

2-25-2023

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 23, 2023

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Life-Saving Responders Receive Sheriff Gene Fischer Hero Award

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Responding quickly to an emergency doesn't necessarily come naturally to many people. That's not the case for five first responders in the Village of Cedarville as they acted quickly to save the life of an 82-year-old man in cardiac arrest during a tennis match at Cedarville University. As a result of their heroic work, the first responders were honored by the Xenia Chamber of Commerce on Saturday, Feb. 25, at its annual gala dinner at the Greene County Fairgrounds.

The Sheriff Gene Fischer Hero Award is part of the annual Xenia Chamber of Commerce gala that was held at the Greene County Fairgrounds. This is the first year this award has been presented, which is in memory of the dedicated service of Sheriff Fischer to Greene County law enforcement. Sheriff Fischer served in law enforcement in Greene County from 1983 until his passing on November 16, 2021. He began his career with the Fairborn Police Department as a volunteer officer. In 1983, he joined the Xenia Police Division, and he was selected as the Greene County Sheriff in 2003.

In recognition of Sheriff Fischer's services, Luke Neikirk, a lieutenant with the Cedarville Township volunteer fire department; Don Parvin, captain with [Cedarville University](https://www.cedarville.edu) campus security; Jayson Neri, campus security officer with Cedarville University; Jayson Neri and Jason Robison, both with the village of Cedarville's police department; and Dr. John Vitaliti, an anesthesiologist, were awarded the Sheriff Gene Fischer Hero Award for their life-saving action. Vitaliti was playing tennis when Awabdy, of Xenia, went into cardiac arrest.

The five first responders worked quickly to save Awabdy's life. While playing tennis with Vitaliti, Awabdy unexpectedly collapsed to the ground on a tennis court at Cedarville University. Within a couple of minutes, Cedarville University's campus security and village of Cedarville police took immediate action that saved Awabdy.

"I had just got home from work when I saw a cardiac arrest notification on my pager," said Cedarville Township volunteer fire Lt. Luke Neikirk. "I went to the scene, and campus security and Cedarville PD were already doing compressions. After using an AED to administer a shock, we retrieved a pulse and gave him care as he was transported to the Miami Valley Hospital."

After receiving medical care, Awabdy was able to walk out of the hospital and return home three days later.

"This award is made to honor our heroic first responders," said Donna Saraga, president of the Xenia Chamber of Commerce. "It is named in honor of the late Sheriff Gene Fischer, and our goal is to annually honor local heroes who respond to medical emergencies."

Annually, the Xenia Chamber of Commerce holds an awards ceremony to honor key members of the local community. The theme of this year's event is "there's no place like home," a nod to the Wizard of Oz's classic line.

"Truly, there's no place like Xenia, Ohio," added Siraga. "Besides an Oz-like tornado history, the people are also special. The community takes care of each other in many ways, much like these first responders did."

The swift action of first responders, including nearly immediate CPR, saved Awadby's life and allows many to rejoice in God's grace.

"We see a lot of cardiac arrests that don't turn out as well as this one did," said Neikirk. "It really was a lifesaving intervention. We transport a lot of patients and don't get to see the outcomes. It's amazing to get to meet him and his family and see how the grace of God allows him to walk another day."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 5,082 undergraduate, graduate and dual-enrolled high school students in more than 175 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, high graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and the #4 national ranking by the Wall Street Journal for student engagement. For more information about the University, visit cedarville.edu.

Written by Alex Boesch