

July 18, 2003



On a mission to jump-start hearts with donated defibrillators

Published in the Home News Tribune 7/16/03

By MARY ANN BOURBEAU
STAFF WRITER

EAST BRUNSWICK: Phil Hossler wants to make East Brunswick "The Heart Haven Township of New Jersey."

Hossler's goal is to have automated external defibrillators (AED) installed in every township school and public facility. He's well on his way, too. Three defibrillators are being donated to East Brunswick High School, where Hossler has worked as the athletic trainer for 20 years. As part of his job, he provides first aid, injury prevention and assessment for athletes in the township's school system.

"Sometimes, I'll be at a high school event where there are 500 people in the stands, mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers," said the East Brunswick resident. "If someone has a heart attack, I'm the only person on site with any kind of credentials. If I'm going to be the natural selection, I want to be prepared."

An AED sends an electric shock to the heart to reverse sudden, life-threatening changes in heart rhythms. Early defibrillation within the first few minutes of cardiac arrest can save a heart-attack victim. The devices are so easy and self-explanatory that laymen can operate them.

Hossler, 52, is the author of two textbooks, is in three halls of fame and holds a patent on a modular first aid splint. He heard in March that the East Brunswick Baseball League had acquired a defibrillator for use at its games. That's when the idea occurred to him that more are needed around the township.

He asked Laura Saker, a retired teacher from East Brunswick High School, if her husband, Richard, would



be interested in donating \$2,000 -- the cost of one defibrillator. Richard Saker owns three area ShopRite stores. Saker responded with a donation to cover six units, one for each ShopRite and one for the high schools in East Brunswick, North Brunswick and South Brunswick.

"That's the kind of response I was looking for," Hossler said.

The athletic trainer received a second defibrillator from a family whose child has a heart condition and will be attending East Brunswick High School in the fall. The third donation came as part of an award, sponsored by Medtronic Physio-Control and the National Athletic Trainers Association, that Hossler received on June 27 in St. Louis, Mo.

Medtronic claims to be the country's oldest and largest maker of defibrillators. As the recipient of the inaugural award, Hossler received a defibrillator for the high school.

He is now looking to get AEDs donated for each school in the district as well as the library, Crystal Springs Family Aquatic Center, Brunswick Square Mall, synagogues and churches -- wherever there are large gatherings of people.

Today, the police have 16, the fire department has nine and the rescue squad has four. Others are located at the Senior Center, Solomon Schechter Day School, Manager's Field and Work Out World.

"There are 35 in East Brunswick now and my goal is 70," Hossler said. "The idea is to make AEDs as common as fire extinguishers. What people don't know is how important one minute is when someone has heart failure. Every minute after the first four minutes, the survival rate is cut by 10 percent."

In fact, two East Brunswick police officers saved a 45-year-old township man in cardiac arrest with a defibrillator on July 5. But the user doesn't have to be a trained medical technician or police officer.

"You can't misuse it," Hossler said. "One of the biggest fears associated with AEDs is whether people will shock and kill someone if they use it wrong. If the defibrillator detects a heartbeat, it will tell you that no shock is

necessary."

Hossler also designed a logo for a sticker that he hopes will be displayed in the window of every place that has a defibrillator on the premises.

"I want to have more AEDs per person than any township in the state," he said.

Mary Ann Bourbeau:(732) 565-7245; mabourb@thnt.com

**Subscribe Now! to the Home News
Tribune. It's EZ.**