

Defibrillators/equipment donated to high schools

By Jim Barber



When Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox & Addington MP Scott Reid joined a number of his Conservative Party colleagues in rejecting a raise in salary a decade ago, he decided to donate the extra cash to a worthy cause.

He chose the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) Foundation, a national organization that works to promote CPR training, public access defibrillators, and paramedic systems.

"The very first year after saying I am giving my raise to charity, what happened was I asked people what I should do with the money, and the idea of defibrillators came up, but it turned out that it was a lot harder to give them out in a way that was useful and meaningful at the time," Reid said, adding that he knew the husband of Sandra Clarke, ACT's executive director, and hooked up with the organization to provide CPR training and training dummies to the 10 high schools in his riding, starting back in 2003.

As soon as affordable public access defibrillators came along in the last couple of years, Reid decided to fund those, and the accompanying training devices, in area high schools.

Reid was on hand to present Napanee District Secondary School officials and students training defibrillators last week. That same day, he announced that the nine other high schools in the riding would be getting the defibrillators themselves. NDSS already had one.

"And it is the Grade 9 phys ed teachers who are now teaching the students CPR, and Scott previously donated CPR mannequins to every school in his riding to make sure they have the mannequins to train and to learn, and now he is adding on defibrillator training units," Clarke explained.

ACT believes it is critically important to get defibrillators in high schools, and to train the students, because they can then go forth into the community and have that knowledge of how to use these important life saving devices.

"The whole point of training the students is if those kids are going to be at the hockey arenas or community centres and there is an emergency, then they know to pull the defibrillator off the wall, and can tell someone to call 911, perform CPR and use the defibrillator if they need to," Clarke explained.

"And there are cardiac arrests happening in schools every day. And that's because schools are more and more like community centres. Many schools have hundreds of people walk through their halls each week, with adult education and various community events. So a defibrillator in a school is actually a natural place for it to be."

"And also, you do have students experiencing cardiac arrests. And the health community is beginning to think it happens more than they previously thought, because the data keeping has not been that good over the years. And when a cardiac arrest happens with a young person, it's so much more tragic."

Each defibrillator costs \$2,000, and each training unit is about \$350. In total, Reid donated close to \$40,000 worth of gear for the 10 high schools in his riding.

"And that covers the training of the teachers too. So it's an instructor/training model. We train the trainer, and then the schools own the program and run with it over the long term. And the schools commit to ensuring that every student that graduates knows CPR, and has defibrillator training," Clarke said.

"So we're releasing a huge number of people into the community each year who are trained to save lives. That's very exciting."

"And students learn so much better. You can get them into groups. It's probably easier to train young people at anything because you can do it as a group. They have way better retention, which is just a fact, than people who are older," Reid added.

ACT is a registered charity, that always is on the outlook for donations.

It receives its core funding from four research-based pharmaceutical companies: AstraZeneca, Bristol-Myers Squibb Canada, Pfizer Canada and sanofi-aventis.

The organization has been in existence since 1985, and has brought its award-winning CPR program to 900 high schools in Canada so far.

For more information, visit www.actfoundation.ca