# Man having heart attack likely saved by use of CPR

***By Jan Schultz***
***The Imperial Republican***

Carla Colton and Gregg Smith, both of Imperial, don’t consider themselves heroes by any means.

However, the actions they took early Sunday morning were critical in saving Rich Grotsky’s life.

Colton said she was on her way to North Platte, and was at the Imperial Kwik Stop counter, shortly after 7 a.m., paying for gas when she saw a man at the pumps go down.

Smith was outside the store visiting with Gale McCormick, and saw the same thing.

They rushed to the gas pump area, where Grotsky had fallen under the boat his van was pulling.

Initially, Colton said Grotsky was conscious and motioning his arm as if signifying he was in distress. He tried to get up once, but Smith said he told Grotsky to stay down, and he eventually fell into unconsciousness.

Colton said she tried to find a pulse and see if he was breathing. She tilted his head back to open his airway. He had no pulse.

Smith started chest compressions. Colton applied mouth-to-mouth, kept taking his pulse and checked his breathing.

A Kwik Stop employee also rushed outside during the ordeal, Smith noted, called 911 and went in the store for towels to put under his head. She also brought out a straw used to keep Grotsky’s tongue in place.

It wasn’t long until the Imperial EMS ambulance arrived. Smith estimated it was about five minutes after the 911 call.

“I sure was happy to see them show up,” he said.

Grotsky was shocked once by the EMTs while still on the ground, then was loaded into the ambulance and taken to Chase County Community Hospital. He was later air-lifted to Northern Colorado Medical Center in Greeley, Colo.

Grotsky’s wife, Leigh, said Wednesday that her husband did suffer a heart attack, and a ventilator put in shortly after they arrived at the hospital was removed Tuesday.

Doctors indicate Grotsky is making good progress, she said, and could be released next week. No surgery was required, but he is being watched closely and on medication.

The Grotskys of Greeley, who are retired, purchased a home in Imperial about seven years ago and spend weekends here. Both are Nebraska natives.

Mrs. Grotsky was notified Sunday morning of her husband’s incident by McCormick, whom she did not know at the time. He got their address from Grotsky’s driver’s license.

McCormick then drove her to the hospital.

“I’m just happy it happened in Imperial,” she said.

Colton, a foster parent along with husband Charley, encourages people to learn CPR and first aid in a letter to the editor this week. She has taken several classes, and currently is enrolled in the medication aide course at Imperial’s Mid-Plains Community College campus.

In fact, Sunday’s incident was the third time she used her CPR/first aid skills.

Smith, on the other hand, has had no formal CPR or first aid classes, he said, but has gleaned a lot of information from talking with Terry Andersen of Lamar, an EMT who also teaches classes in Holyoke, Colo.

“I’ve had a lot of conversations with him,” Smith said, including the correct way to do chest compressions.

Colton said she didn’t think twice when she saw Grotsky in distress Sunday morning.

“It’s something that needs to be done. You do what you can,” she said.

“I can’t imagine how awful I’d feel if we all stood there and I didn’t do anything,” she said.