

Hamilton students empowered to save lives through ACT

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Students at Delta Secondary School were trained to use CPR.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation, in partnership with FirstOntario Credit Union as lead community partner, and the Government of Ontario and other key provincial partners (Hydro One, Shoppers Drug Mart and The Ontario Trillium Foundation), launched the ACT High School CPR Program in Hamilton last week.

More than 4,400 Grade 9 students from 20 high schools in the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board and le Conseil scolaire de district du Centre-Sud-Ouest will now be empowered to save lives. Eighty physical education teachers have been trained as CPR instructors and will train their students using 660 mannequins donated to schools. The students will take their life-saving skills to their current and future families and to the local community.

The ACT Foundation is a national charitable organization dedicated to establishing CPR as a mandatory program in every Canadian high school. The ACT High School CPR Program is built on ACT's award-winning community-based model of partnerships and support. Through this model, ACT raises funds for CPR mannequins for schools and guides schools in program set up. The lead community partner in Hamilton is FirstOntario Credit Union.

"FirstOntario Credit Union is committed to working towards the betterment of our communities," says FirstOntario Credit Union President and CEO Kelly McGiffin. "The ACT High School CPR Program in the Hamilton area is a very valuable program and one we are proud to support. It is truly a privilege to play a key role in the empowerment of local youth and afford them the opportunity to learn the skills and knowledge to save lives."

Eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home. Research indicates that citizen CPR response can improve survival rates by almost fourfold. Empowering youth with CPR training as part of their high school education will increase citizen CPR response rates and save lives over the long term.

"As an Emergency Physician in Hamilton, unfortunately I have seen too many deaths due to cardiac arrest and choking," says Dr. Michelle Welsford, Medical Director at the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre. "Early CPR and the Heimlich maneuver save lives and what better gift can you give than the training on how to save someone's life. Due solely to this program, I will see more people saved by the youth and educators in our community."

The ACT Foundation's goal is to expand the CPR Program to every high school throughout Ontario. To help make this possible, ACT has secured a provincial commitment of \$650,000 from the Government of Ontario. Through a public / private funding model, the Foundation seeks matching funds for program resources at the community level.

"I am pleased to see a program such as the ACT CPR High School Program implemented in our schools," says Hamilton Mountain MPP Sophia Aggelonitis. "It is so important to teach our kids life saving skills. I commend everyone on their hard work and dedication for making this program possible."