

THE DAILY GLEANER

CPR training for Grade 9 students

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Each year the Fredericton Community Foundation provides grants to local charities in the greater Fredericton area.

These grants are used to assist organizations with programming to carry out the great work they do for the citizens in our communities.

In addition to the regular granting sessions, each year the foundation sets aside a larger amount of money for an "impact grant."

The purpose of this grant is to provide an organization or group with a significant amount of funding to implement a program that otherwise might not go ahead.

This year the impact grant was for \$15,000 and the recipient was the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation.

I'm sure as you read this, you're wondering what is the ACT Foundation and what do they do?

First off, they actually do not have a location here in Fredericton.

However, the grant dollars will be used directly in the local area and have an impact on several thousand young high school students.

The \$15,000 grant will be used to implement a CPR training program in both Fredericton High School and Leo Hayes High School.

As a result of this grant, every high school student entering Grade 9 in both these schools will have the opportunity to learn CPR (including defibrillation) and graduate with the skills and knowledge to save lives.

The ACT Foundation was established in 1985 with the mission to "promote health and empower Canadians to save lives."

The ACT Foundation is spearheading an initiative to have all high school students in the country graduate with CPR training.

The program is currently running in 1,500 schools across Canada, having trained approximately 1.4 million youth.

To date, FHS and LHHS are the first two high schools in New Brunswick to participate in this program.

The funding from the Fredericton Community Foundation will be used to purchase two class sets of 30 mannequins each per school, defibrillator training units, teacher training and materials and guiding schools in program set up.

Schools will take on the responsibility of training the teachers who will, in turn, train each Grade 9 student (approximately 1,000 per year) in CPR. The schools make an on-going commitment to maintain trained staff to teach the program to students.

The ACT program promotes healthy lifestyle choices for youth which they then carry throughout their lives.

It also teaches youth the four Rs of CPR: Risk of cardiovascular disease and the importance of health lifestyle; Recognize a developing medical emergency; React by calling 911; and Resuscitate by performing CPR.

The ACT Foundation is a community-oriented organization promoting partnerships with the many CPR agencies in the local community such as St. John Ambulance, the Red Cross and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

With the current statistics showing that youth obesity rates in New Brunswick have tripled over the past 25 years and the overall obesity rate in New Brunswick is one of the highest in the country at 33.8 percent, this is an opportunity to educate these same youth on healthy lifestyle choices.

They can then take this information home to their families and hopefully, begin a shift in the trend.

Research has shown that unhealthy lifestyles increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, cancer, diabetes, depression, increased anxiety and early death.

With the schools accepting a level of responsibility to now have a program that educates every youth entering high school on lifestyle options, we are on the right track.

Imagine, in five years, Fredericton could boast 5,000 youth who are CPR-trained and making healthy lifestyle choices.

Now that is something to be proud of.

Cindy Sheppard is the executive director of the Fredericton Community Foundation and writes about non-profit agencies and issues related to the non-profit sector. Her column appears every second Thursday.