



Getting their ACT together; Community benefits when students learn CPR skill

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By: Aidan Chafe

Grade 12 students at Chilliwack secondary spent last week performing chest compressions, checking for heart rates and reviving plastic mannequins by showing off their lung ventilation techniques.

Fresh from the holiday break, phys-ed teachers at the local high school had their students learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) as part of an initiative to have every student learn the basics of emergency response in B.C. and the rest of Canada by 2010.

"I've had three former students having to use CPR," said CSS teacher Robert Lindsay. "This is an initiative that's going to benefit not only the students but the community."

The ACT High School CPR program started with paramedic instructors from BC Ambulance Service train the phys-ed staff at CSS last year through a teacher training workshop for full CPR certification. The training was followed up with half-day refresher course with the staff updating their CPR certification once every three years.

"We know these students are out partying and having a good time with friends on the weekend," said Barb Kroeker, who was busy in the JY Halcrow gymnasium instructing students. "So if they're equipped to put a buddy in recovery position or how to do Heimlich manoeuvre, that's going to go a long way in maybe saving someone's life."

As of Friday all Grade 12 students who have physical education first semester and many Grade 11s--approximately two-thirds--completed the 80-minute course, which was divided into separate classes. The course is an introductory level of CPR outlining the basics specifically the four "Rs": risk factors for cardiovascular disease and the importance of adopting a heart healthy lifestyle; how to recognize a developing medical emergency; how to react, by calling 9-1-1 and how to deal with the situation until the time the ambulance arrives; and how to resuscitate, or perform CPR.

The program goal, announced back in November 2007, is to have all 275 standard B.C. secondary schools set up with mannequins and materials and have the program running by 2010 with the goal to have 50,000 students training annually.