

## Teachers giving the gift of life

By Robert Mangelsdorf - Maple Ridge News - June 19, 2008



From left, Westview teacher Leanne Trotter, Bill Murphy and Ryanne Lorusso practice proper hand placement on CPR dummies in the school library on Thursday. Simone Ponne/The News

Dozens of high school gym teachers filled the Westview secondary library on Thursday to not only learn how to save a life, but how to pass that information on to their students.

They were being trained as part of a program that will see every Grade 10 student in the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows school district trained to give cardiopulmonary resuscitation in the event of an emergency.

“The more people who are trained to save lives, the better,” said Debbie Keel, School District No. 42’s healthy living facilitator. “It’s been proven to save lives.”

The Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation is sponsoring the program and has helped train more than 900,000 students across Canada to save lives since 1994 by training their teachers to teach them those skills.

As part of the program, Envision Financial has donated 180 CPR dummies to the district – 30 for each high school – for students to learn on.

Paramedics from the B.C. Ambulance Service were on hand volunteering their time to teach the teachers, who were knelt over the blue and grey plastic torsos, pumping the spring-loaded chests to the rhythm of a metronome.

Next year, it will be their students will be performing the same drills.

“Most physical education teachers have a background in anatomy and physiology, so it’s not entirely new ground for them,” said instructor Troy Gienger.

Students who complete the mandatory four-hour course will receive a certificate of completion from the ACT Foundation, who also sponsor a Lifesaver Award for students who have used their CPR skills to save a life.

The foundation's website lists dozens of stories of students saving the lives of their parents, grandparents, even strangers.

"As a paramedic, the treatment that's done before we arrive makes all the difference," said Gienger. "In many cases, it can be the difference between life and death."

By passing on these skills to their students, teachers will not only be giving them the ability to save a life if called upon, but improved self-esteem.

"When you give a Grade 10 student the power to help someone, to save someone's life, that affects their confidence," said Gienger.

"In the event of an emergency ... I think most people want to help. This gives them the ability to do that."

Westview physical education teacher Lola Montgomery said she was excited when she first heard about the program.

"I think this is a necessary life saving tool that we need to teach all our kids," she said.

The program will also dovetail with the district's Physical Education 11 course, which features a full first-aid component.

"It could be a family member, or a friend in an accident they are helping," she said. "They'll be able to recognize the symptoms and help them, and that's a great thing."

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