Khushi Shah is reunited with GoodSAM volunteers Tom Walker (left) and Joshua Gow who helped save her life after she suffered a cardiac arrest at school. Picture: Jonathan Ng

Volunteers with a heart race in to save the day

EXCLUSIVE
Tileah Dobson

What was meant to be a fun day competing in her school's cross country race became a life-and-death situation when 11-year-old Khushi Shah collapsed mid-run.

Despite her medical condition hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, Khushi desperately wanted to have a go in the race at Jordan Springs Public School in Sydney's west.

Her mother, Urvee Somaiya, 41, was hesitant to let her take part but agreed after pleading from her daughter.

"It's a genetic condition which has made her heart bigger, heart muscles bigger than what it should be," Ms Somaiya said.

"I was actually not going to allow her to do cross country, but she really wanted to do it.

Khushi with her parents who were reluctant to let her run the cross country.

"We had a chat with the school to make sure that she's comfortable and she will be fine and they said she didn't have to run, she could walk."

After dropping her daughter off at school and reminding her to not run and take breaks, Ms Somaiya thought she would be safe.

It wasn't until Khushi took a break during the race, that her heart started to hurt and she went into cardiac arrest.

The school and teachers sprung into action, putting her on the ground and alerting emergency services to the incident, triggering the GoodSAM app.

The app works by alerting registered volunteers nearby when a suspected cardiac arrest is reported to triple-0 and can get to the scene before paramedics. Since its launch in 2023, 130 lives have been saved thanks to the assistance of GoodSAM volunteers.

Josh Gow, 30, a Rural Fire Service NSW volunteer was dropping off his own kids at the school for the cross country when he got the alert on his app.

"Initially I didn't think I was in the proximity or close enough to attend," he said.

"When I accepted the event, it actually showed inside the school. So I immediately pulled over, got my wife to then drive the car down and park up while I ran inside the school.

"When I came around the corner, it was quite confronting to see Khushi unconscious with the teachers doing CPR with the AED (defibrillator) connected."

Surf Life Saving volunteer, Thomas Walker, 21, was also alerted and jumped into action, giving instructions to triple-0.

"I just wanted to get through to the call taker just to put a note for the responding crews to let them know that it was a confirmed cardiac arrest and that she was in a shockable rhythm," Mr Walker said.

Katie Ellis and Geoff Healy were two of the paramedics who responded to the call and said the volunteers had "done a really great job" treating Khushi before they arrived.

"We don't often get to see the follow up of (Khushi) sitting here, smiling and talking to us and being thankful for the care that she's had," Dr Healy said.

"To actually see a living, breathing, smiling, grateful human being after what we do every day, is a rarity."