



It's not every day when you meet someone who guides you through an emergency and who has a profound effect on you as well as on those touched by a crisis.

Last summer, I had the opportunity to see and feel the impact of Chaplain Drew Buckner, a chaplain to emergency responders in Kalispell.

I was working at home late one morning and had just hung up the phone when I heard the sound of sirens grow in volume and number. What was so odd and unsettling was that the sound didn't die down as usual when the vehicles sped by. Instead, the noise seemed so close, in fact, right outside my door.

It was. When I opened my door, I saw that both sides of our street were lined with emergency vehicles. Across from me, the front door of my neighbors' house was wide open, and emergency personnel were streaming in and out.

I approached the house, wondering if I would only be in the way. With tears in his eyes, my neighbor told me that he'd walked into his teenaged son's room, only to find him not breathing and unresponsive. His voice shaking, Scott said he didn't know what to do. His wife, Sonja, was at work, completely unaware of their son's struggle for life. Paramedics, unable to find a pulse, were inside working to resuscitate seventeen year old Scotty. My neighbor, Scott, was at a loss to make sense of what was happening, how to best serve his struggling son, and how to get word to his wife and older son, who were at work.

Standing close by was the man I would learn was Chaplain Drew Buckner. I quickly began to appreciate his invaluable and unique role.

The paramedics were exceptional in their care for the young patient as well as their ongoing efforts to keep a frightened father informed of the status of his son's life and death struggle. However, there were questions as to how best to inform mom, how to contact the brother and grandparents, and what coordinating steps to take next. The chaplain calmly and confidently began to take charge of handling emotions and logistics.

When I told Chaplain Buckner that I could drive to the mother's place of employment and deliver her to the hospital, he was way ahead of me. He agreed with my driving to pick up the mother, but suggested that he lead the way in his car. Buckner was prepared for the unexpected.

At the business, we were directed to a conference room where Buckner told me exactly where to stand so that Mom would see a familiar face when we delivered news of the urgent situation. With a calm and controlled demeanor, he related the status of her son. As Sonja frantically ran to gather her purse, Drew took the steps to inform the proper personnel promptly and efficiently as to what was transpiring.

*(continued)*



*(L-R) Scott, Sonja, Scotty, Diana and Chaplain Drew.*

*Photo: Jeremy and Alicia Brown Photography*

Again, he took the lead as he guided us to KRMHC. As I was about to leave the emergency room, the chaplain to emergency responders kindly asked me to stay. This expert in crises knew that my services would likely be necessary. In the ER family room, doctors reported changes, procedures, and probable courses of action to the parents with regularity.

The Hospital Chaplain explained the significance of each doctor's report to the family, and Chaplain Buckner quietly, but intentionally, monitored the emotions of the family. He made suggestions, offered directions, and served as support for each and every person in that room.

The role of the Chaplain to Emergency Responders was integral that day to bringing calm and comfort to a family in crisis. Chaplain Drew Buckner's expertise, caring, and direction were truly gifts to those in need, not only to immediate family members, but to each of us who care for this young man and his family.

The patient and his father were flown to Spokane where extensive work was done on the teenager's heart. Months later Scotty returned home with a beautiful smile on his face and is, currently, completing his senior year at Flathead High School.

I will never forget how essential it was to have Chaplain Drew Buckner there to guide and support all of us through that medical emergency. We are, indeed, blessed to have Chaplain Drew Buckner as such a vital presence in our community.

Sincerely,

*Diana Damron*