

Harrowing ordeal elicits brave response

Local business proprietor jumps into rescue role after school bus driver falls ill Monday



Brian Sullivan of Sullivan Funeral Home was going about his regular course of business in Hinsdale when he encountered something irregular with a school bus. His gripping account indicates the positive outcome could have been much worse. (Jim Slonoff photo)

By Ken Knutson
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Brian Sullivan of Sullivan Funeral Home in Hinsdale had just left Bronswood Cemetery on North Madison Street at about 3:30 p.m. Monday, driving the funeral home's hearse south. Up ahead, in the 800 block, an oncoming school bus was dropping off students, lights flashing and stop sign extended.

But there was a problem. "You could tell something was wrong because as kids were getting off the bus, the bus was rocking forward," he recounted. "It was a longer stop than normal. You could tell something was going on."

The disembarking youth seemed to be yelling back into the bus. Sullivan got out of the hearse and approached.

"My first instinct was that there was a fight. I didn't know what was going on until I came around and saw one kid trying to get (the driver) off the bus," he said.

The driver was in the throes of a seizure.

"The poor guy was just moving all over and had blood all over him, but his foot was on the brake. That's why it was rocking," Sullivan said.

Sullivan worked to get his foot on the brake as he struggled to put the bus in park. The driver, apparently mistaking Sullivan for a malefactor, resisted his efforts.

"He was physically coming against me," he said. "He may have thought something was happening to his kids."

And there was another hurdle. "I couldn't figure out how to get the damn bus in park!" Sullivan exclaimed. "There's no 'P'."

A lady who had also boarded to help called 911, and Hinsdale police responded quickly. A patrol car positioned itself in front to keep the bus from advancing.

Sullivan was finally able to get his foot firmly on the brake before shutting the engine off.

Paramedics treated the driver and Sullivan stuck around talking with the young passenger who had done his best to help.

"He was trying to comfort the driver, to hold him," Sullivan related. "I would love to talk to that young man's parents because they should be proud of him. I think he was more calm than I was."

Sullivan wanted to make sure all kids were accounted for but didn't

know how many had been on the bus. He later found out there had been six Clarendon Hills Middle School students, all safe.

Then he realized his own vehicle needed to exit.

"I felt bad because parents were pulling up, and here's the hearse sitting there," he said with a smile.

Hinsdale Police Chief Brian King said Tuesday that the department's investigation indicated the cause of the incident was medical in nature.

Sleep was hard to come by Monday night, Sullivan confessed.

"I woke up between 2 and 4 (Tuesday) morning thinking, 'Boy, that could have gone a completely different way,'" the Clarendon Hills resident related, noting people had gathered in front of the bus, drawn to the commotion. "At any minute he could have hit that gas pedal."

There was a personal dimension, too.

"I've got an older son who takes the bus, and you worry about stuff like that all the time," he said.

On this occasion, the happy ending prevailed.

"It was just a scary experience, but it worked out," he said. "The kids are fine. Hopefully the driver's OK."

Scholarship aids students of all types and ages

By Sandy Illian Bosch
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Just one semester of classes loomed between Felicia Moore and the job she dreamed of. One semester and the money to pay for it.

"I wasn't sure I was going to be able to go back to finish my degree," said Moore, who was completing a degree in graphic design at College of DuPage when she heard about a scholarship available from the Assistance League Chicagoland West.

That \$1,000, Moore said, made all the difference.

"It was a life changer for me," said Moore, who is now working in her field of choice, thanks to the Assistance League Chicagoland West Scholars Support Program.

Each semester ALCW, a philanthropic group based in Hinsdale, awards \$1,000 scholarships to two College of DuPage students. Unlike many scholarships, the Assistance League awards are available to students of

all ages — from traditional high school graduates to adults pursuing a long-desired degree.

The program began several years ago as an extension of the Assistance League's primary goals — transforming lives and strengthening community. By supporting people in their pursuit of education, the Assistance League is providing the community with a more skilled workforce.

"College of DuPage is the community's college," said Sharon Miller Malek, scholarship committee chair.

As a longtime professor and dean at the school, Malek can speak to the quality of the college's many degree and certificate programs.

To qualify for the award, applicants must have completed at least 12 credit hours toward a degree or certificate at the Glen Ellyn community college. They also must be enrolled in at least six hours for the upcoming semester

and carry a grade point average of 2.75 or higher.

Financial need is a big consideration when choosing the scholarship winners, Malek said.

"We do consider extenuating circumstances," she said, such as family obligations, personal situations and, in Moore's case, previous student loans.

While completing a degree in fashion marketing, Moore discovered a love for graphic design. She soon realized she would need a second degree to pursue her goals.

"COD was an easy choice," she said. The college not only was close to her home, it also was home to one of the country's top graphic design programs.

Moore's advice to scholarship applicants is to be open and honest.

"You have to be willing to put yourself out there, to share your story," she said.

Applicants for the next pair of awards have until March 23 to apply. Go to the assis-

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Making a Difference is a partnership between The Hinsdalean and Assistance League Chicagoland West, whose mission is to deliver education and outreach programs that address needs and help transform lives in local communities.



A \$1,000 scholarship from Assistance League Chicagoland West helped Felicia Moore finish a second degree at the College of DuPage and pursue a career in graphic design. (photo provided)

something completely new. And all are working toward a goal that Assistance League Chicagoland West wants to help them reach.