Right place, right time, right skill

Teenager Esther Tan used CPR on a man who collapsed in Holland Village. The man lived and left hospital after three months.

Esther Tan never dreamt that a first aid course she took at the age of 15 would one day come in useful.

It did, four years later, on Feb 25 last year.

Then 19, and a student at ACS International, Ms Tan was in Holland Village with a few friends when they heard a woman shouting, "Someone call an ambulance!"

Ms Tan, now a social studies student at Singapore Management University, saw magazine store worker 72-year-old Mr Logadasan lying on his side and not breathing. As one of her friends ran off to the nearby Silver Cross Clinic to get a doctor, Ms Tan began CPR.

"I decided that it was better to try than not to try at all," she recalled.

"I kept thinking, 'nobody is going to die today!' and 'This is not happening on my way to school!' while I was doing CPR."

A passer-by helped monitor Mr Logadasan's pulse rate, she said.

She thinks it was about 11 minutes before her friends showed up with the doctor. The ambulance arrived moments later, and the paramedics took over.

They defibrillated him twice before his pulse was restored.

Ms Tan recalled: "On the scene, I was just trying to do my job and make sure that this man did not die. I didn't have time to think about how I was feeling."

She started shaking when she got to school and realised what she had done.

"The best piece of news came when we were told that Mr Logadasan was alive," she said.

He stayed in hospital for three months and his daughter kept in touch with Ms Tan. Sadly, he died at the end of last year of other causes. The Tan family and Mr Logadasan's daughter remain close.

Ms Tan learnt CPR at an in-depth first aid course at the Singapore Red Cross in November 2002.

There were many factors that contributed to her interest in learning it: "My parents and grandmother would tell of how my great grandfather was a hero in the war as a medic. And my dad kept telling me that CPR was an important skill to learn."

Her father, Mr Tan Khian Seng, 51, a management consultant, is a former St John Ambulance Brigade member. Her younger sister Lydia has also had CPR training.

It's important to know it, said Ms Tan.

"I thought I would never have to use CPR. But all I can say is that if you ever find yourself in a situation like that, it would be better if you had the skills and were equipped for action than not be prepared and live with regret and guilt for the rest of your life."

- ELAINE YOUNG