



Teachers Ashley Mazur and Sherri Field check out defibrillators under the guidance of instructor Colin Fitzpatrick with BC Emergency Health Services at Salmon Arm Secondary's Jackson campus on May 19. - Image credit: Martha Wickett/Salmon Arm Observer.

## Teachers to train students to save lives

CPR and defibrillator training for Grade 10s starts in September.

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North Okanagan-Shuswap school teachers participated in a program with heart on Friday.

The teachers were being trained as instructors in CPR and how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED) so they can pass the knowledge along to students.

The ACT High School CPR and AED Training Program will see 500 students from Salmon Arm, A.L. Fortune, Eagle River and Pleasant Valley secondary schools graduate every year with the skills and knowledge to save lives.

The Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation is establishing free CPR and AED training programs in secondary schools throughout B.C. ACT is working in partnership with British Columbia Emergency Health Services (BCEHS), and paramedics who volunteer their time to train teachers as instructors.

Donation of training mannequins and AED training units for schools comes from various community partners and paramedic education officers Karly Jones and Colin Fitzpatrick were at the Jackson campus training teachers last Friday.

Fitzpatrick and Jones explained to the 10 teachers being trained that defibrillators don't actually 'jump start' the heart, as is sometimes thought.

"It temporarily stops the heart, in the hope when it comes back on, it resets and returns to its own intrinsic rhythm," Fitzpatrick said.

The defibrillators are "super safe and super simple," Jones said, noting the devices won't let the person running a defibrillator shock a heart if it's not needed. "Being accidentally defibrillated is not a lot of fun."

The teachers said the CPR and defibrillator training will be part of the new PE curriculum, and Grade 10s will start receiving the training in September of this year.

One of the instances when they can be used is when athletes receive a blow to the chest and pass out. The instructors said time is of the essence so the defibrillator must be used quickly.

Teacher George Kocsis spoke about Rick Harris, a very fit Salmon Arm teacher who died of a heart attack following a run, and the value of the CPR and defibrillator training. The school district presents the Rick Harris Memorial Athletic Award in his honour.

The training program is expected to enable approximately 44,000 students throughout B.C. to gain the information, skills and confidence to save lives.

Research indicates that early CPR, combined with early defibrillation, can increase survival rates for cardiac arrest victims by up to 75 per cent.

“This program will save lives and we are thrilled with the support from schools and our partners,” says Sandra Clarke, the ACT Foundation’s executive director. “With it, we can implement the CPR and AED Program in the communities of Armstrong, Enderby, Salmon Arm and Sicamous. These are lifesaving skills that students will bring to their current and future families and communities.”

To date, the ACT Foundation has set up the ACT High School CPR Program in more than 1,755 high schools nation-wide, empowering more than 3.6 million youth to save lives.

The program is built on ACT’s award-winning community-based model of partnerships and support, whereby ACT finds local partners who donate the mannequins and AED training units that schools need to set up the program. Secondary school teachers then teach CPR and how to use a defibrillator to their students as a regular part of the curriculum, reaching all youth prior to graduation.