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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

Heart Attack Survivor Recounts Life-Saving Heroism by MTA Police Department and LIRR Train Crew Members

Passenger Richard Kossmann, Now 79, Was Among First to Be Saved Using Automatic External Defibrillators

Long Island Rail Road passenger Richard Kossmann, 79, of Syosset, today returned to Penn Station 10 years after he suffered a near-fatal heart attack there to thank the MTA Police Officers and LIRR train crew members who saved his life a decade ago. Kossmann was one of the first people to be saved by the MTA Police using a technology that has now become widely adopted throughout the LIRR and Metro-North Railroad: automatic external defibrillators (AEDs).

On Thursday, April 3, 2003, Kossmann, then 69 years old, had a heart attack shortly before 8 p.m. aboard a Huntington-bound rush-hour train that was at the platform and moments away from departing. His fellow passengers alerted the LIRR train crew, who immediately responded and summoned the MTA Police who rushed to his aid. Using CPR and a newly deployed defibrillator, the MTA Police were able to revive Kossmann at the scene. He was stabilized and transported to St. Vincent's Hospital for treatment.

Kossmann fully recovered from this incident. He continues to be in good health and good spirits 10 years later. He also credits a fellow passenger, Paul Bayer, for coming to his rescue.

"There I was, slumped on the floor of the car," Kossmann recalled. "Fortunately, a Good Samaritan came to my aid and started CPR and directed someone to stop the train from pulling out of the station and to get help. Six MTA Police Officers came with an AED and took over from the passenger. They continued the CPR and shocked me with the AED. Miraculously, I came back to life and was taken to St. Vincent's Hospital, where two stents were put in to correct the blockage that caused the cardiac arrest."

The defibrillators were deployed in 2002. Kossmann was the third person to be saved using them. The MTA Police Department has saved 21 people to date using the devices, roughly two people per year. The department has 65 of the units deployed throughout its 5,000 square mile territory.

All members of the MTA PD are trained in how to use the defibrillators, which are portable devices that are placed on the chest that send a brief concentrated electrical charge to the heart. The charge can cause the heart to regain its normal pumping rhythm after it has suffered a sudden, and potentially fatal, irregularity.

The MTA Police Department is responsible for policing 270 stations on the Long Island Rail Road, Metro-North Railroad and Staten Island Railway, as well as trains carrying nearly 600,000 people per day, the tracks in between stations and behind-the-scenes support facilities.

"This incident exemplifies some of the best of what we do day in and day out," said MTA Police Chief Michael Coan. "We do what we have to do, with the tools that we have available, to save lives, prevent injury, and keep our customers and the general public safe and secure."

"We are very proud of the life-saving work of the MTA police officers and LIRR crew members who came to the aide of Mr. Kossmann," said Helena E. Williams, President of MTA Long Island Rail Road. "We always say the safety of our passengers is our No. 1 priority and their actions gave life – literally in this case – to that motto. We also are grateful to Mr. Kossmann for remembering the role of the police officers and crew who helped him."

The members of the MTA Police Department who responded to the call were: Sgt. Michael Costanza (now retired), Officer Christopher Arena, Officer Leyland Crocilla, Officer Kenneth Jenkins, Officer Richard Lagnese and Officer Patrick Riedel. The members of the train crew involved in the incident were Conductor Rose Ballou, Engineer Carrisa Lastra and Assistant Conductor Brian Ballou.

Passenger Paul Bayer was unable to attend today's event.