

Course is a life saver

By Cameron Orr - Kitimat Northern Sentinel - February 27, 2008

Parents now have a good reason to keep their teenager nearby at all times.

Mount Elizabeth Secondary School and Kitimat City High recently joined the ranks of 100 other schools in BC when they welcomed the ACT High School CPR Program into their curriculum.

ACT - Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation - is a charitable organization that seeks to make CPR training a mandatory part of the curriculum for students before graduation.

"It is not currently in the curriculum but when the schools agree to offer the program to students they integrate it right into the physical education curriculum," explained foundation executive director Sandra Clarke.

What the foundation asks, she added, is that the school integrates the course into an age group and class that would be mandatory before graduation.

Usually the grade 10 physical education class is what is chosen to learn CPR as grade 10 gym is still mandatory.

Later grades still get the chance to learn as many teachers will still offer it as an optional program or refresher in many schools.

Dan Striker, physical education teacher at Mount Elizabeth seen in the photo at right, had only good things to say about the day long course. "It was really good. It was very beneficial," he said.

"I did it [CPR training] about 10 years ago so it was a good refresher to myself."

He said the teachers (three were trained at MESS and one for Kitimat City High) hope to start passing on the knowledge to kids as soon as possible, adding right now it will only be taught to the grade 10 classes.

Carl Wassink, a paramedic from Terrace, was the instructor for the day.

Clarke said that kids learn the heart of first aid through the program.

"They learn the most critical aspect of First Aid, they learn what to do for a critical life-threatening emergency."

She said the program is based off of the "Four Rs" of CPR which includes recognizing risks to help adopt healthier lifestyles, recognizing an emergency, reacting by calling for help, and resuscitation, which involves CPR.

ACT began in BC in 2000 with a pilot project in 20 schools. Through partnerships with the BC Ambulance Service and the Ambulance Paramedics of BC, the program was given a lift in 2005 and began expanded provincially.

Paramedics teach the teachers in special workshops how to perform CPR and the teachers pass that information on to their students.

And while the program is fairly new to schools in BC, the program has taken off nationally and is part of the curriculum at more than 1,000 schools in Canada.

Clarke added the program has already been saving lives from children helping their parents during heart attacks to assisting in motor vehicle accidents.

She is confident that as the BC program grows, we will begin hearing more success stories.

ACT relies on its supporters, which includes the Envision Credit Union Charitable Foundation which gave a grant of \$53,000 - which in Kitimat means the donation of 30 CPR mannequins.

