

Mannequins help students learn CPR

By KATE DUBINSKI, FREE PRESS EDUCATION REPORTER

The young women in Janet Read's Grade 9 healthy active living class kneel beside their mannequins, carefully counting and listening for a soft click that tells them they're on the right track.

A class set of mannequins at St. Thomas Aquinas secondary school is part of a rollout of more than 1,100 of the CPR dolls in London and surrounding area, paid for by community groups and businesses as well as the province.

"The students are very enthusiastic. They like the hands-on aspect. It gives them a level of comfort that if they have to (perform CPR) they can remember doing it," said teacher Julia Read.

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation training has been a mandatory part of the province's high school curriculum since 1999, but many schools didn't have the mannequins for students to practise on because they were too expensive.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation of Canada, armed with half the funding it needed -- \$650,000 from the province -- and a matching amount from sponsors, has purchased about 30 mannequins for each school and training manuals.

The foundation also pays for teacher training so students are taught the skill in-house, said Sandra Clarke, the foundation's founder and executive director.

The mannequins cost \$75 each and allow all students to practise at once. The total cost is about \$3,300 a school.

"It's the whole community that benefits from these kids knowing CPR," Clarke said.

"They learn to manage an emergency situation as a life skill, but they're also learning about heart health and general healthy lifestyles."

The four-hour course, taught in Grade 9 gym classes, gives students CPR certification.

About 200 teachers from all 37 area secondary schools -- from both the Catholic and public boards -- will eventually be taught how to teach the course, Clarke said.

"We had a unit at the beginning of the semester about CPR, but now that the dummies are here, it's a lot more fun," said Julia Loreto, 14, one of Read's students.

"With the mannequins, you know how hard to press, where to do it. I just kind of thought we would be taught the basics (of CP) but this is a lot better."

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The following community partners helped bring 1,140 mannequins to the region's schools through the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation of Canada:

- AstraZeneca
- Bristol-Myers Squibb Canada
- Pfizer Canada
- Sanofi-Aventis



Janet Read uses one of the new mannequins to show Laura Eisar 13, to how to check for chest compressions when doing cardiopulmonary resuscitation. (Dave Chidley, LFP)

- Hydro One
- Government of Ontario
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- GoodLife Fitness Clubs
- Sterling Trucks Corp. and CAW Local 1001
- Charles H. Ivey Foundation
- London Community Foundation
- Shoppers Drug Mart