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Saving lives on teachers' list

By Bob Munday

Just over a handful of teachers from the local school district had what potentially could be life-saving lessons of their own last Friday.

And, the educators will take their new-found knowledge back into the classrooms. Throughout the day Friday, nine teachers from School District No. 53 Okanagan-Similkameen underwent training that will, hopefully, empower their students with life-saving CPR and heart health education through the Advanced Coronary Treatment High School CPR Program.

Teachers from Oliver's Southern Okanagan Secondary School and Osoyoos Secondary School participated in the ACT High School CPR Teacher Training Workshop which was held at the School District 53 Board Office.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation, in partnership with the British Columbia Ambulance Service and the Ambulance Paramedics of BC - CUPE Local 873 is working to bring the ACT High School CPR Program to all BC youth.

"This is the first time we've trained teachers in Oliver, so it should be a pretty big deal to both the board and the students who will be empowered to save lives as a result," said Jessey Bird, ACT Foundation manager of media relations, told the *Oliver Chronicle* in a telephone interview last week from Ottawa.

Bird said that in the Oliver-Osoyoos region more than 250 students are expected to learn how to save lives following the teacher-training event.

"We bring in paramedics, and other trainers, and they train all the teachers which creates a sustainable program in the high schools so that the teachers can continuously teach all the students and more people in BC will have their lives saved," said Bird. "We have kids saving lives all the time."

In the Okanagan-Similkameen, ACT is receiving funding from lead community partner Interior Savings Credit Union. Thanks in large part to a grant of nearly \$8,000, participating secondary schools in Osoyoos, Keremeos and Oliver will receive curriculum materials as well as 70 CPR mannequins. This grant is part of a larger grant totaling \$36,800 from Interior Savings to bring the ACT High School CPR Program to the secondary schools in School Districts No. 53 Okanagan-Similkameen, No. 58 Nicola-Similkameen, and No.73 Kamloops/Thompson.

"Training teachers to teach youth how to save a life is a tremendous asset to our communities," said Gene Creelman, vice-president marketing and communications of Interior Savings, in a news release. "This program will have many benefits since it is sustainable over time and we will continue to see its positive impact year after year."

The ACT program is built on a strong community-based model of partnerships and support whereby ACT helps communities find local partners who donate the mannequins, curriculum materials and

teacher training that schools need to set up the program. Secondary school teachers then teach CPR to their students as a regular part of the curriculum, reaching all youth prior to graduation.

Full implementation in BC will see approximately 50,000 youth trained in CPR annually.

Teacher training in BC is provided by local paramedics, who volunteer their time to prepare teachers to teach the program to their students. Friday's teacher training was being provided by Wayne Smith, BCAS Paramedic and CPR instructor.

Cardiovascular disease is the second leading cause of death and accounts for more than one fifth of all deaths in BC. Research indicates citizen CPR response can improve survival rate for victims of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest by almost fourfold. With eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occurring at home, empowering youth with CPR training as part of their high school education will help increase citizen CPR response rates over the long term.

"It's estimated that only 15 per cent of British Columbians know CPR," said BCAS Vice-President of Medical Programs Dr. Jim Christenson, a press release. "Even with the best technology, medical expertise and timely deployment of first responders, the best chance for someone in cardiac arrest is still to have a bystander perform CPR until paramedics can provide professional CPR and defibrillation."

In addition to empowering youth to save lives, the ACT program has a strong health promotion message, said Sandra Clarke, executive director of the ACT Foundation.

"Students learn about risk factors for heart disease and the importance of adopting heart healthy lifestyle behaviors at a young age," said Clarke. "They will then bring their health promotion message and lifesaving skills to their present and future families."

To date, the ACT Foundation has set up the ACT High School CPR Program in over 1200 schools nationwide, empowering more than 900,000 youth to save lives.

The ACT Foundation is a national, award-winning charitable organization dedicated to promoting health and empowering Canadians to save lives. ACT is driving a national campaign to establish CPR as a mandatory program in every Canadian high school. ACT raises funds for CPR mannequins for schools and guides schools in program set up. The Foundation, and its core partners, are winners of Imagine Canada's 'New Spirit of Community Partnership' award. Core partners are companies in the research-based pharmaceutical industry: AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi-aventis. They provide Act's sustaining funding and are committed to the Foundation's national goal of promoting health and empowering Canadians to save lives.