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Durham students learn to save lives

All Grade 9 students to get defibrillator training

Brock Citizen

By Kristen Calis

(DURHAM REGION) Grade 9 students across Durham Region will be learning how to save a life.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation and partners have launched a new CPR and defibrillator training program through the Durham public and Catholic school boards.

"It's an excellent project and it will truly make a difference," said public school board chairman Joe Allin.

Each year, more than 7,000 high school students from 25 high schools in the area will be trained in the program.

"With defibrillators being more available in hockey arenas and other public places, we can be assured that thousands of young people will know how to perform CPR and will know how to pull that defibrillator off the wall to save lives throughout Durham," said Sandra Clarke, executive director of the ACT foundation.

After sponsors Sanofi, AstraZeneca and Pfizer Canada donate the equipment, teachers are trained on defibrillators and then do four hours of training with Grade 9 students, as part of their physical education course.

"We are seeing an increase in the number of public access defibrillators in the community, but having them available is only part of the equation — there is also a great need for people trained and comfortable with using them," said Mr. Allin.

"This program ensures a generation of our students will have these potentially life-saving skills."

The training and equipment have the potential to make a real difference in cardiac arrest outcomes, said John Bowyer, the Durham District School Board's superintendent safety and security.

"We know from the Heart and Stroke Foundation that early CPR, in combination with use of an AED, boost survival rates significantly," he said.

"It is our goal at DDSB to provide opportunities for students to develop positive character traits, and this gives them hands on training to do just that."

The program is also supported by a lengthy list of community sponsors, including Ontario Power Generation, Veridian Connections and the Lions Clubs in Beaverton, Cannington and Sunderland.

"We are thrilled with the support of ACT's partners. Without them, this lifesaving program would not be possible," Ms Clarke said.

To date, the ACT Foundation has instituted the program in more than 1,600 schools nation-wide.

The training equipment is expected to arrive at Brock High School later this month.

For more information on the program, visit actfoundation.ca

With notes from Scott Howard

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