

Getting ready to save a life

By Heather Wright

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Drew Anderson has never been in a situation to help someone having a heart attack but now he has the skills to do it.

Anderson who is a student at SCITS in Sarnia is one of the 2,800 students in Sarnia-Lambton and Chatham-Kent who will be learning CPR and how to use a defibrillator thanks to a group called ACT and local businesses.

ACT has been teaching CPR to students across Canada for years, providing training for teachers so students in Grade 9 Physical Education can learn the life-saving technique.

In 2008, it started adding instruction on how to use defibrillators. The group approached businesses in the region to sponsor the cost of the program in each of the high schools.

Dr. Adam Dukelow, the medical director for Southwestern Ontario's Regional Base Hospital Program, says studies show taking the time to teach CPR to as many people as possible can make a difference.

He says in Seattle, there has been a concerted effort to offer the course. If you have a heart attack in Seattle you are twice as likely to survive because about half of the time a bystander would have performed CPR.

Jennifer Boissonneault of ACT adds students trained in the program have already helped with "hundreds of lives" have already been saved by students.

And officials hope the program will help in the community, too. Hydro One is one of the companies supporting the program.

Doug Bendall, customer operations manager, says it is important to train teens because they are "the workforce of the future" and the knowledge they're receiving through CPR training will enhance the workplace in the future.

The students are excited to get the life-saving training. Anderson already knew CPR from his training as a lifeguard. But he says learning how to use a defibrillator is a bonus.

"It's actually really easy to use," he says after demonstrating how the purse sized unit works.

"You can do it without training because there are instructions but obviously the training is very helpful."



LIFESAVERS Madison Grant and Ferdinando Colella of SCITS work to save the life of their mannequin during a demonstration recently. ACT and local businesses are helping all the high school students in Sarnia-Lambton learn how to do CPR and use a defibrillator.