

## It heartily matters

by Raffy Boudjikianian

November 26th 2008

About twenty teachers from all over Montreal Island received a day-long training session in CPR and related first-aid manoeuvres at École Secondaire Émile Legault in St. Laurent last Friday at the hands of trained Urgences-Santé paramedics officers thanks to ACT (Advanced Coronary Treatment) Foundation of Canada, a national charitable foundation with roots in the West Island.

"We do this at least twice a year," explained officer Patrice Ruest. The idea behind the foundation's high school program, he said, is to train teachers so that they in turn can teach their own students how to perform CPR.



Once teacher training is complete, the foundation also supplies the schools in question with mannequins for students to practice on, as well as training DVDs.

Ruest said there is no real danger of anything getting lost in translation between the officers teaching the teachers and the latter passing on that knowledge to their students. "When you call 911 and someone is instructing you how to deliver CPR over the telephone, for example," he said, "it's always better to have already gained knowledge first-hand from a teacher."

He argued the combination of remembering a hands-on training session and hearing instructions again over the telephone could only help.

The two instructors taught more than just CPR on Friday's session. The Heimlich manoeuvre, which allows someone to clear a choking victim's blocked trachea, was also demonstrated live. Ruest posed as the choking victim and his colleague Benoît Chapdelaine showed wrapped his hands around the former's diaphragm and showed how to apply pressure on it.

"Can you perform the Heimlich on yourself?" Asked one of their pupils, wondering what would happen if there was nobody around to help out.

Chapdelaine answered the best possible solution was to both call 911 immediately and try to find the edge of a table or kitchen counter to press against one's own diaphragm, in order to expel the object.

According to ACT Foundation's executive director Sandra Clarke, Émile Legault is but one of 200 schools in Quebec which partake in the training program every year. "Four thousand five hundred students are now trained every year," she added.

Since ACT started up in 1985, it is estimated about 37 000 students have learned how to perform CPR.

ACT is able to reach its goals thanks to national sponsors such as Pfizer, sanofi-aventis, AstraZeneca and Bristol-Meyers Squibb Canada.