

Teachers to pass d-fib training to students in Parksville Qualicum Beach

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Paramedic Sheree Hunt, left, trained Kwalicum Secondary School's Ruth Stefanek, centre, and Ballenas Secondary School's Larry Stefanek on how to use AED training units last Thursday. — *Image Credit: JESSICA SKELTON PHOTO*

Eight secondary school teachers in School District 69 (Qualicum) now have the know-how and equipment to train their students how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED), thanks to a course provided by the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation last Thursday.

Three representatives from Ballenas Secondary School and five from Kwalikum Secondary School were there.

"The goal is to ensure each young person graduated with the knowledge to save a life," said ACT's executive director Sandra Clark.

"I think it's important for everyone to have training," said Ballenas vice principal Kevin McKee. "You never know when it's going to come in handy."

The new AED training will supplement a similar CPR program implemented in all B.C. secondary schools by the organization a couple years ago. Clark said the addition is in-line with the trend of AEDs being put in more and more public spaces. "It's a huge step," she said.

According to a news release from ACT, eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home or in public. The release also said that the Heart and Stroke Foundation has found that early CPR, combined with early defibrillation, can increase survival rates for cardiac arrest victims by up to 75 per cent.

Larry Stefanek, one of the Ballenas PE and Health teachers who took both ACT training courses, also said that the students will learn more than just how to run an AED and perform CPR; they'll also learn how to recognize the symptoms of a heart attack and stroke, control an emergency situation without panicking and find help.

Clark said the schools have committed to training every pupil in CPR and AED once, meaning around 300 students are trained each year. The training will be targeted at Grade 10s through their PE class. "They're at the age where they're ready to learn," she said. "They see it as a life skill."

KSS vice principle Don Bold also said that is a "perfect time to get this training" as PE 10 is a mandatory course.

In order to provide the program, ACT fundraises through community-specific sponsors, said Clark. For SD 69 (Qualicum), those funding partners are Telus and Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island.

"Having those two sponsors is huge for us," said KSS vice principal Bold said. "It's not an inexpensive program."

Aside from teacher training, each secondary school received four AED training units — which look and act like the real thing — and four AED training mannequins each, as well as curriculum materials. KSS will also receive an AED.

Ballenas already has an AED on site.

AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi Canada provide funding on a national level. Clark said that British Columbia Emergency Health Services and British Columbia Ambulance Service volunteered their staff's time to provide the teacher training. For SD 69, paramedics Sheree and Jesse Hunt came up from Duncan.

While ACT only provides equipment and initial training, each school is responsible for updating their teachers training through outside programs approximately every three years.

Bold said their school will implement the course next semester.