

Paths Destined to Cross

By Elizabeth Whitchurch
Photo by Jeff Frey

She was supposed to be sleeping after working the night shift. He never rode that route on his bicycle. But on a stifling August 31, 2008, Fate had a different plan for these two people – one a WITC-New Richmond RN graduate, the other a benefits manager.

Gisele Coleman was roused from her normal sleep to go pick up her 4-year-old from her uncle's house. On her way home – and back to bed – she saw a man lying in the street, his toppled bicycle nearby. At first she wasn't sure what she was seeing, was it some kind of joke? But then she noticed the man was blue. She stopped and looked around to see if others had noticed the situation. Seeing no one, she called 9-1-1 and immediately began CPR as the man was not breathing. It was the first time Gisele had ever done CPR on a human.

"I remember doing more than 100 chest compressions before help started arriving," Gisele says. "They worked on him for what seemed like quite awhile," she says. "It was scary – I thought they were going to lose him."

"I told the cops I didn't want him arriving at the hospital as a John Doe – the man probably has family," she says. So Gisele went to the man's fallen bicycle and rescued the fanny pack, which contained the man's identification: Chuck Felion. When Felion's wife found out the route her husband had taken, she said, "He never takes that route."

"If it wasn't for her (Gisele), he wouldn't be alive," the police officer told Felion's wife.

But the story doesn't end there. Several weeks after the rescue, Gisele opened her benefits package from her new employer, U of M Medical Center, and there on a letter explaining her new benefits was the name of the man she'd saved! Felion is the benefits manager at the hospital where she works.



Felion made a full recovery and is back to work. Gisele rarely sees him as he works days and she works nights, but they periodically check on each other via e-mail. "I needed a new dental card, and he helped me this time," she laughs.

Gisele graduated in May 2008 with her RN degree from WITC-New Richmond. She and her mother took the program together, commuting from Minnesota. Gisele was preparing to begin her new job as a night nurse in medicine at University of Minnesota Medical Center, when she faced that life-saving challenge on a street in Maplewood, Minn. She later received a life-saving award from the city for her heroic efforts.

Gisele compliments her education at WITC. "They really care and nurture their students. They take you under their wing. Whenever I hear about people looking to go to school, I always tell them to look at WITC."

Gisele Coleman continues her lifelong learning beyond what she learned at WITC: "I look forward to going to work and learning new things every day." ■

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