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More defibrillators added to local schools

It was heart-warming news for the Durham District School Board (DDSB) recently when it was announced 78 more Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) will be placed in DDSB schools.

What's more, Grade 9 Physical Education students will learn how to use them - all thanks to grants the board received.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation and the Heart and Stroke Foundation, on behalf of the province, provided the grants which were announced as part of the board's Safety Week events held recently.



Jamie Chevers knows firsthand just how an AED can save a life. According to the release from the board, the Whitby resident was saved by staff members at the Pickering Recreation Complex who used an AED on him after he collapsed in August 2009. He says he's thrilled to see an increase in access to defibrillators and training.

"It's absolutely vital," he says.

Gary Gibson, the Durham District School Board's manager of health and safety couldn't agree more.

"It's not an issue anymore of having defibrillators up on the wall; it's having folks who are not afraid to go up and grab the defibrillator and use it," he says. "By training Grade 9 students, we're training a generation for whom it will be just second nature to grab the defibrillator when it's needed and use it."

Lifesavers Training Academy, a local company, which is run by Paul Fitzgerald and Marty Smith, is donating the training for teachers who will in turn train students.

"We see CPR and use of AEDs as such a life skill that everyone should know," Fitzgerald explains.

The devices themselves walk people through the process, but having people trained will make them more confident about using them, says Lisa Hardy, a physical education teacher at Donald A. Wilson Secondary School. Hardy helped run a Grade 9 AED training program last year.

Funding for the AEDs, which help re-establish heart rhythm following a coronary episode, came from the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the release continues.

"To get every Grade 9 student trained is amazing," notes Donald A. Wilson Principal Warren Palmer. "I know every principal is happy to have one inside their school."