

# The Ashcroft Cache Creek Journal



High school teachers in School District No. 74 received CPR training last week, so that they can teach students techniques that could help them save lives.

— *image credit: Tracy Liesch*

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High school teachers in Ashcroft, Clinton, Lillooet, and Lytton took part in the award-winning ACT High School CPR and Defibrillator program last week, where they were trained as instructors who will be able to pass these skills on to 100 students per year in the Gold Trail school district.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation is a charitable organization that is establishing free CPR and defibrillator training programs in high schools across Canada. The course, which was held at Cache Creek Elementary School on June 27, was staged in partnership with BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS), Interior Savings Credit Union, AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada, and Sanofi Canada.

BCEHS paramedics volunteered their time to train the teachers in CPR and defibrillator skills, using training mannequins, automated external defibrillator (AED) training units, and curriculum materials, all at no cost. In addition, ACT donated 5 defibrillator training units and mannequins, student manuals, and funding for four automated external defibrillators (one at each district high school).

The training is important, says Sandra Clarke, executive director of the ACT Foundation. “We’re seeing more defibrillators going into public facilities such as sports venues, but not many people know how to use them. Research shows that if someone goes into cardiac arrest, and CPR and a defibrillator are used right away, it increases their chance of survival by up to 75 per cent.

“By focusing on schools, we ensure that every student—the adults of the future—has the training.” She adds that students love the training, and that having that knowledge takes the fear away from intervening. “They see it as their responsibility to step forward, take charge, and maybe save a life.”

The training will be provided to students at no cost, and Clarke says that ideally one high school grade level will be trained each year at the four area schools with high school students.

Funding for the defibrillators was supported by Interior Savings Credit Union. “Thousands of people pass through the halls of our high schools each week for sports, cultural events, adult education courses, and community events,” says Kathy Conway, president and CEO of Interior Savings. “By empowering our students with these life-saving skills, we are helping to safeguard the health of our communities.”

It is estimated that eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests take place in homes or public places, and ACT believes that empowering youth with CPR and defibrillator training as part of their high school education will help increase citizen CPR response rates over the long term.

Clarke says that ACT spends a good deal of its time fund-raising to provide the program and equipment, and could not do it without their partners in the community and nation-wide. “We are thrilled with the support from our partners. With it, we can implement the CPR and AED program in Ashcroft, Clinton, Lillooet, and Lytton. These are lifesaving skills that students will be able to bring to their current and future families and communities.

“We are seeing so many rescues across the country, and heart problems cut across all age groups. This strengthens the health of our communities.”