

POLICE OFFER LIFESAVING SERVICE

By Paula Marinak
Capital Times Staff Writer

The PSH Office of Safety and Police Services recently acquired some equipment that will enable officers to perform a common lifesaving treatment for students, faculty and staff with heart problems. This past May, the office purchased an automated external defibrillator (AED) which the officers have been certified to use since September 26.

"It's been a number of years since we've had anyone on campus have a heart attack," said Officer Dan Tingle, emergency services coordinator. "But in the recent past we've had people with chest pains."

The officers have not needed to use the defibrillator yet, but they have tried since last year to get it. They originally looked to the Emergency Health Services Foundation to help them obtain the technology since that organization has a grant and a training program that allows any public safety agency to get one. Because the grant only applies to municipalities, police services had to pay for the \$3,500 machine out of its own budget.

Harrisburg and Schuylkill are the only Penn State campuses that have defibrillators and, currently, each location has one unit. PSH is considering a proposal that would place an AED in individual buildings, but for now, the officers keep it because someone is always on call who would be able to take the defibrillator where it is needed.

Tingle led the effort to get the LifePak 500. He said his office decided to purchase it because, as a non-traditional campus, PSH might be more likely to have a greater number of older students, faculty and staff who may be more prone to heart problems.

Chief Kevin Stoehr thinks the AED is worth every cent of its price tag. "Years down the road, as prices go down, I think they'll just become more familiar in society in general. Almost like fire extinguishers," he said.

A recent *USA Today* article described how defibrillators can save lives. The heart is divided into four chambers. The top two are called the right and left atria; the bottom two are the left and right ventricles. Blood enters the heart in the right atrium and travels to the right ventricle and then to the lungs, where it gets oxygen. The oxygenated blood then moves from the left atrium to the left ventricle, and out to the rest of the body.

Normal heartbeats start with small bursts of electricity that begin in the right atrium. The impulses go through the heart, where a second stronger impulse forces the muscle to contract and pump blood to the body. If the heart is damaged and the signal is blocked, a short circuit can occur. This causes the muscle to quiver, or fibrillate, which prevents it



According to a *USA Today* article, "Defibrillation washes the heart with an electric current, allowing the heart to start its natural cycle again. It's like rebooting a computer."

from pumping and causes a heart attack.

"A defibrillator increases chances of survival," Tingle said. "The earlier you can use it, the better." As *USA Today* reported, the chances of saving a heart attack victim drop 10 percent for every minute without treatment.

Tingle explained more thoroughly how this life-saving device works. "First, you expose the person's chest. Then, you place one pad on the upper right side of the chest and the other on the lower left side to surround the heart. The heart goes into four abnormal rhythms," he continued. "Two of those are shockable and two are not. When you turn the defibrillator on, a readout will tell you what kind of rhythm you have. If it is shockable, the defibrillator delivers the shock. If not, perform CPR and try to get the heart into a rhythm where the defibrillator can help."

To use some concrete examples, defibrillators restore normal heartbeats by bathing the heart in beneficial electricity. It is like recharging a battery or rebooting a computer.

Health and safety professionals such as police officers, firefighters and emergency medical services workers must have CPR certification before using defibrillators, and they can also attend a training course, which lasts about four hours.

Stoehr and Tingle said these machines are extremely simple to use. A defibrillator came in handy for the police at Harrisburg International Airport earlier this summer. They had just gotten an

AED, but had not yet learned to use it when someone went into cardiac arrest in the airport. Even without training, police saved the person's life, because, as Tingle said, "There are cards and diagrams explaining how to do everything, so you can just open it up, look at it and go."

Just as defibrillators are becoming common in public places such as airports, more colleges across the country now have them. Tingle said Gettysburg College, for instance, got two with an alumni donation.

"I think we've just seen the tip of the iceberg," said Stoehr, regarding AED purchases at colleges, universities and elsewhere, and Tingle agreed. "It's a lot easier than CPR and much more effective," he said. "Anything we can do to help someone who might suffer from a heart condition, we should do."

Blood Drive

Hosted by Chi Gamma Iota
By Kimber Booth
For The Capital Times

Chi Gamma Iota hosted a Red Cross Blood drive at PSH on November 1. With the help of XGI members, Lion Ambassadors, and the Communication Club, met their goal of seventy-five pints.

Kerri, XGI secretary, stepped forward to donate. "I try to donate every eight weeks because of its importance to Red Cross. This donation will go for my sister who is getting ready to undergo surgery."

Amanda Barber, a first-time donor, was always leery of donating. "They had to take my pulse a second time. They let me know it was high because I was nervous. My stepmom always gives blood and I've decided to because of its benefit."

Fred Fuller, SDCET student and XGI member, reminds students to support the Red Cross College Challenge hosted by Chi Gamma Iota. Area colleges will compete in March for the greatest amount of donated blood. Prizes will be awarded and everyone who donates blood will receive a T-shirt. The exact dates of this drive are still being discussed, but be sure to step forward and show your school spirit.

XGI will also host a Veteran's Day ceremony on Thursday, November 9, from noon until 1 p.m. at the main flag pole in front of the library on Vartan Plaza. Guest speakers include Col. David Hansen, U.S. Army, retired, and Capt. Chris McKelvey, a U.S. Navy commander. "There will be a static display of



Donating blood takes only a few minutes.

impressive military equipment, as well as the unveiling of a permanent memorial marker honoring all veterans." A reception follows the ceremony in the Morrison Gallery Lounge in the library.

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