

## Students lend a hand in CPR initiative

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By Peter Criscione

MISSISSAUGA — Students from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School in Mississauga got a first hand lesson this week in how to save a life.

On Monday, 70 students from the local high school gathered at biopharmaceutical firm AstraZeneca Canada, 1004 Middlegate Rd., for the launch of a new initiative aimed at teaching more people cardiopulmonary resuscitation, commonly known as CPR.

AstraZeneca Canada and the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation announced new campaign to raise awareness and knowledge among Peel and Halton region students on how to perform CPR and Automated External Defibrillator (AED).



### CPR training

Photo by Bryon Johnson

Mississauga Councillor Sue McFadden (on right) takes part in CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) training at AstraZeneca's offices on Monday May 12. Training her is Alexis Yang, a Grade 12 student at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Secondary School. Other students from the high school also took part in a mass training of AstraZeneca employees that day.

The initiative, called Skills 4 Life, aims to raise \$350,000 in the Peel-Halton region with an ultimate goal of providing more than 18,000 high school students CPR and AED training each year.

The ACT campaign is working to set up its program in 70 schools in Peel-Halton region and on Monday invited local students to help with the formal launch.

"Each and every day, many Canadians experience a cardiovascular event. These events can happen anywhere, at any time and immediate response is critical," said Sandra Clarke, ACT Foundation Executive Director. "Our goal is to empower youth with life-saving skills, so that they can take charge and help in an emergency."

So far, several schools in Peel and Halton regions have participated in the ACT initiative. The initiative hopes to train close to 6,000 Gr. 9 students in 20 Brampton high schools and 7,187 Gr. 9 students in 27 Mississauga schools.

"We have received hundreds of stories where youth have reacted quickly and taken the right steps to save lives," said Clarke. "These are incredibly moving stories of youth who have saved their mother or father, a sister or brother, or even a complete stranger."

More than 2.6 million Canadian youth in more than 1,600 schools across the country have been trained through the ACT High School CPR Program. ACT is now adding defibrillation as an enhancement to the CPR program already in place in these schools.

At Monday's launch, students from Our Lady of Mount Carmel conducted training sessions for AstraZeneca Canada employees.

A founding partner of the ACT program, AstraZeneca Canada has pledged \$50,000 in support of the ACT's new campaign.

"We believe in its mission to empower youth with the skills and knowledge to save lives," said Elaine Campbell, AstraZeneca Canada president.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, early CPR combined with early defibrillation can increase survival rates for cardiac arrest victims by up to 75 per cent.

Every year, Peel Paramedics respond to more than 85,000 emergency medical calls.

The local paramedics service hosts several CPR training sessions each year for students.

With a bystander CPR rate of just 35 per cent in Peel, paramedics have been pushing for more people to learn life-saving skills.

Dr. Dave Williams, Southlake Regional Health Centre president and CEO, Canadian astronaut, and co-chair of the campaign, said CPR and AED training are valuable skills to have.

"I am a long-time advocate of citizen CPR and defibrillation training," said Williams. "From my university student days as a CPR Instructor, to leading the implementation of an AED program at NASA and taking the first defibrillator into space as an astronaut, I am very proud to play a key role in supporting this exciting program for our schools and youth."