

## **Students prepare themselves with CPR basics**

By LEAH PRESTAYKO

### Medicine Hat News

Hatters can feel more at ease about surviving a heart attack or accident while going about their daily business if there's a Grade 10 student on hand.

Some 1,000 Grade 10 students from eight Medicine Hat area schools will receive CPR training this year thanks to a new program under which all Grade 10 students in Alberta will be required to take the training as part of their physical education classes.

Leaning over a training mannequin, Hat High students showed their newly acquired skills to program coordinators and sponsors Monday morning.

"I'm a first-aider. I can help," Lindsay Owen tells her 'patient.'

"You, call 9-1-1," she and seven other students direct in unison, starting the chain of events they've been taught to follow in preparation for one day being called on to save a life.

For Owen, the training is likely to be more than a high-school requirement -- she wants to become a paramedic.

Noel Chant, 14, was recently certified in hopes of becoming a lifeguard and appreciates efforts to make it mandatory in schools.

"You never know when something is going to happen and it can be pretty scary when you don't know what to do," Chant said. "It helps you take control of the situation."

Hal Canham, medical director for the Medicine Hat Ambulance Service said the skills the students will learn are critical to the chain of survival which involves calling for emergency services and providing care until paramedics arrive.

"As in any chain, the strength of the chain is dependent upon the strength of each link," Canham said, noting the training will strengthen the first links.

In 2000, Alberta Learning announced the mandatory training. The ACT foundation, which is coordinating the programs, is a national non-profit foundation whose primary goal is to establish CPR training in all Canadian high schools. The program is designed to teach the four Rs -- risk factors, recognize early warning signs, react and resuscitate.

The Kiwanis Club of Medicine Hat, Kiwanis Club of Medicine Hat Golden K and the STARS foundation have jointly donated 125 CPR mannequins to be used in the local schools.

"I truly believe lives will be saved," said Ken Sauer, Kiwanis Club president. "What better gift can you give to the community?"

The Medicine Hat News is sponsoring the printing of the student manuals for the next three years.

"What we're excited about is the opportunity to provide students with the skills to meet the challenge," managing editor Alan Poirier said.

Nationally, 450,000 high school students will be trained annually through ACT programs once all programs are in place.