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Chain of Survival - AGWSR Receives Heart Safe Designation

The chain of survival for heart patients and other health emergencies requiring an AED just got longer in the communities of both Ackley and Wellsburg. Both AGWSR learning centers earned the Project ADAM Heart Safe School Designation following drills held last Thursday.

AGWSR District Nurse, Kaitlin Kreimeyer, explained last week that because of her background in emergency services, she felt a need to put together a critical emergency plan for the district – Project Adam, at the school. On Jan. 16, teams in both learning centers held practice drills which were observed by two nurses – Trudy Pierick (Co-Medical Director) and Brenda Haag (Program Coordinator), from University of Iowa Hospital. Both centers' emergency response plan and trainings meeting Project ADAM requirements.

As a result, banners designating the district as Heart Safe were awarded.

That distinction came after hours of work by Nurse Kreimeyer and the staff who put in the effort and were willing to be on the cardiac response teams in each building.

As the drill began in the Ackley building, students and staff were made aware of the event through the district's communication system. The call went out and the AGWSR library quickly filled with cardiac response team members.

First on scene in the Ackley drill was AGWSR high school English teacher Bill Heubner. Heubner located the mannequin between a coffee table and a couch in one of the many reading areas in the library. He quickly moved the furniture out of the way as other team members arrived, AED's and other emergency response equipment in hand.

In the blink of an eye, the victim had been assessed with CPR underway. Team members worked flawlessly, switching roles as needed to relieve others from the very physical duty of manual CPR. Others counted compressions, and took the victim's pulse, all while following the directions of the AED which alerted them when it was time to shock the patient.

Following the actual drill, the team along with Pierick and Haag, debriefed, talking over what went well and providing insight for the next drill or event, as the case may be.

“They did very well,” Pierick said, noting that the designation of Heart Safe is important not only to the school, but to the community. One of the most important processes – providing the first shock to the patient, should come within three minutes of finding the victim. The team completed the task at two minutes 45 seconds.

Haag noted that the team had great communication, and she was impressed with how well they worked together, including having members counting compressions out loud, charting, and jumping in to relieve the members doing the actual compressions.

“At any one time, 20 percent of a community is in the school building. So this designation, these volunteers, are making these communities safer for everyone,” she said. “Not only have they taken on their roles within the building, but beyond. When they are out an about in the community, they know what to do.”

Ashley Sires, AGWSR Elementary Principal, is part of the cardiac team. She states that communication of, and between, team members will be even better with walkie-talkies – which have been delivered and were taking their first charge, as the drill took place.

All staff in the district will have alert buttons which, depending upon the number and/or length of a button push, will alert others to emergencies throughout the building, one code will even automatically and directly go to 911 and emergency responders. The equipment was purchased by the district with School Safety Improvement grant funds.

The single criticism of the drill – really only an observation, was that the district’s AED’s are located outside the lunchroom/gyms on either end of the Ackley building. The observing nurses, as well as Nurse Kaitlin, noted that a third, more centrally located AED would be of great benefit to the team and any victim of a health emergency.

That is not to say that the plan didn’t work as well as expected, remember, the team shocked the victim well within the timeframe which is most beneficial, and not a single piece of emergency equipment was forgotten by the team as they responded.

While the emergency response team managed the incident well, they also counted on staff members who stepped into classrooms across the building, stood at doors to direct EMS teams upon arrival, and those who reached out to the victim's family to alert them of the emergency.

"This was a great team effort, in both learning centers," Nurse Kaitlin said. "This training in not just for cardiac emergencies, this will smooth roles in other incidents, which might result in the use of AEDs as well.

Anyone wishing to aid in the purchase of a third AED for the district is asked to clearly direct their donation to "AED Fund".



HeartSafeDrill

Becky Schipper Jan 16, 2025

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