

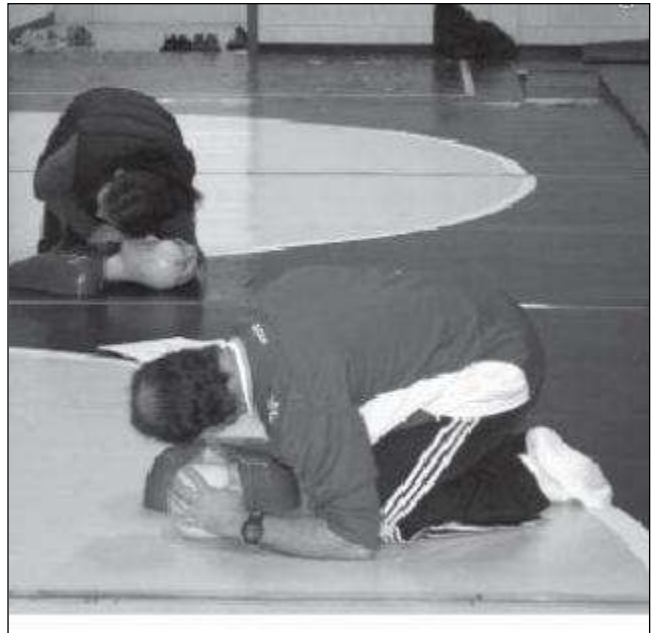
Learning to save lives - one breath at a time

Published: March 24, 2010 10:00 AM

Do you know how to save a life?

High school students will now, thanks to members of the community and the ACT Foundation. The Foundation rallies the support of community partners and raises funds enabling high school teachers to teach their students a four-hour Heartsaver CPR course. This ensures all youth will graduate with the skills and knowledge to save lives by providing CPR until emergency medical services arrive.

The ACT Foundation works in partnership with British Columbia Ambulance Service and the Ambulance Paramedics of B.C. Paramedics volunteer their time to train the high school teachers as CPR instructors for their students



Local teachers recently participated in the program with local paramedic Laine Smith volunteering his time to instruct the group.

Teachers participating from NVSS were Chris Mushumanski, Rob Kerr, Vaughn Mueller and Gary Simrose. From FLESS were Dan Duncan, Mike Leduc and Larry Ashmore. Jen Williams from Valhalla High School and Karen Nelmes participated from Fort St. James Secondary. Many of the teachers have taught first aid/CPR before, but the Heartsaver course is a more simplified version.

"Let's face it, this is number one. If you don't get blood to your brain, you die," said Rob Kerr who teaches P.E. at NVSS

"I think things like this are so integral to all P.E. programs," says Kerr, adding that kids come away from it with confidence in handling emergencies involving others as well as themselves. Another benefit is that the information is cross-curricular, meaning the students learn it in health class and science class in addition to P.E.

"The more we spread this information the more equipped we are as citizens," said Vaughn Mueller. He added that by having the knowledge, people would be at peace that they did everything they could, should they encounter an emergency situation.

Mueller said he has found this version of CPR easier to learn and teach and planned to teach it to his wife and kids.

Chris Mushumanski is involved with search and rescue and has taught CPR for a number of years, so he recognizes the importance of refreshing the mind on the lifesaving procedure.

Of his students, Mushumanski says “a lot of them see they could have encountered a circumstance where things could have gone sideways.” He said an added benefit to having the skill would help the students to differentiate themselves in the job market.

During the course instruction, Smith stressed to the teachers that even if you feel air against your cheek, if the **chest isn't moving, there isn't good airflow. Some teachers were concerned about encountering situations** where they might be unsure whether or not to perform CPR. Smith told the group that doing CPR is always better than standing there and doing nothing.

“If you start pounding on my chest while I'm having a nap, I'm going to wake up pretty quickly,” he said.

Through the program, the district received 100 mannequins, which were distributed to schools. The schools now own the mannequins, meaning the program is sustainable over time at no cost to schools. The mannequins were donated to the schools by several community partners including AstraZeneca, Pfizer Canada and sanofi-aventis.

Through this initiative, the ACT Foundation rallies the support of community partners and raises funds for program start-up resources for schools, including CPR training mannequins, teacher training and materials. ACT then guides schools in setting up a long-term, self-sustaining program.

Executive director of the ACT Foundation Sandra Clarke says there are many reasons why the CPR training program is so great.

“What's really neat about this course is the students are learning the 4 R's,” Clarke explained. The four R's include risk factors for cardiovascular disease and the importance of adopting a heart healthy lifestyle, how to recognize a developing medical emergency, how to react, and how to resuscitate (perform CPR). Students also learn how to respond to a wide range of emergencies.

Clarke said other than saving lives, the information is important for teens because they are adopting health behaviors that affect the rest of their lives. The program has been a big success since it began in 2005. This is the **first time this particular “Students have been stepping out in all kinds of emergencies,” said Clarke.** When students do use their skills to react in an emergency, the ACT Foundation interviews the student about their experience.

“We find that the students feel they were just doing what they were taught,” explains Clarke.

Every year, thousands of Canadians **die from cardiac arrest because they don't receive medical treatment fast** enough. Eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home. Survival rates could be much higher if people know how to respond with CPR.

Early recognition of a cardiac emergency by a family member, early access to medical help (calling 911) and early citizen CPR are critical to saving lives. The majority of cardiac arrest victims do not receive citizen CPR.

Paramedic Laine Smith summed up the importance of CPR, saying, **“If you don't do CPR, the person is going to die.”**