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Students put hearts into training

By Benjamin Aubé
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Timmins High & Vocational School was pumped up to receive four new defibrillator (AED) units courtesy of TransCanada and the ACT Foundation on Friday. Having AEDs on site and people trained to use them can increase to likelihood of surviving cardiac arrest by up to 75%. Among those touching up their first-aid knowledge on Friday were, from left, Mayor Tom Laughren, TransCanada representative Dan Stencill, and TH&VS students Jenna Wilson and Sam McPhail.

TIMMINS - A group of community-minded organizations teamed up for a truly heart-warming story.

Timmins High & Vocational School is now equipped with four new automated external defibrillator (AED) units courtesy of natural gas company TransCanada and the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation.

"The goal is to promote mandatory coronary and aid training in high schools throughout Canada," explained TH&VS principal Barry Mulrone. "Approximately 1.8 million students across Canada have been trained through ACT programs, and almost 2,000 schools are now participating."

The ACT Foundation acts as a supplier of resources and a co-ordinator of training for high school teachers and "ensures that there's sustainability for all the schools so we can maintain our equipment and keep the program running for years to come," said Mulrone.

"TransCanada has donated four AED (automated external defibrillator) units, training mannequins, as well as curriculum resources and teacher training this past year. This year, we've trained over 15 teachers in the program here at Timmins High and our offsite facilities. It's been a really huge benefit to our school."

As a heart attack survivor himself, Mulrone said he's aware of how important acting quickly can be when someone is suffering cardiac arrest or having similar problems.

"The main reason we're here today is we know that early acting with CPR and AEDs will increase survival rates," he explained. "Just CPR increases the survival rate by four times, and the addition of AEDs brings the survival rate up to 75% beyond that."

Local teacher training is done through the local Emergency Medical Services, run by the District of Cochrane Social Services Administration Board.

Sitting on the CDSSAB board, in addition to being a longtime volunteer firefighter, Timmins Mayor Tom Laughren knows that every second counts when it's a matter of life and death.

"It's important that we have the defibrillators out there and that people are trained," said Laughren. "When you bring that into public buildings such as schools and arenas, when you can train teachers and workers and students, I think that's really important."

"The more people we have out there, the more ways we have available - as Mr. Mulrone illustrated - it definitely saves lives, it gives people a better opportunity."

Laughren also thanked TransCanada representative Dan Stencill and other involved corporate partners on behalf of the City of Timmins for their interest in benefiting the community at large.

Stencill accepted a plaque from the city which honoured TransCanada for its efforts to improve the lives of residents.

"TransCanada was involved in the CPR program a few years back," said Stencill, "and this was a nice follow-up for the Cochrane and Kenora District high schools with the AED program."

"TransCanada encourages and supports ACT programming because we realize the important role it plays in the success of promoting a healthy environment. It's our hope that through supporting community assets like the ACT Foundation, we're helping empower individuals to build strong communities and create effective citizens."

