



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Phoebe Sumter Supports Local Nonprofit That is Saving Lives**

**Albany, Ga.** – “Thank you for calling the Cole Varnum Agency. How may I help you?”

That was the playful way 21-year-old Cole Varnum would often answer the phone – a greeting that may elicit a knowing grin from those who knew him well or a bemused pause from those who didn’t. On June 2, 2018, Cole died in his sleep of sudden cardiac arrest caused by a previously undiagnosed heart condition. To help them cope with their grief, and to keep Cole’s memory alive, his family created The Cole Varnum Agency.

“I knew there was nothing that could be done to save him, but I wanted to do something in his memory and be able to give back to the community who poured so much into his life in his 21 years,” said Charley Varnum, Cole’s sister.

The Americus nonprofit organization is saving lives by providing automated external defibrillators to businesses, churches and organizations in and around Americus.

“Our mission is to raise awareness about sudden cardiac arrest, provide funding for CPR and AED training and place AEDs throughout our community and surrounding areas,” Charley said.

Since its founding in 2019, The Cole Varnum Agency has sponsored multiple training sessions in conjunction with the Americus Fire Department, given funding to fire departments in surrounding counties for training and donated 15 AEDs. Recently, those AEDs helped save two people who suffered sudden cardiac arrest – a man at his gym and a woman at her church.

“Because of two different AEDs that have been placed by The Cole Varnum Agency, and because of the selfless individuals who took quick action, two lives have been saved. Both lives were saved within three days of each other just a few weeks ago,” Charley said. “This is just further evidence to show that it can happen to anyone at anytime without any warning and that the importance of AEDs within close range is beneficial and lifesaving.”

Phoebe Sumter Medical Center shares the Varnum family’s commitment to educating the community about sudden cardiac arrest and to making AEDs more readily available.

“I was personally moved by the way the Varnums transformed their family’s tragedy into something positive for the community. Not only are they honoring Cole’s life and legacy, they are also providing education and equipment that is literally saving lives, and the Phoebe Sumter Family is honored to support that work,” said Carlyle Walton, Phoebe Sumter President.

Phoebe Sumter invited Charley to speak at the hospital’s recent Heart Walk. After Charley’s remarks, the hospital surprised her by donating four AED kits to The Cole Varnum Agency.

“It came at a great time,” Charley said of the donation. “We just got asked to give out two AEDs, but we had to cap our deliveries until we start getting sponsors for our fundraiser in the fall because that money is what goes back into the community. So, this donation means those people don’t have to wait,” Charley said.

The Cole Varnum Agency will hold its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Heart & Sole 5K fundraising race on Saturday, September 13 at 8:30 a.m. The chip-timed 3.1-mile race starts and finishes at Central Baptist Church. All finishers will receive medals. Awards will also be presented to individual male and female winners in several age groups, as well as to overall winners. Race registration will be through “Run Signup” and will be available in a few months. The Cole Varnum Agency accepts donations year-round and is currently seeking sponsors for this year’s race. You can follow the organization on Facebook to learn more.

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