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Group Aims to Boost Use of Lifesaving Tool

GWU Group Donates Defibrillators

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Kim Bauhs was ready to give a presentation at a business meeting two years ago when she collapsed, stricken by sudden cardiac arrest.

Two colleagues quickly found assistance from a nurse who happened to have an automated external defibrillator on site.

"I owe my life to that nurse and her AED," Bauhs said.

In an effort to save more lives from sudden cardiac arrest, the Richard B. and Lynne V. Cheney Cardiovascular Institute at George Washington University has launched ReStart DC, a program to place AEDs in locations where large groups gather.

"Through ReStart DC, we will raise awareness of the need for AEDs," Lynne V. Cheney said at the launch Thursday at Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Roman Catholic Church in Southeast. "They're easy to use. Anyone can save a life."

Cheney helped establish the institute along with her husband, the former vice president.

The program will donate 50 defibrillators to community centers, churches and youth organizations that serve residents throughout the District.

The first eight organizations to receive defibrillators: the Latin American Youth Center in Ward 1; Emmaus Services for the Aging in Ward 2; Lisner-Louise-Dickson-Hurt Home in Ward 3; Emory United Methodist Church in Ward 4; Harbor Light Salvation Army in Ward 5; Holy Comforter-Saint Cyprian Roman Catholic Church in Ward 6; the First Baptist Church of Deanwood in Ward 7; and THEARC in Ward 8.

An AED can recognize and distinguish between normal and abnormal heart rhythms. The device momentarily stops an abnormal heart rhythm and returns it to normal through a small electric shock.

The Rev. Ronald K. Miner Sr., pastor at First Baptist Church of Deanwood, said members of the church's nursing team informed him of the program and the need for the device.

"I just thought it was an excellent idea," Miner said. "It's just a blessing to have them."

Community organizations that serve low-income residents and senior citizens and that do not have an AED are eligible to receive the device through the program.

Defibrillators must be registered in the District. The program provides training and medical oversight to groups that receive an AED.

As defibrillators have become compact and user-friendly over the years, medical professionals have advocated for their general availability. The devices are programmed with voice instructions to guide the user in the event of an emergency.

"We have a tool now that is small and smart," James J. Augustine, medical director and assistant fire chief for D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services, said at the launch. He added that when the AED is used "before we arrive, we can find a person now with a pulse."