

From Moviegoer to Action Hero

Off-duty Kaiser Permanente pediatric nurse practitioner Debbie Marquez gives CPR and saves a life at the movies.

A quiet after-work trip to a local theater to see the new movie about Judy Garland quickly turned into a life-saving evening for off-duty Kaiser Permanente employee Debbie Marquez, NP.

“The movie had started, and I heard people shouting ‘Help, emergency!’ from just down the row where I was sitting,” recalled Marquez, who has been a pediatric nurse practitioner at the Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center for 20 years.

Marquez looked to see what was going on and found a man in his 60s slumped over in his theater seat. His companions were distraught. Marquez began shaking the man’s shoulders and loudly asking if he could hear her.

Marquez got no response or pulse, and she couldn’t feel him breathing. She immediately began CPR while the man was still in his seat.

No Time to Waste

Meanwhile, the theater stopped the movie and brought up the lights in the auditorium. A group of moviegoers gathered around and helped Marquez get the man out of his chair and onto the aisle floor.

As Marquez performed CPR, one of the other theatergoers called 911. Marquez asked someone to find an automated external defibrillator (AED), to try to shock the man’s heart into a normal rhythm.

Marquez heard one of the man’s companions say there was a history of heart problems.

“Sudden cardiac arrest leads to loss of consciousness and pulse and is caused by an electrical malfunction in the heart that causes an irregular heartbeat,” Marquez said. “I knew the man would die if he didn’t receive CPR and the AED shock.”

A bystander ran to the health club next door to borrow an AED. Meanwhile, Marquez was still doing CPR and talking to a 911 operator via a speakerphone being held by another moviegoer, all while the paramedics were being dispatched.

Ready to Save a Life

When the AED arrived, Marquez wasted no time in administering the shock treatment. The first

time, there was no response.

“We were doing CPR for 7 to 8 minutes. I gave the man a second jolt as the ambulance arrived,” she said. “As they wheeled him away, one of the emergency medical technicians said the man’s heart had started beating normally again.”

“Debbie Marquez has always stepped in to do the right thing,” said [Chynna Bantug, MD](#), chief of pediatrics at the Kaiser Permanente San Jose Medical Center and Marquez’s supervisor. “Her pediatric patients love her, the parents do as well, and we’re so proud to have Debbie Marquez caring for our members and also doing great work with the public.”

Marquez never learned the man’s name or the outcome of her fast CPR. But she said there is a bit of lucky irony here. “Just the day before, I had my basic life support refresher, which nurses take every 2 years to keep their license. I was ready to do CPR and save a life.”