



Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

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Photo, Video and Interview Opportunities: MCFR firefighters will unite with the Zimmerman family for the first time before the Marion County Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday, April 21 at 9 a.m. SHARP (601 SE 25th Avenue).

MARION FIREFIGHTERS MENDING HEARTS AND SAVING LIVES

Immediate Release

MARION COUNTY, Fla. (April 17, 2009) – Otto Zimmerman, 57, of Southeast Marion County died but then lived to tell a tale of survival. About 8 p.m. on March 16, crushing pain radiated across Zimmerman's chest and up his left arm. He became cold, clammy and short of breath. While most people would dismiss these symptoms as heart burn, Zimmerman's wife, Barbara took her husband's condition seriously and immediately called 9-1-1. Her call for help and the events that followed changed the Zimmerman family forever.

Marion County Fire Rescue (MCFR) firefighters from South Forest Station 6 arrived at the Zimmerman home in about five minutes. These dual-certified firefighter/paramedics and firefighter/EMTs accessed his condition and confirmed that he was having a heart attack. Crews provided advanced life support (ALS) emergency medical care, giving Zimmerman medications to help slow the progression of his heart attack.

Meanwhile, an MCFR ambulance housed at Weirsdale Station 27, also staffed with dual-certified firefighter/paramedics and firefighter/EMTs, responded and transported Zimmerman with lights and sirens to the hospital. About half way there, Zimmerman told firefighters that he had a severe headache and felt like he was going to faint. A few seconds later, he was unconscious, his heart was no longer beating and he was no longer breathing. But the firefighters were prepared. They had already hooked Zimmerman up to their LifePak 12, a professional grade defibrillator that enables emergency responders to jumpstart the heart. They also provided cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Doctors unblocked Zimmerman's clogged artery and credited Marion County firefighters and their quick response with saving his life. While MCFR personnel save lives and protect property everyday, this incident is significant for three reasons:

- 1) As part of MCFR's 10-year-plan, fire rescue leaders staffed South Forest Station 6, formerly an all-volunteer station, with full-time dual-certified firefighters in March, 2007. Without the commitment to the 10-year-plan and the availability of the crews to respond quickly, Zimmerman's outcome would likely be different.
- 2) MCFR added ambulance transport to its growing mission on October 1, 2008, when the former ambulance provider dissolved. This emergency demonstrates MCFR's continued commitment to providing a quick, skillful emergency medical response to citizens countywide.
- 3) Barbara Zimmerman immediately called 9-1-1, enabling firefighters to get on scene quickly and change the outcome of the emergency. Often people hesitate, which can have deadly consequences.

The Zimmerman family will unite with the following MCFR crewmembers: Lieutenant/Paramedic Bill Thomas, Firefighter/EMT Caleb Bankston, Firefighter/EMT Jaime Grisales and Firefighter/EMT Christopher Caravetto of South Forest Station 6 as well as Firefighter/Paramedic Pablo Echevarria, Firefighter/EMT Matthew Daily and Firefighter/EMT Steven Spencer of Weirsdale Station 27.

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