



High schools to get life-saving defibrillators

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Three teachers from Southern Okanagan Secondary School in Oliver have been trained to empower their students to save lives.

Steve Podmorow, Dan Fuller and Dave Wilson recently attended an automated external defibrillator (AED) course as part of the ACT High School CPR Program.

The course will result in 200 students in School District 53 trained annually on how to use the AED to save lives. The device is used to "shock" the heart back to life after a patient is found with no pulse. The machine comes with electronic pads that are placed on the chest.

Because of donations of \$9,966 from Interior Savings Credit Union and \$1,780 from Osoyoos Credit Union, the three secondary schools in the district will each receive defibrillator training mannequins, training units, as well as an AED for in-school cardiac arrest emergencies.

"Enabling teachers to train youth how to save a life is a tremendous asset to our communities," said Kathy Conway, president and CEO of Interior Savings. "This program will have many benefits since it is sustainable over time, and we will continue to see its positive impact year after year."

Oliver branch manager Gina Chapman said she can definitely relate to heart disease since her husband Vince had two heart attacks at the age of 40 and 46. She noted he was not doing anything strenuous, just sleeping. He now has four stints in his arteries, and he's "like the bionic man now," Chapman said.

"It's unfortunate for him but heart disease is hereditary in his family and his mom died at 28 and his grandma at 55."

The ACT Foundation is the national charitable organization that is establishing CPR

and defibrillator training programs in all Canadian high schools.

The recent training course was provided by BC Ambulance Service paramedic and CPR instructor Anne Benn, who volunteered her time to teach the workshop.

"BC Ambulance Service paramedics attend over 3,000 cardiac arrest patients each year," said BCAS Chief Operating Officer Les Fisher. "Although our dispatchers relay resuscitation instructions to 9-1-1 callers, a cardiac arrest victim's best chance of survival is CPR and application of an AED by trained bystanders while the ambulance is enroute."

With eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occurring at home or in public places, empowering youth with CPR training as part of their high school education will help increase citizen CPR response rates over the long term.

Early CPR, combined with early defibrillation can increase survival rates for cardiac arrest victims by up to 75 per cent, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

ACT Foundation executive director Sandra Clarke said the CPR program in district schools allows students to bring these skills to their families and communities.

Cindy Gilbert, executive assistant to the superintendent, said students in Physical Education 10 class will receive CPR/AED training from their teachers.

"It's amazing how simple it is (to operate an AED). It (the machine) walks you through it."

The device actually prompts the user what to do by indicating what button to push and when to push it.

Podmorow said this training will prepare students to act when they are faced with an emergency, instead of feeling powerless because they don't know what to do.

Before the training course, Podmorow

admitted he was a little worried about using the AED incorrectly. But he found out the device does not work unless it has to.

The AED works in conjunction with CPR,

in which chest compressions and assisted breathing must be performed. If the machine detects a heart rhythm, it will shock the patient.



Teacher Dave Wilson from SOSS pretends to choke on food while teacher Sam Wingham from SESS tries to help before going into CPR/AED mode during a recent training course at the Oliver Community Centre.

Lyonel Doherty photo