

Fire district works to increase survival chances in cardiac arrest

Sisters resident David Adler can attest to how suddenly a life can be in great peril from cardiac arrest. Quick and effective action by civilians and first responders saved him when he was felled by cardiac arrest while working out (*see story, page 1*).

The Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District is increasing the chances residents may survive a cardiac arrest by making wholesale improvements to the local coordinated response system. Improvements include enhanced community education, implementation of the pulse point system, public access to automated external defibrillators (AED), and enhanced advanced life support training and equipment for firefighter/EMTs.

Cardiac arrest is the abrupt loss of heart function in a person who may or may not have diagnosed heart disease. Death occurs within minutes after the heart stops, but cardiac arrest may be reversed, if CPR is performed, and an AED is used to shock the heart within a few minutes.

The District recognizes the important role the community plays in saving lives. Bystander CPR is one of the most important aspects in saving lives after a cardiac

arrest occurs, and having a community that is trained and willing to perform CPR is critical. The District provides CPR and first aid classes to area residents and businesses. In the past two years the District has trained 186 residents in the newest techniques of CPR and first aid.

Captain Jeremy Ast told *The Nugget* that CPR is vital, especially in rural areas. Survivability in sudden cardiac arrest diminishes by 10 percent per minute when a patient is unattended. The further you are from first responders, the more critical it is that you are trained to react and perform life-saving CPR.

Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District Fire Chief Roger Johnson said, "CPR has changed so much in the past decade due to research and clinical studies. If you haven't taken a CPR class in a while we strongly encourage you to do so."

A class is scheduled for March 17. Contact the District for information at 541-549-0771 or visit www.sistersfire.com.

The Deschutes County 911 Service District can provide CPR instructions over the telephone prior to the arrival of advanced life

support care and hands-only CPR is also an option.

The PulsePoint phone application is a way for area residents to help save a life when every second counts. The application notifies people when someone has suffered a cardiac arrest near their location. The application informs users of the location of the victim and also notifies people where the nearest AED is located. The notification is sent at the same time emergency responders are notified so the public is often the first person on the scene of the emergency. The application was developed to encourage bystander CPR and to save lives during cardiac arrest. Another benefit of the application is that local residents can choose to be alerted to other types of emergencies including fires and motor vehicle accidents. Knowing when there is an accident on the pass can provide an opportunity for people to take an alternate route or avoid the area altogether. For more information about

PulsePoint visit <http://www.pulsepoint.org/>.

Another important element in the coordinated response system is rapid public access to AEDs. AEDs are a computerized heart monitor that can recognize lethal cardiac arrhythmias and deliver an electrical shock to the heart. The lethal arrhythmia will often be converted back to normal if the AED is used quickly after the cardiac arrest occurs. The District has been working with local businesses in the past year to increase the number of AEDs within the community. Local businesses have purchased and installed 10 AEDs within the Sisters community as part of a grant program the District implemented in 2017. There are now over 20 AEDs installed in businesses and public buildings throughout Sisters Country.

The last local element of the coordinated system is rapid response of basic and advanced life-support personnel. The District has nine highly trained career paramedic staff on call 24 hours

a day, 7 days a week. The District also relies heavily on its volunteer staff, which includes an additional 6 paramedics, 15 emergency medical technicians, and 13 emergency medical responders. Paramedic staff is trained in high-performance CPR, interosseous access for IV medications and Lucas continuous CPR machine use. If necessary, cardiac arrest victims also have access to two air ambulances. Life Flight and AirLink flight crews are equipped with specialized equipment and medications that ground ambulance crews don't have access to. In remote areas of the district, Life Flight and AirLink can often times provide quicker access to area hospitals for critical patients.

Over the past two years, fire district personnel have responded to 30 cardiac arrest calls in Sisters Country. By working together with our community on this coordinated system, we are making great strides in improving the chances of survival of sudden cardiac arrest.

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