

LIFE SAVERS

BY MICHELE MEYER

How Pearland First Responders and Memorial Hermann Came to the Rescue

When beloved Pearland convenience store owner, Kyung Lee, 48 years old, collapsed of a heart attack at his Handi Plus #7336, luck was on his side.

The customer who found him without a pulse immediately started CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Another customer, an off-duty Pearland police officer, joined in. They alerted the nearby Pearland Fire Department. The Emergency Medical Services paramedics responded within minutes and were able to resuscitate Lee using a defibrillator.

Lee survived thanks to the speedy and coordinated teamwork of bystanders that started CPR, Pearland's first responders and the top-tier cardiac specialty care available at Memorial Hermann Southeast Hospital. Upon Mr. Lee's arrival at the hospital, Rohit Bhuriya, MD, a cardiovascular disease specialist affiliated with Memorial Hermann Southeast, examined his heart with state-of-the-art digital imaging to reveal multiple blockages in all three major coronary arteries. At the time, Lee was in a coma, due to the loss of oxygen to his brain during the massive heart attack.

Memorial Hermann Southeast's lifesaving heart care continued as Dr. Cesar Nahas, FACS, restored bloodflow by performing triple bypass surgery. "Memorial Hermann Southeast is a community hospital, but we're able to do things usually only done in big medical centers," says Dr. Nahas, Cardiovascular Surgery Program medical director and associate professor in the department of

Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth.

Over the next 33 days, Lee remained in a coma. "But, his wife Seonah never lost hope," marvels Dr. Nahas. "She was sure he'd come back – and she was right."

Defying all odds, Lee awoke on the 34th day. He had lost 30 pounds, much of it muscle. "I felt I'd been in a deep sleep with weird dreams," he says. "At first I didn't recognize my wife."

His recovery since has been amazing. Within days, Lee was walking and talking.

In the year since, the Lees' lives have changed forever. The father of two no longer works long hours fueled by a diet heavy in sugar and fried food. Now, he watches what he eats, exercises four to five days weekly and takes his prescribed medications. "Now if doctors tell me to do something, I do it," he says.

"I almost didn't make it, and my wife and children (a son, 22, and a daughter, 16) would've had to plan my funeral."

Instead, his wife relieves him several days weekly so he has time off, and daughter Sue, a sophomore at Glenda Dawson High School, is considering medicine as a career.

Says Lee, "It's a blessing to wake up each day, hug my wife and take my daughter to school."



Cesar Nahas, MD,
Heart Surgeon



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