

The Pueblo Chieftain ■ Pueblo, Colorado

Ben Franklin Elementary accepts gift defibrillator

By **JOHN NORTON**
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

A group of Boulder soccer players have made Ben Franklin Elementary School the first District 60 school to receive the gift of an automatic external defibrillator.

The device was presented formally to Franklin Principal Keith Johnson at an assembly Tuesday by Nigel Lock of Kick Start Your Heart, the soccer players' foundation.

The Boulder group staged a 24-hour "soccerthon" last year to raise funds for the devices, which cost more than \$2,000.

Tuesday's presentation was the group's third in the state so far and its first to a school.

A recently-passed state law requires schools to accept AEDs if offered, and provide training and maintenance.

In the Pueblo district, Cesar Chavez Academy is the only other school to have one. The charter school purchased its own device.

District officials aren't ready to buy the machines for all 33 schools, estimating that aside from the price of the machines, it will cost more than \$13,000 a year for training, battery and pad replacement, according to district spokesman Greg Sinn.

Kevin Walter, president of the Franklin Parent Teacher Organization, said that the group decided it wanted to find one for the school.

It was at Ben Franklin where 9-year-old Sydney Boettcher collapsed and died last year. The girl suffered from an irregular heartbeat.

Johnson said that Richard Perse, president of Arvada-based HeartSmart Inc., visited the school in October and did a presentation on the devices.

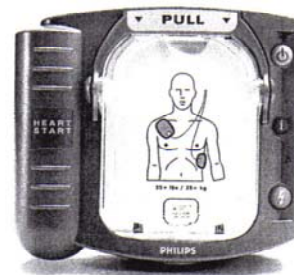
Perse is a Pueblo native and former paramedic who also does CPR classes for District 60 employees and made a presentation to the school board last year, demonstrating the AEDs. His company sold the AED to the Boulder group.

Walter said that the staff at the school indicated that they would like to have one on the campus and the PTO began looking for ways to find one.

That was when they were connected with the Boulder soccer group. Lock said his group provides the machines but asks that the recipients stage fundraisers to pay back 25 percent of the cost. At Franklin, the PTO paid the group \$500, Walter said. The PTO also agreed to cover Perse's fee of \$10 per person to train and certify 34 staff members in CPR and AED use at a session Tuesday evening.

The next step will be getting a local physician to certify the Franklin AED program, something Johnson said should take a couple of weeks. After that, the AED will be mounted in a case in a central location at the school.

Walter said that the teachers at the school have been very supportive, even giving up their own time for training.



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