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## Learning to save a life

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**DEREK BEDRY**

Sometimes the most important thing a person can learn is how to save a life.

Some teachers at North Peace Secondary School in Fort St. John are certified to give CPR and automated defibrillation in emergencies after a workshop on Friday, and they'll be passing the knowledge on to hundreds of students each year.

Eight teachers from North Peace and Hudson's Hope Elementary-Secondary learned the life-saving techniques as part of the ACT (Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation) High School CPR program. Global Medical Services donated AED (automated external defibrillator) devices and mannequins for the workshop. The participating teachers from North Peace will be able to train 350 students a year to use the same skills.



Derek Bedry Photo

Ryan Leclair, left, and Torben Graham learn CPR and defibrillator skills as part of a program to enable teachers at North Peace Secondary in Fort St. John and other schools in the region to pass the skills on to students.

"They're the ones who will help people like me when I get older, or their grandparents or parents, anyone they might see at a recreational facility where someone might be having a heart attack," said North Peace physics and math teacher Torben Graham. "I think it's a good opportunity that should be available at most schools so we can get as many people trained in AED and CPR as possible."

Phys. Ed. and Social Studies teacher Ryan Pearce said students would hopefully never have to use the skills, "but at least with this they'll be comfortable if they see a situation where there is an AED there and they'll be comfortable commanding someone to go get (the defibrillator) and know the steps to save someone's life if it comes to that." He said students who participate will also be certified.

Hudson's Hope shop teacher Ryan Tilsner said parents were cautious at first. "When I first came here, the response from everybody was, 'Don't bring that into our school.' Because they're afraid of the technology, they don't know about it so that knee-jerk reaction was 'We don't want it.' But it's nice to find out that it's a very foolproof, safe method and probably the best way of saving someone's life."

He said he thinks all schools should have a similar program.

Workshop instructor Jeff Kain said high school students are an ideal group to receive training.

"There's lots of them, they are a captive audience and there are lots we can reach in a single class rather than going to workplaces," Kain said. "Normally this is something people thought was reserved for health care providers. It's not, so being able to reach people early when they're young, at a level where they can understand that stuff and can actually do it, that's why it's high school students. They can teach these skills early and it's something they'll carry with them all their lives."

North Peace and Hudson's Hope schools get to keep two AEDs, five AED training units, and five AED training mannequins.

The ACT Foundation is a national charity that establishes similar programs in Canadian high schools. To date, 220 B.C. high schools participate and about 235,000 students in the province have been trained to give CPR. ACT is working with the Emergency and Health Services Commission and B.C. Ambulance Service to give workshops.

BCAS Chief Operating Officer Les Fisher said CPR and AED give the best chances of surviving cardiac arrest while an ambulance is en route. The Heart and Stroke Foundation says these techniques increase survival rates by 75 per cent.

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