



(SUBMITTED PHOTOS)

LEFT: Sigfrid Muller (right) poses with friends at a barbecue. Taken moments before he collapsed from sudden cardiac arrest, Aug. 23, 2024. **RIGHT:** Sigfrid Muller (center) pictured with friends Paul and Kimberly Wright. Kimberly performed CPR on Muller before paramedics arrived on scene, Aug. 23, 2024.

Minnetonka man shares near-death experience in honor of American Heart Month

Sigfrid Muller suffered a sudden cardiac arrest at a barbecue in 2024

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It was Aug. 23, 2024, when Minnetonka resident Sigfrid Muller experienced a sudden cardiac arrest at a friend's backyard barbecue after a day of golfing.

Sudden cardiac arrest is the abrupt loss of heart function caused by an irregular heart rhythm, according to the Mayo Clinic. Without immediate treatment, sudden cardiac arrest can be fatal.

A friend performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation, commonly known as CPR, while emergency responders were en route. Muller was clinically dead for about eight minutes before paramedics revived him using an automated external defibrillator, known as an AED.

Doctors gave the 58-year-old less than a 1% chance of making a full recovery, but Muller defied those odds. He spent seven days in the intensive care unit following the cardiac event and experienced anterograde amnesia during the first two days of his recovery.

"I was alert and awake and talking to people just like we are now, but I have no memory of anything that happened during those first two and a half days," Muller says. "So what I learned from my sister, my friends, my family, my caregivers, was that I said one phrase thousands of times to everyone who came into the room. [It] didn't matter if you were the nurse, the doctor, the janitor or a friend, if you came into the room, I would say, 'you are the world's best,' and I would say it again and again and again."

Muller's short-term memory was temporarily impaired by the cardiac arrest, and he repeatedly asked hospital staff to explain what had happened. One of his first clear memories from his weeklong ICU stay came on the third day, when a Medtronic representative told him he would be receiving an implantable cardioverter defibrillator — a device implanted in the chest to monitor heart rhythm and correct potentially life-threatening arrhythmias.

More than 70 weeks later, the now 60-year-old is a professional speaker and author who uses his sudden cardiac arrest experience to encourage others to live their very best lives. In August 2025, he published his book, "Dying To Be The World's Best: Reignite Your Heart To Elevate Your Life," which became a number one bestseller across several categories on Amazon, according to Muller.

The book teaches readers how to live with purpose, gratitude, and resilience, sharing personal stories from his years as a Division I swimmer at Northwestern University, his more than 30-year corporate career at companies like General Mills and Mayo Clinic, and his lessons from fatherhood and coaching. It also offers actionable tools to help readers become the best versions of themselves daily.

Coincidentally, Muller's corporate career consisted of working for companies that furthered the development and installation of AEDs.

"I have done that work 25-30 years before my cardiac arrest," Muller says. "I found my own boss afterwards, and he said, 'You didn't know you were working on and writing a prescription for what would eventually save your life."

After more than 70 weeks, Muller's recovery is still a day-by-day journey as he works to maintain his physical and mental well-being. He did cardiac physical therapy for the first few months following his cardiac arrest, which consisted of walking on a treadmill at faster speeds over time and light weightlifting.

Doctors recommended he give up his hobby of scuba diving and make certain lifestyle changes to help prevent another cardiac event in the future. But for Muller, the mental recovery has been the hardest part to overcome. Since the 2024 incident, he has been navigating his battle with post traumatic stress disorder. He credits his family and friends for helping him maintain his strength as he works through the next chapter of his life.

With American Heart Month approaching in February, Muller recommends that everyone participate in CPR and AED training, so they can be prepared in the event of a cardiac emergency.

"We all have the power, talent, [and] capacity to be the world's best version of ourselves. It's a choice every day to do that," Muller says. "Secondly, know CPR. Do CPR."

