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BCEHS Education Officer Teresa White has been helping the ACT Foundation fulfill its mission to ensure that students graduate with life-saving skills for six years. She sees her involvement as a natural extension of her job, to help people save lives.

"The ACT model helps a lot more people learn CPR than I could teach on my own," she said. "Teaching more people about how to administer CPR and use a defibrillator leads to a greater chance of survival for anyone that suffers a cardiac arrest."

Teresa was one of four recipients of the Community Health Champion Award, presented by the ACT Foundation at the

BCEHS recognition events in Victoria, Vancouver, Prince George and Kelowna.

Over the last ten years, BCEHS staff members have volunteered with the ACT Foundation to help train 325,000 students in 226 public secondary schools across the province. This school year, approximately 44,000 more BC students will receive this life-saving training. The program is built on ACT's community-based model of partnerships and support. ACT raises funds for mannequins and resources, and leads schools in program set-up. BCEHS staff members volunteer their time and expertise to help instruct teachers how to most effectively train their students in CPR and defibrillator usage.

Teresa said that the program runs like a well-oiled machine with administrative support provided by, Mary Adams, the British Columbia project manager for the ACT High School CPR and AED program. This allows BCEHS staff to focus on the training. Through the ACT program, BCEHS instructors teach the teachers how to develop methods to engage their students, such as role-playing exercises or interactive tutorials.

"Most of the teachers have learned some CPR at some point, but we are providing them with a refresher as well as teaching them how to teach their students," Teresa said. "That means providing guidance on how to notice errors in form and how to correct students to ensure that CPR is being administered effectively."

Teresa believes the positive impact of this program extends well beyond the increasing number of people who are able to administer CPR and use an AED.

"It's great for students to put on their resumes that they are certified in CPR, as it shows initiative and is a requirement for many jobs," she said. "Learning CPR through role-playing exercises is also a valuable way to develop psychomotor and cognitive skills."

Having taught several workshops and helped organize more, Teresa remains involved because she enjoys teaching and values the work of everyone involved in continuing to broaden the program to more and more students.

"It's really satisfying to empower these teachers and their students to help save lives," she said.

"We're giving back to our community and that is something so many BCEHS staff love to do whether through the ACT Program or the many other initiatives we are involved with throughout the province."

Congratulations to Teresa as well as the other 2016 Community Health Champion award recipients: Paul Linza, Trevor Zechel, Troy Gienger, BJ Chute, as well as Jesse, Natalie and Sheree Hunt on this well-deserved recognition.

The ACT Foundation is the national charitable organization dedicated to establishing free CPR and defibrillator training programs in Canadian high schools. ACT's health partners who are committed to bringing the program to high schools across British Columbia and throughout Canada are AstraZeneca Canada, Pfizer Canada and Sanofi Canada. For more information about the ACT Foundation, please visit www.actfoundation.ca.