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Elk Valley teachers become instructors



Sparwood Secondary School's principal Frank Sopko accepts a cheque for \$9,000 from Isabelle Randell, branch manager of the Royal Bank in Sparwood, and Pam Shaw, regional vice president for the Royal Bank. The money will go towards all of the schools in the Elk Valley for First Aid training supplies.

— *Image Credit: B. Catton*

by [Bryn Catton - The Free Press](#)

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June 22 had teacher representatives from the three Elk Valley high schools attend a teacher training workshop at Sparwood Secondary School. The teachers were being trained in CPR and defibrillator with the aim to teach every highschool student the life saving techniques by the time they graduate starting next fall.

A foundation is responsible for getting the Elk Valley program started as they have done for all of Canada. Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation (ACT) is a national charitable foundation with a mission to promote health and empower Canadians to save lives.

“Our goal and major activity is to help secondary school everywhere across the country establish this program,” said ACT’s Executive Director, Sandra Clarke. “Our approach at the ACT foundation is to approach schools and we say if you will allow us to train your teachers to be instructors for the programs and agree to teach your students the skills prior to graduation then we will donate the training equipment.”

The idea was identified a number of years ago and has been developed since 2005.

“We thought a number of years back that this could be a really effective way to make a major impact on saving lives. What I mean by that is the approach of getting it into the school system whereby teachers teach the students,” she said. “So we started a pilot, and it has just taken off from there. To date, teachers have taught over 3 million students. More recently we have added on the defibrillator program. We find that it is a program teachers love to teach and students love to learn. It has immediate relevance in the community in terms of students knowing that they could use these skills at almost any time to potentially save a life of a friend, family member or stranger.”

ACT is now going back through the school that it trained in CPR instruction to also include defibrillator use because of the amount of defibrillators that are easily accessible in public places like arenas, community centres and shopping centres.

“The reason we are going back to the schools to offer the additional training is because the research shows that CPR training is really important but you can save even more lives if you have early CPR and defibrillation,” she said. “In fact, research from The Heart and Stroke Foundation shows that if someone recognizes the cardiac arrest emergency and can start CPR right away and if someone can pull that defibrillator off the wall that we are beginning to see in more and more public places and use it quickly than it can increase the chances of survival by up to 75 per cent for a sudden cardiac arrest victim which is huge.”

“We have the support of three national partners, AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi Canada. They are our core partners and they help us do this project by giving us some funding in every community across the country, and then what we will do is fundraise locally,” said Clarke.



Local fundraising was spearheaded by a donation from Sparwood’s Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) branch. The Regional Vice President of the Interior for RBC, Pam Shaw, believes that it is a great program and organization to donate to.

“It involves youth and we want to have a [connection] with youth in our communities. This is a great one, I think it is grade 10 it starts where we will be teaching them CPR, I would almost like it to be earlier, I heard from one of the paramedics that they could do it in grammar or elementary school. It is just very important for RBC to give back to the community,” she said.

Noel Bullock, a Sparwood Secondary School teacher was at the event and although he has had first-aid training in the past this was his first time being taught how to instruct a course.

“First-aid is an important skill for anyone to have and I think it will make all the students more comfortable. It is a great opportunity to pass the skills on to the students. I have taken first aid courses on my own because I have worked with youth in the past but this is the first time I have done it with the view of teaching students,” he said. “The teaching aspect is great, we are learning from a very qualified teacher who has been teaching for years. Our instructor says she has 15 or 20 years of teaching first aid and it is very similar to what I have received in the past.”