

Saint Anthony's Promotes CPR/AED Training

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In an effort to better prepare people for medical emergencies, Saint Anthony's Health Center is utilizing newly purchased automated external defibrillation (AED) trainers in their CPR certification classes.

Saint Anthony's has offered CPR/AED training for over 10 years, giving class participants a chance to operate an AED in a non-emergent setting. CPR Training Coordinator and Registered Nurse Nancy Blair says the new trainers offer a more realistic experience for students.

“Being in an emergency situation is stressful enough, but being in that position and having to use equipment you’re not familiar with can be overwhelming,” Nancy says. “Since we were able to purchase two different trainers, participants have the opportunity to experience some of the different types of AEDs that are out there and have confidence in using them in emergency situations.”

AEDs are used to correct an abnormal heartbeat that can lead to sudden cardiac arrest. The AED interrupts the abnormal heartbeat and attempts to return the heart to its normal rhythm. The process is similar to rebooting a computer, says Nancy.

Sudden cardiac arrest can strike young and old alike - often without warning. The American Heart Association reports that victims can appear healthy with no signs of heart disease or other risk factors.

According to the American Heart Association, statistics show that only 8 percent of people who have an out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrest survive. However, the survival rate increases by two to three times if CPR is administered and an AED is applied as soon as it arrives. Because of these factors, Nancy encourages everyone to get CPR /AED training.

“Statistics show that 4 out of 5 cardiac emergencies happen at home. There is a good chance your training could benefit a loved one,” Nancy says. “The faster you can recognize an emergency, call for help (911) and start CPR the better their chances of survival are.”

AEDs are manufactured to be easy to use, and a person is not required to be certified to operate one. They come with easy to follow step-by-step pictorial instructions and audio prompts. Once the AED is attached to the victim, it will read the victim’s heart rhythm and inform the operator if a shock is required.

“They are easy to use. However, AEDs do not take the place of CPR. AEDs are only an additional tool to help responders increase the victim’s chance of survival,” she notes.

Fear is one of the biggest barriers preventing people from acting in a medical emergency, according to Nancy. Saint Anthony's has designed their CPR/AED classes to help people overcome their anxiety.

“There is a lot of stress in these situations. The best way to help is to keep calm, follow your training and, if you’re not directly involved, keep other people back so the responders can do their job,” she says.

Although many people find the cost of purchasing an AED for their home prohibitive, recent state and federal laws have increased the availability of AEDs in public. With AEDs being more prominent, Nancy encourages people to be aware of the placards that designate AED locations.

There are also several Good Samaritan Laws that protect individuals from civil liability due to performing CPR and/or utilizing an AED.

“Not only do you need to be able to locate an AED, you have to be able to effectively use it,” she says. “When you take a class you have time to familiarize yourself with it. This way, if you were ever called to respond you might feel more confident to do so.”

Saint Anthony's Health Center is currently offering a four-hour Healthcare Provider class for medical professionals and a three-hour Heartsaver class for lay rescuers. Anyone interested in registering for CPR/AED training can call (618) 465-2264.