

## Students receive defibrillator training

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High school students Kira Schmidt (far left) and Kiera Hughes join Janaiah Orsetti and Emma Lizee in demonstrating lifesaving skills they learned at the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation's High School CPR and Defibrillator Program on Friday in the Westsyde secondary gymnasium.

*Dave Eagles/KTW*

Janaiah Orsetti and Emma Lizee clap their hands over the prone figure on the floor of the Westsyde secondary gymnasium, looking for a response.

When none comes, and it's clear the object of their attentions isn't breathing, it's time for the Grade 10 students to start chest compressions and begin hooking up a special piece of technology that should help them in their efforts — a portable defibrillator no bigger than a dinner plate.

The girls are among the first at Westsyde secondary to get CPR and defibrillator training through the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation, a charitable organization that gives high school students across Canada the opportunity to learn lifesaving skills.

Materials for the program, including defibrillators and practice dummies, are donated locally by Interior Savings Credit Union.

The program is rolling out in 10 high schools across the Kamloops-Thompson school district this year and will reach about 1,100 Grade 10 students annually.

"The research is showing that when someone suffers a cardiac-arrest emergency, you can significantly increase their chances of survival if someone does CPR at the scene and someone uses a defibrillator to restart that stopped heart," said ACT executive director Sandra Clarke.

While defibrillators are becoming more common in public buildings, including Kamloops Airport, Sagebrush Theatre and the Tournament Capital Centre, Clarke said many people are unsure how to use the technology. "You pull it off the wall, you press a button and there are voice prompts that takes you through with instructions on what to do," she said. "And defibrillators cannot shock a heart that doesn't need it," Clarke said.

"They're failsafe. You cannot make a mistake with them. But, unfortunately, most people are afraid to use them if they haven't been trained."

Kamloops-Thompson school district assistant supt. Bill Hamblett said the training will give students the skills to step in during emergency situations.

"What a powerful lifelong lesson that is, the willingness and confidence to act," he said.

Training takes place over about two weeks during gym class, said Westsyde teacher Dionne Newman.

Students had learned CPR before, but Newman said the defibrillators have added a new level to the curriculum, which also includes lessons on risk assessment and the heart.

"People get afraid of them, but they're so simple to use," she said. "They talk you through everything."

So, can students Janaiah and Emma see themselves using their new training?

"I hope not," Emma said.

But, the two agree they would be more prepared in case of an emergency.

"She plays soccer and I play basketball sometimes, so if that happened on the field or the court, we'd know what to do," said Janaiah.

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