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Drake grad receives her diploma in her father's hospital room

05/17/2009

Drake University senior Cassaundra Koenen missed the Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony Saturday morning because her father, Glenn Koenen, suffered a heart attack in the stands at the Drake Knapp Center about a half hour before the ceremony, which began at 10 a.m.

Drake staff members, along with an emergency room nurse and a doctor in the audience, came to Glenn Koenen's aid.

Annie Swanson, an ER nurse at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, was there to watch the graduation of her niece, Molly Rafmussen.

"I was four rows in front of him and someone yelled 'Is there a nurse or doctor?' So I turned around and hopped over the bleachers and went over to him," Swanson said.

"He was sitting next to his wife and he was hunched over the seat in front of him. I asked what his history was and his wife said he'd had cardio surgery before. I lowered him to ground and felt for a pulse and there was no pulse, so I gave him CPR.

"He was dead and had no pulse, but I gave him CPR and chest compressions for about two minutes and he started to wake up and then the defibrillator came."

Drake staff members Michael Ball and Matt Miller hooked up Drake's automated external defibrillator with the expert assistance of Dr. John Kuhnlein, an Ankeny physician in the audience who rushed over to help. The defibrillator advised administering a shock and Kuhnlein pressed the button to deliver the shock.

Campus Security Supervisor Mark Risvold had called 911 to request an ambulance, which soon arrived and transported Glenn Koenen to Mercy Medical Center, where he's being treated in the Coronary Critical Care Unit and is expected to undergo bypass surgery.

"It went pretty smooth even though there were so many people and not much room," Swanson said. "We just improvised and I'm so glad he lived."

Nurses at Mercy later contacted Drake officials to see whether someone could present Cassaundra Koenen's diploma to her at the hospital because her father felt he had spoiled her graduation and wanted her to get her diploma.

Drake President David Maxwell went to the hospital, donned his academic robe and formally presented the diploma to Cassaundra Koenen as she stood at her



Drake President Maxwell reaches across Glenn Koenen's hospital bed to congratulate Cassaundra Koenen on her graduation.

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Cassaundra Koenen shows her diploma case to her father.

father's beside. Maxwell was accompanied by Joe Lenz, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and Tom Delahunt, vice president for admission and financial aid.

Cassaundra Koenen has earned a bachelor's degree in graphic design in Drake's College of Arts and Sciences. She plans to return to her hometown of St. Louis with her family once her father recuperates from surgery.

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