

## Teaching Chilliwack how to save lives

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Dave Allan demonstrates the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training unit. — *Image Credit: Greg Laychak/TIMES*

The defibrillators Dave Allan and his co-trainees were using Friday may be less dramatic than portrayed in ER and other emergency room situated TV dramas, but they are just as important to anyone suffering cardiac arrest.

A group of more than a dozen teachers from around Chilliwack school district gathered in G.W. Graham middle-secondary school's (GWG) library last week to participate in the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation (ACT) high school CPR and defibrillator training program.

It's a program designed to set teachers up with the knowledge to train their students in the fundamental skills for saving lives.

Large paddles were replaced by small white adhesive pads attached to lunch-box sized Automated External Defibrillator (AED) training units that talk the trainees through the process.

Allan, co-head of GWG's phys-ed department has been passing on the critical information to his students for seven years and is grateful for the donation of training mannequins, AED training units, curriculum materials and program set-up his school and others are receiving.

“If the time arises—maybe it’s a relative, maybe it’s a friend—they’ll know what to do and they’ll be able to react and call for help and keep the person alive,” Allan said. “The more people trained in it, the more likely it will be that the person who needs help is going to make it.”

The program’s approach is to reach every student passing through the public school system by training teachers the skills to empower youth with CPR training as part of their high school education, helping increase citizen CPR response rates over the long term.

“Teaching the teachers is my favourite thing, because I know one teacher usually is 100 people,” Lori Huberman, school program assistant co-ordinator for St. John Ambulance said.

She and Ritima Sharma provided the instruction Friday that will result overall in 21 teachers trained as CPR and AED instructors and more than 650 students per year learning those skills.

Huberman said she gets emails all the time from people who she’s trained with stories of how her education sessions have resulted in lives saved.

According to ACT, eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home or in public places.

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

In total, Chilliwack secondary school (CSS), GWG and Vedder middle school will receive 26 CPR mannequins, 12 AED training units and 12 AED training mannequins to help the teachers educate students in saving lives.

In addition, CSS and GWG are also each receiving a real AED unit like the ones found in an increasing number of public spaces, so students and teachers alike will have the necessary tools to implement their new skills if there is an emergency.

Funding for the equipment was provided by RBC, AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi Canada.

*>The ACT Foundation is a national charitable organization establishing CPR and defibrillator training programs in Canadian high schools. To date, the ACT high school CPR program has been implemented in 224 public standard secondary schools throughout B.C. and over 325,000 students have already been empowered to save lives with CPR.*