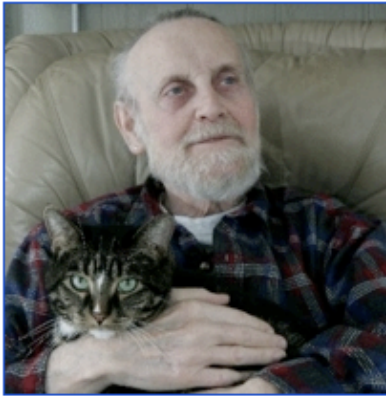


When John Maun began experiencing symptoms of a heart attack Sept. 12, he knew that time would be of the essence for the rescue personnel and doctors he would soon be meeting.



John Maun, a 68-year-old Omahan, has suffered two heart attacks, most recently on Sept. 12. He survived that attack with help from the Immanuel Charitable Foundation, which equipped the Irvington rescue squad with a tool to quickly diagnose the extent of a patient's heart attack.

"No one else was home, so I called 911 . . . and went out front to sit in a lawn chair and wait," the 68-year-old northwest Omaha resident said. "This was my second heart attack, so I know that getting the artery unclogged within 90 minutes gives you a much better chance of survival."

It took just 54 minutes from the time Maun called 911 to open his clogged artery.

That's thanks to a partnership with Immanuel Charitable Foundation, which equipped the Irvington rescue squad with a tool to quickly diagnose the extent of a patient's heart attack.

The foundation recently equipped Irvington, Bennington, Ponca Hills and Fort Calhoun with 12-lead EKG units that give doctors a clear picture of the extent of damage.

An EKG device measures electrical activity in a heart. Medical personnel use an EKG readout — an electrocardiogram — in treating patients.

Virtually all fire departments in the metropolitan area either have the advanced EKG units or are in the process of obtaining them. Omaha recently purchased 18 of the devices at a cost of \$423,000. Area hospitals have helped pay for the units.

In Maun's case, emergency personnel attached electrodes to his chest while en route to the hospital and used cellular technology to send the results to a doctor at Immanuel Medical Center. The doctor determined there was 100 percent blockage in Maun's right heart artery and assembled a heart team — before Maun was even at the hospital.

"For people with heart problems, everything is a matter of minutes," said Tom Townsend of the Irvington Fire Department. "Even saving 15 or 20 minutes, that is a lot of time for the heart to be clogged. We are saving lives and improving the patient's quality of life after recuperation."

When Maun had his first heart attack in 2003, Irvington rescue personnel were equipped only with heart monitors. The true extent of the problem was not determined until after he arrived at the hospital, costing precious minutes while his heart possibly suffered further damage.

Dr. Bruce Holcomb, the medical director for Irvington's fire department, said the new EKG units give residents a better chance at survival and improved recoveries.

"You save 30, 40, 60 minutes with the 12-lead EKG because we get the information while the patient is en route to the hospital," Holcomb said. "In that time you save a lot of heart muscle. We always say, 'Time is muscle,' and that is so true."

Maun has a history of heart disease in his family with five uncles dying of heart attacks while in their 50s. A vegetarian since 1975, he exercises regularly and closely watches what he eats.

"About halfway through my cardiac rehab, I began feeling about as strong as before the attack," he said. "Getting that blockage cleared in 54 minutes had to have something to do with me feeling so good so fast."