

## 5,700 high school students to receive defibrillator training

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More than 5,700 high school students across Niagara will receive training in the use of defibrillators this year.

The lifesaving training will help students in all 30 of the region's high schools respond to cardiac emergencies beyond their CPR training.

An automated external defibrillator is an easy-to-use device that can tell when a heart stops beating effectively and can deliver an electric shock to restart the heart.

The initiative is the result of a public-private partnership between the provincial government, Heart Niagara, the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation -a first-aid advocacy group sponsored by four pharmaceutical firms -and lead sponsor First Ontario Credit Unit.

The credit union will contribute funding for enough defibrillators for the 23 schools in Niagara that do not currently have them as well as foot the bill for the training program.

Funding will also provide defibrillator training units and mannequins for students to practice on.

The program will be an enhancement to the already established region-wide Grade 9 CPR training program run by Heart Niagara.

"Having these devices located in our high schools is both a valuable learning opportunity for our youth and will benefit the overall health and safety of our community," said St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley.

Bradley made the announcement at St. Francis Secondary School in St. Catharines Friday, along with Niagara Falls MPP Kim Craitor.

"This is an excellent program that gives our youth the skills to save lives at home and in our communities," said Craitor.



In 2008, the provincial government invested \$1.4 million to help the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation expand the defibrillator training program to all Ontario high schools.

Craitor said he's encouraged to see so many facilities across Niagara, such as hockey rinks and ball diamonds, equipped with defibrillators.

"The more people trained to provide CPR and use defibrillators, and the more places that have these units, the safer we'll be," he said.

Eight in 10 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur at home. Research shows that if used in the first few minutes, CPR and the use of a defibrillator can improve survival rates.



The provincial government's plan also comes at a time when the rate of heart disease among young people has skyrocketed.

A recent report from the Heart and Stroke Foundation warned of an impending health-care crisis as young Canadians have higher cholesterol and blood pressure due to poor diet and lack of exercise, making them increasingly at risk for heart disease.

"Training young people in CPR and (automated external defibrillator) gives them the tools to help others in overcoming sudden cardiac arrest in our schools and in our community," said Dr. Doug Munkley, an emergency physician and medical director for Heart Niagara.

"It also gives them a greater awareness of the impact of heart disease and helps to strengthen the message about making healthy heart lifestyle choices."

February is Heart Month in Canada and Canadians are being urged to take steps to ensure their lifestyles contribute to good heart health.

Meanwhile, more than 2,000 pamphlets, titled Remember Minutes Count, are being sent to local ice facility user groups for distribution to their

associated participants.

The purpose of the program, endorsed by Heart Niagara, Niagara Falls city hall and city resident Ed Strohak, is to inform and enable as many people as possible of the role they can take in a heart-related incident, regardless of whether they are an untrained responder or fully trained in CPR and defibrillation.

Strohak, who is the founder of the Niagara Falls Play the Puck 55 Plus Hockey Association, said he's pleased to hear CPR and defibrillator training is being promoted at the youth level.

"Our group is getting older now and I was bypass recipient years ago, so I know the importance of having this type of training and what it can mean to someone," said Strohak. His association educates and trains its membership to cope with hockey heart-related emergencies. Its "action plan," along with its life-saving skills, were exhibited during an on-ice simulation of a heart-related emergency on CBC's 2007 Hockey Day in Canada presentation. Those interested in CPR and defibrillator training, call 905- 358-5552 or email [info@heartniagara.com](mailto:info@heartniagara.com).