

INTERIOR-NEWS

Keep close to a teenager; they may save your life

February 24th, 2010

Starting this year, physical education teachers at Smithers' and Houston's high schools will be including CPR training thanks to the Advanced Coronary Treatment (ACT) foundation.

The foundation has been working diligently to establish CPR training in high schools all across the province and so far has signed up 180 schools. Their goal is to get 400 in total of the public high schools.

"With the two high schools in Houston and Smithers we'll have 200 grade 10 students that will learn [CPR] every single year," said Sandra Clarke, Executive Director of the ACT Foundation.

The foundation works to fundraise to get the necessary equipment. For Houston and Smithers, 45 training mannequins were provided through the corporate sponsorship of AstraZeneca, Pfizer Canada and sanofi-aventis.

The B.C. Ambulance Service (BCAS) and the paramedics' union also partnered and area paramedics volunteered their time to train high school teachers to deliver the program.

From here the program should effectively run itself.

"By giving the schools the mannequins and by training the high school teachers at the grade 10 level ... then they have what they need. It becomes a turnkey program and they can then deliver it to their students every year."

The program focuses on the four Rs of CPR: Risk factor education, recognition, react, and resuscitation.

The program has proved popular and effective among students.

"It's hard to teach risk factor education to young people because most of us think we'll live forever at that age but the kids are so anxious to get on to the mannequin and learn the hands-on skills of CPR that the teachers then have their attention," said Clarke.

The program has already proven effective and there have been cases in the province of kids using their knowledge in emergency situations.

"It's like a little bit of training gives them the confidence and the permission to act."

Clarke said that eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happen in the home.

"Research indicates that survival rates can increase by almost four times if someone does citizen CPR right away and calls EMS."

The choice of giving the instruction is made by the school district and the foundation's only request for the program is that it runs in essential classes before graduation, no optional courses.

In the long term the foundation is hoping to have the government implement the program as part of the provincial curriculum in order to ensure the stability of the course in the long run.

Clarke said that Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario already include CPR in the provincial curriculum.