

Officer Joseph Calorossi

*Presented by Paul Sullivan, CEO,
American Red Cross Connecticut
Blood Services Region
and
James T. Shearin, Esquire,
Pullman & Comley LLC*



First Responders are trained to handle emergencies on the job. But what about when you are off duty? Officer Joseph Calorossi sees it this way: "You have an ability and the training and if you don't use it when it's needed, what is the point?"

Officer Calorossi put his abilities to use one day last November when a motorist in distress flagged down the car in which he was riding with his father on Interstate 91 near Hartford. The driver of the other vehicle flashed his lights and honked repeatedly at the Calorossi's vehicle. They pulled over, thinking the driver was alerting them to a problem with their car, but he pulled alongside them in the breakdown lane, screaming "I need help!"

The driver was having a severe asthma attack. Officer Calorossi called for emergency assistance and, with another motorist who stopped and identified himself as a nurse, began trying to calm down Courtney Roberts, the young man having the attack. Calorossi tried to get Roberts to stand up to ease his breathing, but Roberts' condition only worsened. Soon he was unconscious. Calorossi and the nurse began to check Roberts' vital signs. The nurse, who had no equipment with him, began chest compressions, but Calorossi was concerned that Roberts' oxygen levels were very low. He decided to begin rescue breaths.

As they worked, Calorossi's father came from their vehicle with a canister of Albuterol, which a doctor had given him for a breathing problem. Calorossi, knowing that it was used to treat asthma and might help the victim, inhaled a dose and pushed it with a breath into Roberts. He repeated this process until the Albuterol was gone.

The nurse told Calorossi that Roberts had a pulse, but it was very low. State Police arrived on the scene but had only a CPR breathing mask to supply. Calorossi took the mask and continued performing rescue breaths until an ambulance arrived and Roberts was transported to the hospital.

Calorossi had used Roberts' cell phone to alert a person in his call list in hopes they could reach family to meet him at the hospital. Calorossi and his father then left the area. Officer Calorossi called the hospital to check on Roberts, but was only able to leave a contact number as the hospital was reluctant to share patient information. A short time later, Roberts called to say he was doing alright and they have remained in contact since. Roberts tells Calorossi he now wants to become a Police Officer.

LAW ENFORCEMENT