

Total of 350,000 Americans Suffer Cardiac Arrest Each Year

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PEORIA - Each year nearly 350,000 Americans suffer cardiac arrest. When a person goes into cardiac arrest, their heart suddenly stops beating, they lose consciousness, and will die without immediate treatment.

Survival rates for someone who experiences an out of hospital cardiac arrest hovers around 12 percent.

Medical professionals and first responders are working to increase that survival rate, and are looking to the public to help reach that goal.

Bystanders can be critical in saving a person's life by performing hands-only CPR – pushing hard and fast on center of a person's chest at 100 beats per minute.

Dr. Kurt Bloomstrand is a Medical Director of Emergency Medical Services for OSF HealthCare. He says stepping up to help before an ambulance arrives can be the difference between life and death.

“There's that missing link in the chain of survival rate,” he explains. “We know that we can get an ambulance to you hopefully within eight minutes, but every minute that goes by, your chance of survival decreases by 10%, so by the time eight minutes get to you, your chance of survival is only 20%. So we really need to make an impact in those first eight to ten minutes until an ambulance or professional gets to you.”

Now first responders are empowering everyday citizens to step up and save a life with the help of a smart phone, and an app called PulsePoint.

“Essentially any time someone calls 911 and they need CPR, it goes into the app and the app will alert anyone that's within a quarter mile of that incident to tell them that CPR is needed, and we can get the public to that scene, usually before fire and EMS gets there, because those first couple minutes are crucial,” said Nathan Gorman, an OSF HealthCare EMS Training Coordinator.

After a successful launch of PulsePoint in Champaign County, OSF HealthCare just launched the service in Vermilion County. Since the app first launched nationwide in 2011, nearly 750,000 sudden cardiac arrest events have been communicated to the app's 1.9 million registered users.

According to Gorman, simply signing up is the first step in saving a life.

“CPR is needed everywhere, and when people sign up for the app, if we can get people there, that's what's going to save lives,” said Gorman.

Dr. Bloomstrand says quick bystander intervention can nearly triple someone's chances of surviving a sudden cardiac arrest. However people are often hesitant to help, because they aren't confident in their CPR skills.

“We really need to get CPR training events out there, but we also need to pass a message along that anything is better than nothing. So really there’s just two easy things for doing hands-only CPR: pushing hard and pushing fast. If you can do that, anybody can do CPR,” he said.