

## Hundreds of students to get first-aid training

posted Feb 10, 2015 at 1:00 PM



Colin Fitzpatrick guides Summerland teacher Tom Birckenden through CPR training that he'll now deliver to his students thanks to help from the ACT Foundation and TELUS. — Image Credit: Joe Frie/Penticton Western News

People with heart trouble might breathe a sigh of relief knowing upwards of 500 local students annually will soon be receiving enhanced first-aid training that could save their lives.

Ten educators from high schools in Penticton and Summerland last week were certified to teach their students how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation and use an automatic external defibrillator, which delivers an electrical jolt to restart someone's heart.

The training, plus AED devices and practice mannequins for each of the three local high schools, were funded by the TELUS Thompson Okanagan Community Board through the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation.

Instructor Colin Fitzpatrick, an education officer with B.C. Emergency Health Services, said CPR and AEDs greatly increase patients' odds of survival.

"There's a lot of evidence to show that early CPR and early defibrillation make a huge difference in cardiac arrests," he noted.

"Good CPR and how to use these machines is relatively easy to learn, and you absolutely will make a huge difference" Fitzpatrick continued.

“The only way that we have super-good outcomes is if people in the public get involved, if people take CPR courses, know how to do it and are willing and able to get involved when they see something happen.”

Tom Brickenden, a teacher at Summerland Secondary School who was among the 10 who received training last week, had no difficulty catching on.

“It’s actually quite easy,” he said.

“There are definitely some things you need to know, but the machines are so high-tech now they sort of talk you through the scenario. Really, it’s almost idiot-proof in some ways.”

The ACT Foundation is a national non-profit devoted to making free CPR and AED training available at every high school in Canada. To date, it claims to have helped nearly three million students learn those skills.

“It’s a fantastic program,” said Fitzpatrick. “The more people we train, the better off we’re all going to be.”