

Hampden *Highlights*

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ABOUT TOWN

Fire Department Helps Expand AED Availability

If you've been to Edwards' Family Shop-N-Save recently, you may have noticed something new. In January, Edwards' purchased a potentially lifesaving Automated External Defibrillator (AED). Mounted in a cabinet on a wall near the pharmacy counter, the Defibtech Lifeline AED is available for emergency use by CPR-trained store employees and customers. Edwards' also expanded its employee-training program to include AED use.

Edwards' isn't alone, however. There are several locations in town that have AEDs. There's one at the Lura E. Hoit Pool. Every school building in town now has at least one, and the school even sends one with some sports teams when they travel. The Hampden Fire Department hopes to expand AED availability even further.

"Our hope is that someday an AED will be almost as common as a fire extinguisher. It wasn't that long ago that they were more than \$5,000 each. With contract pricing made available through the state, these devices can now be purchased for less than \$750. That's a huge price drop," said Matt Thomas, public education officer at the Hampden Fire Department. "At that price, many small businesses, churches, and community organizations can afford to make the investment."

An AED is a battery-operated portable device about the size of a laptop computer. When someone is pulseless, self-adhesive electrodes from the device are placed on their chest. A loud, clear voice guides the rescuer through each step of the process. Most cardiac arrests are caused by one of two lethal heart rhythms, ventricular fibrillation or ventricular tachycardia. The AED automatically analyzes the heart



rhythm and if either is present, it will deliver a shock. In many cases this shock will cause the heart to begin beating normally again. The devices are simple to use and require only modest training and little maintenance. In fact, a 2007 study showed that even sixth graders were able to use them effectively with no prior training at all.

AEDs must be used in the first few minutes of a cardiac arrest to be most successful. For every minute defibrillation is delayed, a cardiac arrest victim's chance of survival drops by 7-10 percent. Even in Hampden with full-time EMTs and paramedics on duty 24 hours per day, it still takes an average of eight minutes to respond depending on the location. Early EMS activation by calling 911, effective CPR, and quick defibrillation with an AED can dramatically improve survival. Over 335,000 people die every year in the United States from sudden cardiac arrest and it frequently strikes Hampden residents. Even children are affected as in the case a few years ago when a child collapsed and died in Hampden while participating in a sporting event. This tragedy resulted in a widespread community effort to place AEDs throughout MSAD 22.

"We're committed to helping every interested Hampden business and organization acquire an AED and establish an ongoing CPR/AED training program," explained Thomas. "I've personally seen an AED save the

life of a young woman, and she walked out the front door of the hospital less than a week later. If an AED hadn't been available, she almost certainly would not have survived."

American Heart Association HeartSaver CPR/AED classes are available through a partnership between the Hampden Fire Department and MSAD 22 Adult Education. For more information or to register for a class, call 862-6422. Businesses or community organizations that would like more information about establishing an AED program can call the Hampden Fire Department at 862-4586. ■

Hampden AED Locations

Hampden Academy

- Cafeteria
- Gym
- Nurse's office

Reeds Brook

- Near Gym
- Second floor hallway

McGraw School

- Gym

Weatherbee School

- Outside the gym

Lura E. Hoit Pool

- Front desk

Edwards' Family Shop-N-Save

- Near pharmacy

Do you know of another AED in town? Please let the Fire Department know so that they may update the list.