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Loveland high schools receive defibrillators

*By Shelley Widhalm
Loveland Reporter-Herald*

Richard Perse II opened up the cabinet housing a new automated external defibrillator at Thompson Valley High School, causing an alarm to sound.

The alarm, which is not hardwired to emergency services, is a local warning that a student, staff member or visitor may be experiencing sudden cardiac arrest.

“These machines are designed for someone who has never used one,” said Perse, founder and president of HeartSmart Inc., an Arvada-based company that specializes in emergency response training.

On Monday, Perse demonstrated how the defibrillator works to those involved in donating five of the devices to Thompson Valley, Loveland, Mountain View, Harold Ferguson and Berthoud high schools.

Ten staff members from each school were trained to use the defibrillators, which provide step-by-step vocal instructions and diagrams of where to place the pads on the patient’s chest.

But anyone can use the units in an emergency, protected by the national Good Samaritan Law, Perse said.

Every minute that a patient in cardiac arrest does not receive defibrillation — the application of electrical therapy to restart the heart — survival rate decreases by 10 percent, Perse said. By the time emergency services arrive, the national survival rate is at 6 percent, he said.

The McKee Medical Center Foundation provided \$9,600 to Dr. Scott Sundheim, chairman of emergency medicine, and the emergency department to purchase four of the units.

“Hopefully, it will be a rarely needed development,” Dr. Sundheim said.

Big Thompson Emergency Physicians P.C. partnered with the Kick Start My Heart Foundation, a Boulder-based nonprofit that raises funds for AEDs in schools statewide, to purchase the fifth unit, which is at Loveland High School.

“A lot of high schools have them. The void is in middle schools and elementary schools,” Perse said, adding that approximately 30 percent of schools in the state have the AED units in their buildings.

The Daniel J. Lunger Memorial Fund covered the expense of training school staff for the fifth unit.

Howard Lunger, a Lakewood resident whose son Daniel died of cardiac arrhythmia in August 2006, aims

to get AEDs placed in all schools statewide, working with HeartSmart and Kick Start My Heart as partners.

The memorial fund placed the first AED at Daniel's school, Standley Lake High School in Westminster, in April 2007.

A year later in April 2008, Lindsay Hayden, a student at the school, was saved when a fellow student and school resource officer performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation and defibrillation using the AED unit.

"If these things are available, they are going to save somebody's life," Lunger said.

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