



**“It was a miracle starting with the 9-1-1 call.”**

*Frank Dargavage*

*Montgomery County Hospital District EMS responded when Lucretia Mitchell Dargavage suffered sudden cardiac death last November. In February, the crew gathered with Lucretia and her husband, Frank, to celebrate her recovery after she was released from Reliant Rehabilitation center. On the call, from left, David Overstreet, EMT-I; Peter Cameron, EMT-I; Frank Dargavage; Lucretia Mitchell; Lt. Ronnie Greener, EMT; Wayne Bedair, EMT-P; and Supervisor Cindy Kennedy, LP.*

# Calls of a lifetime

By Kelly Harrell

When we first ran a story last May on the impact emergency responders can have on the lives of others, it was one of our most popular issues ever. So, we’re here again to remind you how often those who work EMS and trauma systems can have a positive impact – a life-changing impact – on the lives of others. The stories below are just a few of the thousands of great stories happening every year. In honor of Texas EMS Week, May 17-23, and Trauma Awareness Month, we salute those who make a difference.

## **Lucretia Dargavage**

**Date: November 29, 2008**

**First Responders: Montgomery County Hospital District EMS**

The sweetest words Frank Dargavage ever heard about his fiancé may well have come from an EMS crew: “We’ve got a pulse.”

Early morning on November 29, 2008. Frank had returned from Florida, where he had to bury his 45-year-old daughter (Lisa), who’d died five days earlier. A retired Continental pilot, Frank had come home a day early, afraid he wouldn’t get a standby flight home on Thanksgiving weekend in time for his wedding

on Monday. His fiancé, Lucretia Mitchell, picked him up at the airport and stayed with him that night, worried about his mental state. “I wanted him not to be alone,” Lucretia says.

It was a fortuitous decision. Around 6 a.m., Frank felt an odd sensation on his hip and realized that Lucretia’s bladder had released. When he turned over, she was not breathing. Never a day of heart trouble in her life, Lucretia had suffered sudden cardiac death – and each second counted. Frank began CPR and called 9-1-1. Within seven minutes, a crew from Montgomery County Hospital District arrived. They defibrillated five times before they got a pulse. At Woodland’s Memorial Hermann Hospital, staff induced a coma and cooled Lucretia’s core body temperature for several days then brought her temperature up slowly. Still, it was touch and go. Lucretia says several times family members thought she was not going to pull out. But she did. And when she finally opened her eyes, she winked at Frank. Today she has minor neurological deficits, and she still uses a walker. Frank and Lucretia finally tied the knot on January 30, about two months after the original ceremony was planned. But the Dargavages emphasize this story is not about them – it’s about the EMS/trauma system, from the 9-1-1 staff and the EMS crew to the staff at the ER. Frank says they can never repay the personnel on that call.

“It was a miracle starting with the 9-1-1 call. It was just amazing they never gave up — never, ever gave up. They’ve given her a second chance at life. They saved my life, too. I’ll be forever indebted to them.”

---

### **Carl Langley**

**Date: August 13, 1998**

**First Responders: Lockheed**

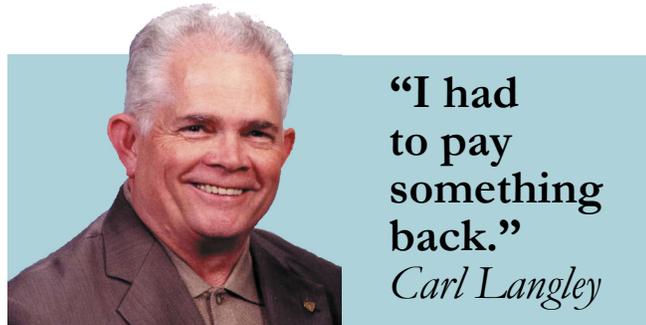
**Martin Aeronautics First Responders**

An AED – please pardon the pun – is at the heart of this story. But it’s not about just that EMS call in 1998. It’s what engineer Carl Langley did in the years following the day his heart stopped. On August 13, 1998, Langley went to work, just like he had done every day for more than 40 years, at Lockheed Martin just west of

Fort Worth. The last thing he remembers is going to a meeting in the afternoon.

“They told me I took off my glasses and fell over backwards,” he says.

Fortunately, people in the room began CPR immediately. But Carl had another bit of good fortune. About a month earlier, the Lockheed fire chief had pushed for AEDs to be readily available for his first responders – and he was successful. First responders grabbed the AED and defibrillated Langley at five minutes and 15 seconds. He says that people told him he sat up and wanted to continue the meeting, just



**“I had to pay something back.”**

*Carl Langley*

like “the Type-A person I was.” Instead, he was transported to the hospital for surgery and the implantation of an internal cardio defibrillator. Langley recovered fully and went back to work. But that was just the beginning of his association with AEDs.

