

Wells High School Cheerleaders Raising Funds for Heart Defibrillators

Last October 18th, 17 year old Matthew Keene, a student at Kimball Union Academy in New Hampshire, collapsed during football practice. Unexpectedly, he suffered cardiac arrest. His heart stopped beating and he was no longer breathing. Coaches and trainers rushed to his side and administered CPR.

Keene was lucky. Those attending to him were able to use a portable device no bigger than a common laptop to shock his heart into beating again. Keene recovered and wants others to have access to the special equipment known as an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED).

According to Cheerleading Coach Sybil Coombs, Wells-Ogunquit CSD has just one AED which is located at the high school. She believes that all District schools should have a device on hand for an emergency at sporting and other events.

According to statistics from the American Red Cross, 200,000 people in the United States experience sudden cardiac arrest each year. It is estimated that as many as 50,000 of those individuals could be saved by calling 911, administering CPR and (if needed) administering shock treatment from an available AED by someone trained in its use. Some models are sophisticated enough to determine if a shock is even needed.

In November, the cheerleading team began a fundraising campaign called "Heart to Heart." The team's goal is to raise funds to purchase four AEDs at an expected cost of \$1,500 apiece. According to School Nurse Patricia Endsley, it may be possible for the cheerleaders to purchase units for a lower price. "AEDs retail for about \$1500 to \$2500 but schools and municipalities can often purchase them through state contracts at substantial savings," commented Endsley.

The Heart to Heart campaign does not just involve the cheerleaders. It encourages students, staff and various school clubs to help raise money to make this purchase possible. Thus far, the cheerleaders have been holding 50/50 raffles at home basketball games with a special Valentines Day raffle planned. According to Coombs, 'Cheers from the Heart,' an annual regional cheerleading event, will also donate to this cause. The boys' basketball team is conducting a bottle drive and the track team is planning an upcoming dodge ball tournament.

"More than anything, we want the students to lead the way and help raise money for the defibs," commented Coombs. "We hope to have money raised by the end of the school year. We are not asking large amounts of money from anyone but asking teams and organizations that use the facilities to make a \$25 donation." Coombs stated several district staff members have already made donations. She urges the general public to give if they wish. Donations can be made at school sponsored sporting events in Wells or by writing and mailing a check to Joe Schwartzman, Student Activities Director, P.O. Box 579, Wells High School, Wells, ME 04090.

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