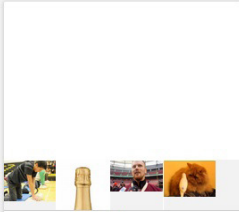


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**Defibrillator training program comes to Okanagan secondary schools**



Grade 10 Kelowna Secondary School student Michael Patora demonstrates the training he learned through the ACT Foundation high school defibrillator training program at KSS Friday. — image credit: Wade Paterson/Capital News

Okanagan secondary students are receiving training that could help them save lives.

Several Kelowna Secondary School students were on hand Friday for the official launch of the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation high school defibrillator training program.

"We're going to see all public secondary schools in the Okanagan region training their students how to save a life with CPR skills, and they'll learn also from their teachers how to use a defibrillator," said Sandra Clarke, executive director of ACT Foundation.

"So they'll all be empowered to save lives as they graduate."

The training program will be introduced at KSS, Mount Baucherie Senior Secondary, Okanagan Mission Secondary, Rutland Senior Secondary and George Elliott Secondary; about 1,900 students will be trained in both CPR and how to use a defibrillator each year.

According to Clarke, the program cost is about \$5,000 set up in each school. The funding includes 28 automated external defibrillator (AED) training mannequins, 28 AED training units and four AED units for in-school cardiac arrest emergencies.

Early CPR, combined with the use of an AED within the first few minutes, can improve survival rates for cardiac arrest victims by up to 75 per cent, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Clarke said students who have been involved in the program in other parts of the province haven't had much difficulty learning how to use the defibrillators.

"We've already set up the program in over 50 secondary schools around the province of B.C.; the teachers say it's easy to teach students how to use the defibrillator," said Clarke.

"The actual machine is very easy to use. It has voice prompts on it, so it actually takes (students) through the simple steps."

After taking part in the two-week training course, Grade 10 KSS student Michael Patora said he is confident he could help save a life if the situation ever presented itself.

"It was a little bit confusing at first, but we have good teachers," said Patora.

"We really got to perfect our skills."

ACT Foundation is working in partnership with BC Emergency Health Services, BC Ambulance Service and Interior Savings Credit Union to bring the program to public schools in the region. Health partners AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi provide sustaining funding for the foundation.

"We are thrilled with the support of ACT's partners. Without them, this lifesaving program would not be possible," said Clarke.

Kelowna-Mission MLA Steve Thomson said the program is an "important" one for local secondary schools.

"Community safety is everyone's responsibility; we need to remember the importance of working together in order to respond to these medical emergencies," said Thomson.

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