



City of Yakima

# **News Release**

**Subject: Wife Uses Heimlich Maneuver to Help Husband**

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## **911 Calltaker Talks Woman Through Heimlich Maneuver**

On October 25<sup>th</sup>, Robbie Watkins discovered her husband Vic having trouble breathing in the kitchen of the Yakima home where the two senior citizens live. The first thing Robbie did was call 911.

SunComm Calltaker Judy Dalzell immediately assessed the situation and, after determining that Vic was likely choking on an apple slice, asked Robbie if she knew how to perform the Heimlich maneuver. Robbie was vaguely familiar with the procedure originally developed in 1974 by Dr. Henry Heimlich as a way to help choking victims, but had never used it on someone. Further complicating matters was the fact the petite Robbie wasn't sure she had the strength to perform the maneuver on her much larger husband.

Still, Dalzell calmly instructed Robbie how to stand behind her husband, wrap her arms around his abdomen, make one hand into a fist and place it just above Vic's navel and under his breast bone, grasp her fist with her other hand, and then pull inward and upward, pressing into Vic's abdomen with quick upward thrusts.

It worked. When Yakima Fire Department ("YFD") Lieutenant Alex Langbell and his Engine 92 crew arrived at the Watkins home, they found Vic with watery eyes and coughing into a napkin, but otherwise just fine.

"If it wasn't for the quick actions taken by Robbie and the incredible assistance she got from Calltaker Dalzell, this story would very likely not have had the happy ending that it did," said Lt. Langbell. "Robbie was very brave to do what she did. By working together with Dalzell, she saved her husband's life."

Since it was first introduced, the Heimlich maneuver is credited with having helped prevent more than 100,000 people from choking to death.

"The Heimlich maneuver is relatively simple procedure and, as Robbie proved, can be performed by just about anybody regardless of age or stature," said YFD Captain Tom Schneider. "Hopefully the experience that Robbie and Vic went through will inspire other people to get trained in how to use the Heimlich maneuver as well as other life-saving techniques."

Capt. Schneider says a variety of health care providers and other certified instructors in Yakima offer classes in first aid, CPR, and other emergency response procedures. He encourages community members to take advantage of training opportunities so they'll be prepared when faced with a situation like Robbie and Vic were.

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