

Sparwood teachers and students learn to save lives



Jeff Chambers photo

Sparwood Secondary Principal Frank Sopka, with teachers, receives \$9,000 donation for CPR Equipment from Pam Shaw and Isabelle Randell of RBC.

EFF CHAMBERS **Elk Valley Herald Reporter**

On Wednesday, June 22, Paramedics attended Sparwood Secondary School to educate teachers in the basics of CPR and how to properly use a defibrillator. In turn, every student will have the chance to learn from the teachers these important lifesaving strategies.

The program is made possible by the charitable organization, Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation. With the support of several health partners such as Astra Zeneca, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi Canada, the ACT Foundation is hoping to take this program right across the country. Every year 310,000 students are trained by their high school teachers thanks to ACT. To date the Foundation has donated over 50,000 mannequins to high schools across Canada and 6,000 teachers have been trained as CPR instructors for their students.

"It's a wonderful program and the students are excited to be prepared to save a life. We want to make sure that every young person across the country receives this training as part of their high school education. We see this as a huge enhancement to emergency response and a compliment to paramedic care," said Sandra Clarke with the ACT Foundation.

Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) has a large part to play in the program in Elkford, Fernie and Sparwood, donating \$9000 dollars for equipment that the schools get to keep to continue the training for years to come. RBC donates 2 percent of their revenue to RBC foundations and programs like this one, and this year are very focused on the youth in schools, according to Regional Vice President of RBC Kootenay/ B.C. interior, Pam Shaw. "This is going to save lives," said Shaw. "It's something we should all be educated in for sure. Even if this were to be taught in grade 1 or grade 2, a child can easily roll someone over on their side and call 911 if need be. Just basic things that they can learn are beneficial. People

would like to see the training started younger so when kids start partying and there is an incident, they'll know how to check on their friends and make sure they are alright. Why wait until grade 10?"

A giant cheque was presented to Principal Frank Sopka, of Sparwood Secondary School, by Pam Shaw and Isabelle Randell on behalf of RBC on Wednesday and all the equipment was laid out on tables ready for demonstration.

"We think it's a great program. It educates our youth, and although this training starts in grade 10, it could be started even earlier," said Sparwood RBC Branch Manager, Isabelle Randell

The equipment donated by RBC will see every Secondary School in the Elk Valley receiving 13 prompt CPR mannequins, 2 Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training units and 2 Prestan AED mannequins.

"Our goal is to see this program essentially nailed into the curriculum so every young person will learn how to save lives," said Clarke. "We are working with the British Columbia Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) and the paramedics in many cases conduct the teacher training. The paramedics train the teachers to be the instructors so they can teach the students. It's a wonderful partnership between the ACT Foundation, BCEHS, the community and of course our corporate partners as well. We go community by community to set this up and we raise funds for equipment, get the schools on board, arrange the teacher training, the school is then ready to take ownership of the program and insert it into the curriculum."

The program has been in place in British Columbia since 2005 with a first wave setting up just the CPR program but more recently, as defibrillators became more common in public places, the foundation decided to add the AED training as well.

"We are now going back through the province and upgrading the teachers with CPR and AED training. Research shows that when someone suffers a cardiac arrest, if someone starts CPR quickly and applies a defibrillator, chances of survival can increase by up to 75 percent," said Clarke. "Both are very important, and although there is an increase in AED's in public places, not enough people are trained on how to use them. By ensuring young people are trained through their school education we know now that if they see a defibrillator in a sports arena, community centre or other public places, they will have the confidence and training to pull it down off of the wall and they'll know how to use it."

Students involved seem to be learning very quickly and have a natural ability to learn the life saving techniques, according to Clarke and the AED's have a failsafe so they cannot shock a beating heart.

Clarke explained that even now there are many rescue stories where students and teachers have stepped in to save a life in an emergency. When asked about the experience, students usually reply very modestly, "I was just doing what I was told to do."

To learn more or to view for yourself some of the rescue stories and the positive impact the program has had, visit actfoundation.ca.

<http://www.elkvalleyherald.ca/archives/160629/index1.htm>