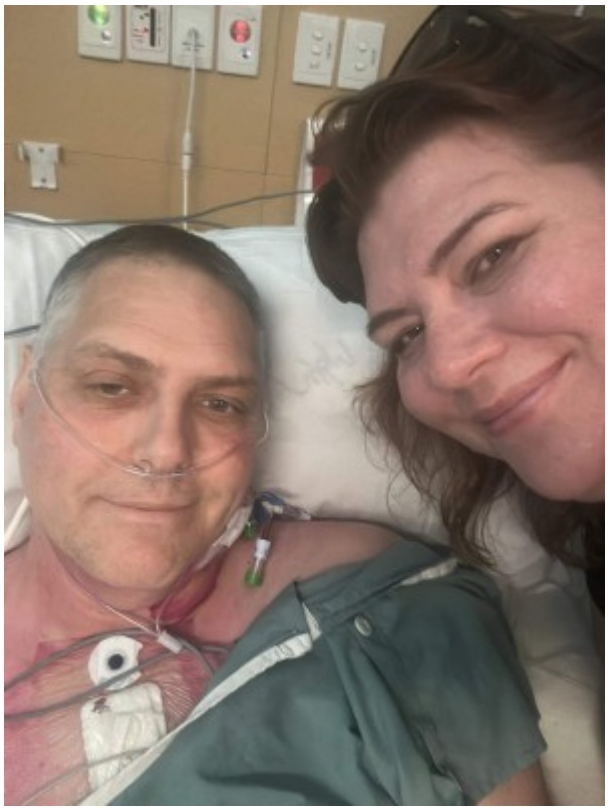
“You never know what someone else is going through, just try and help them.”



After the show, Natalie realized she had lost her phone. She rang the phone, and rushed up the hill to meet the person who had found it, however on the way up Craig’s knee was troubling him, and he stopped for a rest. “Go on ahead, I’ll catch up,” he told Natalie.

Once Natalie and her daughter had collected the phone, Natalie turned back to look for Craig, however he wasn’t there.

While heading back to find him, their daughter noticed flashing lights in the distance and as they got closer they saw Craig receiving CPR.

A man attending the event had spotted Craig lying unconscious and went to check on him.

He realised that Craig was unresponsive and rolled him onto his side. He was able to flag down an event ambulance who happened to be leaving the venue. Within minutes, a fire truck which was at the event monitoring the fireworks arrived carrying an AED (Automated External Defibrillator).

Craig had suffered a cardiac arrest. A cardiac arrest means the heart stops beating altogether, quick response is vital to save someone in cardiac arrests life. Event medics and fire and emergency staff worked together performing CPR for over 20 minutes while delivering multiple life-saving shocks from the AED which restarted Craig's heart.

Natalie and her daughter, watching helplessly in the pouring rain, were supported by emergency services while CPR continued "They put us in a police car to shelter from the rain while they tried to save Craig's life."

Craig's situation was critical. In the ambulance, paramedics diagnosed a left ventricular STEMI, a severe type of heart attack, and administered clot-busting medication to stabilise him. The bad weather delayed his transfer to Waikato's ICU, forcing him to stay overnight in New Plymouth. Due to the families strong support networks in Wellington the decision was made to airlift Craig to Wellington when the weather improved.

The next day, Craig was airlifted to Wellington by Life Flight in an induced coma. Natalie's mother drove up from Whanganui during the night to help with their daughter, allowing Natalie to focus fully on her husband.

Natalie and Craig's amazing network of family and friends stepped up to support them. Friends drove Natalie down to Wellington, as she was too tired and emotional to drive alone.

When Craig began to wake, he was confused and disoriented, unsure what had happened or where he was. On Tuesday morning he turned to Natalie and said "You found me." Natalie was relieved that Craig recognised her as it was unclear what Craig's cognitive function would be once, or if he woke up.

Craig spent two days in the ICU before being moved to the cardiac ward.

Craig's journey to recovery was long and difficult. Complications like pneumonia, stress-induced atrial fibrillation, and a blood clot added further challenges to his recovery.

An angiogram had revealed severe blockages in his arteries that couldn't be treated with stents, so a triple bypass surgery was scheduled for January 12, 2024.

After five weeks in the hospital, Craig was airlifted back to Whanganui on January 20 2024.

"It went on too long," Craig admitted about being in the hospital, as fatigue and stress took their toll. Despite the progress, the recovery process was more emotionally exhausting than either Craig or Natalie had anticipated. "It took just as long for me to recover emotionally as it did for Craig to heal physically," Natalie said.

Craig was cleared to return to part-time work in March 2024.

In addition to his cardiac arrest, Craig and Natalie had endured a series of emotional challenges in 2023, including two floods at their home, and their parents experiencing a series of health events including cancer diagnoses, multiple surgeries, and a broken hip. "2023 really was our *Annus horribilis (Horrible Year)*"

Through it all, Craig and Natalie have tried to focus on living life to the fullest and making new memories—they recently went on a family trip to Melbourne.

Craig's story is a reminder that cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, anywhere—even someone young and seemingly healthy can have a cardiac arrest. At just 49 years old, Craig had no idea his heart was in danger. But his survival highlights the importance of community response, quick access to AEDs, and the power of kindness.

"Lead with kindness" Natalie says this is something they want to instill in their daughter. "You never know what someone else is going through, just try and help them."

Craig and Natalie no longer take life for granted. "Grab the opportunities when you can," they say.

Their experience has inspired them to raise awareness about the importance of AEDs, CPR, and supporting one another through life's challenges. As Natalie puts it: "We need to teach CPR in every school. It's a skill everyone should have—it saves lives."

Craig's survival was made possible because bystanders, first responders, and medical teams acted quickly. Knowing CPR and how to use an AED can save lives—and that knowledge could make all the difference when the unexpected happens.

Craig's story highlights the importance of response: Don't wait to act. Whether it's learning CPR, placing AEDs in public spaces, or simply being kind to someone, every action matters, And it might just save a life.