

Elora Crawford
May 31, 2012 – 3:18 PM

Mount Carmel flash mob could save lives

Students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School flash-mobbed their classmates on Tuesday, and proved that a little training goes a long way in saving lives.

The event at the Meadowvale school, deemed CPR day, saw the healthcare class of more than 100 grades 11 and 12 students teach the remainder of the school's 1,600 students about chest compression CPR.

The event was organized by healthcare teacher Taylor Farquharson and supported by the ACT Foundation (Advanced Coronary Treatment), a national charitable organization working to establish free CPR and defibrillation training in every Canadian high school.

Sandra Clark, executive director of the ACT Foundation, flew in from Ottawa to witness the event. She said it was "inspiring."

It kicked off with a morning flash mob, as healthcare students took their life-saving skills to the football field in a synchronized display of CPR on training mannequins. The ACT Foundation donated more than 100 CPR training mannequins and Automatic External Defibrillator training units for the school-wide event.

"Learning CPR takes more than a few minutes, but it's easy to learn," said Clark.

For those who experience cardiac arrest, that lesson can be life-saving. CPR keeps oxygenated blood flowing to the vital organs in the event of a heart attack. When defibrillation occurs within the first few minutes, it can increase survival rates up to 70 per cent.

"More and more, we're seeing students from the national program step up in emergency situations ... they're saving lives," said Clark. "These students at Mount Carmel could give a chance of life to people that might otherwise not have one."

The foundation focuses on introducing programs and equipment in high schools. It rallies community partners to raise funds for program start-up resources for schools, including CPR training mannequins, teacher training and materials. ACT then guides schools in setting up a long-term, self-sustaining program.



"Having outside professionals come into schools to teach students CPR is expensive and unsustainable," said Clark. "Instead, ACT instructs school teachers so they can train students on their own."

For Clark, being witness to the initiative at Mount Carmel meant seeing the success of her program in action.

What began with one teacher trained in CPR became 120 of her healthcare students trained, which on Tuesday became some 1,600 students at Mount Carmel equipped with the know-how to save lives. It shows how "introducing little sparks is so important," Clark said.

In Toronto, ACT has set up the CPR program in 120 high schools and 275,000 students have been trained to date, with 26,000 more trained by their teachers every year. Figures for Mississauga weren't provided.

Not only do students love the program, but they're also learning a valuable skill that's useful on their resumes, says Clark.

"Students are learning life skills, skills they'll take to their future families," she said.

The ACT Foundation's main funding is provided by the Ontario government, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Hydro One. Health partners AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi also provide funding.

