to the people he cares about. He hopes to return to campus for the second semester of the 2023-24 school year.

Cardiac arrest has altered his perspective on life forever. "I've got to do better for myself and for everybody else around me that I love," Curley said. "I'll probably have to take it down a few notches, and that's ok."

He may not have gotten that chance if Nelson hadn't renewed his CPR certification just a month before Curley fell knees first on the pavement.

"I've got to do better for myself and for everybody else around me that I love. I'll probably have to take it down a few notches, and that's okay."

James Curley
Davis High teacher

CPR CERTIFICATION

IMPORTANCE OF QUICK APPLICATION

The death rate for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is 90%, according to the American Heart Association. Every minute CPR is not applied, the death rate increases by 10%, according to Davis High medicine technology teacher Helke Farin.

CERTIFICATION IN THE COMMUNITY

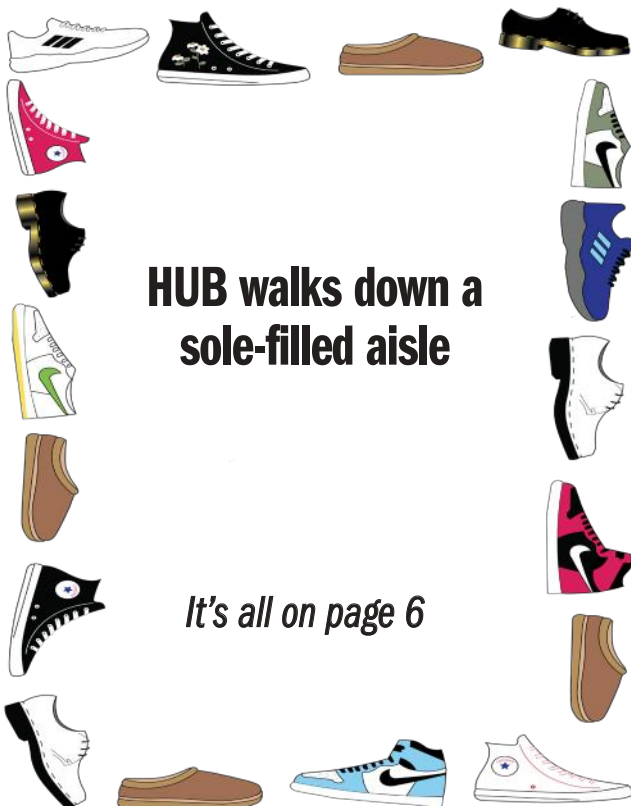
The Davis Red Cross Club, which meets every other Monday in P-22, is planning to certify every one of their 52 members this school year through a paid instructor.

GET CERTIFIED THROUGH MED-TECH

DHS offers a way to get CPR certified through the medicine technology pathway. More than 90 students have been certified this school year through the Human Bodies and Diseases course.

TIM NELSON'S CERTIFICATION

Nelson looked into a career in firefighting, which first led to him getting CPR-certified. Nelson renewed his certification about a month before James Curley's cardiac arrest on Nov. 19.



HUB walks down a sole-filled aisle

It's all on page 6



SPOTLIGHT on CARS
It's all on pages 4 & 5

SAADYA MAHMOOD/HUB PHOTO



Viewpoint: It's time to let teens stay out late

On page 7

ASHISH LAMA/HUB PHOTO



HUB profiles powerful people

It's all on page 3

MINA DEANEY/HUB GRAPHIC