

Students learning to save lives

■ Program launched in Metro high schools teaching students CPR and defibrillator skills

BY DYLAN HACKETT
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT STAFF

Moncton High School made its first step toward saving a life when the school launched its high school CPR and defibrillator training program yesterday afternoon.

Officials from the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation and Environment and Local Government Minister Bruce Fitch announced the official launch for Moncton High School, École L'Odyssee, Harrison Trimble High School and Riverview High School.

Nearly 50 students demonstrated their CPR and defibrillator skills in the Moncton High cafeteria, with the help of their teachers and Moncton paramedics. The program began in New Brunswick last year.

"This is our first stop in Moncton. A year ago we set it up in Fredericton at Leo Hayes High School and at Fredericton High School," said Sandra Clarke, the foundation's executive director.

The program works with community sponsors to give high school students the knowledge necessary to save lives by the time they graduate.

"It's a beautiful program in the sense that partnerships come together and they create community champions. So far 1.8 million students in 1,600 schools have been trained in Canada," said Clarke.

The Moncton Hospital's Internal Medicine Educational Fund donated 16 automated external defibrillator training units and 120 training mannequins to the high schools.

Dr. Mary Catherine MacSween from the intensive care unit at the hospital heard about the program and proposed it to Moncton High



DYLAN HACKETT/TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Grade 9 student Caitlin Smith, left; Gerry McCarron, senior manager of public affairs for Pfizer Atlantic Canada; Environment and Local Government Minister Bruce Fitch; and Grade 9 student Renee Hache practise CPR skills at Moncton High.

teachers.

"This is a sustainable program, and it is the norm in a lot of provinces," MacSween said in a statement from the foundation.

"My colleagues and I in the Department of Internal Medicine see every day the toll that cardiac disease takes on our patients. We have also seen the tremendous benefit of bystander response in cardiac emergencies. New Brunswick has an excellent supply of automatic defibrillators in public places. It only makes sense that simple, effective, life-saving interventions of CPR and — where available — the use of an AED become an essential part of a high school."

Clarke says that the ACT Foundation's goal is to make the

program a part of a mandatory curriculum in high schools throughout Canada.

"We began in Ontario in 1994 as a pilot project then went to Alberta, B.C. and we are also working now in Quebec. The program is now mandatory in Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario," said Clarke.

Clarke says that 100 per cent reach is what the foundation is aiming for and the opportunity to provide simple, life-saving skills before graduating high school is something most students wouldn't have received.

"We have lots of student who have already saved lives, it's incredible. A little bit of training gives them skills and confidence to save a life."