Langley has spent several years on the board of the American Heart Association, volunteering to tell his story to anyone who would listen. “I had to pay something back,” Langley says. He has spent hours talking with lawmakers and local officials about the importance of having AEDs in public places, including state buildings, schools and in the workplace. The money spent on AEDs and the number of saves “are really important numbers,” Langley says. “But when something like this happens, it doesn’t just happen to the patient, it happens to the whole family. The number affected for me is six — my wife, kids and grandkids. So when we see that heart disease affects 500,000 per year that number is magnified greatly.” As for as the first responders and medics who responded to his sudden cardiac arrest, he has a special place in his heart for those folks.

## Kennedy Thompson

**Date:** February 27, 2009

**First Responder:** Off-duty EMT Brandon Porter (ETMC EMS)

It was a normal day of errands in Tyler for Stacey Thompson and her 16-month-old daughter, Kennedy. Thompson, a city council member from nearby Bullard, had left Hobby Lobby and pulled onto a busy street. When she glanced back at her daughter, strapped into the safety seat, she gasped. Kennedy was having a full-blown seizure. By the time she stopped, the baby was limp. Thompson was panic-stricken.

"I have no medical training. I found the nearest intersection, pulled over, got my baby out of the car and started screaming for help," Thompson says.

At that very moment, Brandon Porter, an off-duty EMT for ETMC EMS, drove by the intersection after running some errands. He saw her out of the corner of his eye and, without thinking,

did a U-turn. He told Thompson he worked on an ambulance and offered to help.

"She just handed me the baby," he says.

While bystanders called 9-1-1, Porter lifted Kennedy's head and began to gently rub her sternum. She started to cry and perked up a bit, but went limp again. He continued holding her head and rubbing her chest until his colleagues from ETMC EMS and Tyler Fire Department arrived. By the time he handed her off to his colleagues from ETMC, she was doing much better, says Porter.

Kennedy's had a series of tests to explain the seizure, but doctors found nothing. Today, she's a healthy and active toddler. Later, when the Thompson family had Porter over for dinner, they discovered that Porter and Kennedy share the same birthday – October 25. Thompson says words cannot express her gratitude to Porter and to the EMS crew who responded. Stacey and her husband, Clay, lost their only son shortly after his birth in 2006. It could have been another tragic situation if not for quick emergency response.

"I don't know how to get across to him and the others who stopped the degree of my gratefulness to them," Thompson says. "They saved our family from another tragedy."



*"I don't know how to get across to him and the others who stopped the degree of my gratefulness to them."*

*Stacey Thompson*

*Stacey Thompson got a chance to thank EMT Brandon Porter for coming to her daughter's aid in a ceremony at ETMC EMS. Photo by Mignon Adams.*



**“I just want to thank everyone from the first person to the last.”**

*Patti Hamlin*

*A family affair: Patti Hamlin saw plenty of opportunities to crash when she raced stock cars around a dirt track along with her two sisters and her mother. But it was a wreck on I-35 in March that nearly killed her. She credits Georgetown Fire Department and other responders with saving her life. In their racing gear, from left, are Juanita Craig, Hamlin's mother; Hamlin; sister Terri Dillard; and sister Robin Rasmussen. Photo courtesy of the Hamlin Family.*

**Patti Hamlin**

**Date: March 3, 2009**

**First Responder: Georgetown Fire Department**

Patti Hamlin, her two sisters and mother spent several years as a team racing stock cars around a dirt track. She'd even watched as her mother was taken off the track in an ambulance after a wreck. But in March, a Texas highway proved worse than any dirt track. Hamlin, who cares for medically fragile foster children, left her Harker Heights home on March 3 to take her foster daughter to a doctor's appointment in Austin. On an I-35 frontage road, she lost control of her truck and rolled several times, coming to rest right-side up in a ditch. Hamlin doesn't remember a thing, which is probably good, given her injuries. Georgetown firefighters responded minutes later to find a semi-conscious Hamlin. She had suffered severe internal injuries, vertebra injuries and a broken jaw. One wrong move could have caused much more harm. The 4-year-old, strapped in a safety seat, was not injured. Hamlin was flown to Scott & White Memorial Hospital.

According to Georgetown Fire Chief

*Georgetown Fire Department was the first responder to the wreck. Personnel on the call received a Green Cross, an award for making a rescue. The firefighters honored were (left to right) Firefighter Michael Anderson, Lieutenant Ethan Walker, Firefighter Timothy Armatta, Apparatus Operator Michael McLaurin, Firefighter Cory Jolly, Firefighter Jamison Humphres, and Battalion Chief Ray Cummings. Photo by Keith Hutchinson.*



Robert Fite, the responders extricated Hamlin by the book, “exactly what they were trained to do.” Hamlin's mother and sister met with firefighters a few weeks after the crash to thank them and watch as they received the Green Cross Bar, awarded to firefighters involved in rescues where their actions directly impact the safety of others.

“Words can't express what you did for us and our sister,” Robin Rasmussen, Hamlin's sister, told the firefighters.

A month later, Hamlin's back home with her family and five foster children. She'll be medically fragile herself for a while, although she's not thinking about that. She's anxious to get well enough to care for her kids.

“I've had over 350 (foster) children in 22 years. I've touched a lot of lives and now I'll be able to touch a lot more,” Hamlin says. “I just want to thank everyone from the first person to the last. If they hadn't done just what they did, I wouldn't be here to take care of the kids.”