

## Paul Wilkins, 22, Kent

Whilst out celebrating at Pizza Hut in Bexleyheath, Paul Wilkins from Welling, Kent, collapsed and died on his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Here, Paul's mum, Pam, shares her story and tells us why she is campaigning in Paul's memory for more AEDs in the Bexley borough.



"Paul was fit and healthy, active in the community and had his whole life ahead of him," recalls Pam.

No one could have known that her eldest son would die suddenly, as a result of Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome, or 'SADS', a condition which can cause an otherwise healthy person's heart to suddenly stop beating. In retrospect, however, Paul did have warning signs, although these were not obvious to Paul's family until after his death, when they learned of SADS and some of the warning signs that may occur.

"Just a few weeks before Paul collapsed he had made a rare trip to the doctors. He had started to experience dizzy spells and a feeling that his heart was racing, unfortunately no tests or referrals were advised," she says.

***'Paul was fit and healthy,  
active in the community  
and had his whole life  
ahead of him'***

In the six years that have passed since his death on 11 January 2008, Pam is now able to think back to the many great memories she has of her much loved and popular son. She recalls, "In his teenage years, Paul was an active member of the Bexley Police Cadets; he went onto full time employment as a CCTV operator for Bexley Council whilst also acting as a Special Police Constable. In his spare time he ran a popular mobile disco."

This was a young man with everything to live for.

In light of her loss and the shocking statistics, Pam was driven to act under the Arrhythmia Alliance Hearts & Goals campaign.

"I was shocked to discover that fourteen young people die each week from Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome in the UK," she says.

Pam, with the help of family and friends, has arranged a fundraising event each year to coincide with Paul's birthday. This year's event was held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, which would have been Paul's 28<sup>th</sup> birthday and they once again organised a live singer, disco, raffle and auctions, with proceeds going to Arrhythmia Alliance and its Hearts & Goals campaign for the first time, one of a number of heart charities the group has supported since Paul's death.

"With proceeds raised at this event and a kind donation from Welling Round Table, we raised a grand total of £7,847.45 – enough for five 'public-access' defibrillators to be placed in the Welling and Bexley areas," Pam goes on to say.

"In the regrettable event these machines are ever needed and used alongside regular CPR, they can increase the chance of someone's survival from 9% to 50%, sadly a chance not available to my son six years ago."

Designed for public use, with these AEDs placed in prominent locations within the community, more people, both young and old alike, will have access to lifesaving treatment that will substantially increase their chance of surviving a cardiac arrest.

"We feel proud these machines are out there as something tangible for people to see after all the hard work that has been carried out in Paul's memory."

Testament indeed of the hard work of Pam and her dedicated supporters of family and friends, who have to date, raised £22,567.45 for various heart charities over the last six years and a fitting tribute to Paul who started, but sadly had cut short, a career in the local community.

***'We feel proud these machines are out there as something tangible for people to see after all the hard work that has been carried out in Paul's memory'***

Pam Oates and her family would like to express personal thanks to several local companies and friends for their continued support of her campaign in Paul's memory. They include: Welling Round Table, TK Maxx, Pizza Hut, Delfont Mackintosh Theatre, Diggerland, Kwik Fit, Cineworld, Shaffer Pens, Lakeside, Chiquito, Nivea, Animal, Windsor Castle, Serenity Rooms, Hotel Chocolat, Sainsburys, Morrisons, New London Theatre, Menkind, Allbeauty.com and Inspirations Balloons.

The five public-access defibrillators the group have placed to date can be found at:

**7 Day Chemist, 175a Bellgrove Road, Welling, Kent DA16 3QS**

**The Lord Kitchener Public House, Wrotham Road, Welling, DA16 1LS**

**Goals Soccer Centre, Graham Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7EG**

**Danson Park Boathouse, Danson Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 8HL**

**Bexleyheath Police Station, 2 Arnsberg Way, Bexleyheath, Kent DA7 4QS**

Find out more about placing an AED in your community at [www.defibssavelives.org](http://www.defibssavelives.org)



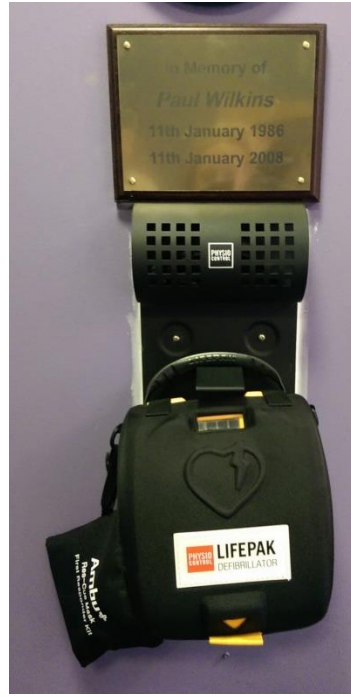
**7 Day Chemist**



**Danson Park Boathouse**



**The Lord Kitchener Pub**



**Goals Soccer Centre**