

## Carmel: Schools get devices that revive hearts

By Meg Haskell  
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CARMEL - Caravel Middle School, home of the Bobcats, became home on Wednesday to another powerful presence as well — an automated external defibrillator, or AED.

On hand to celebrate its arrival at the small school were U.S. Sen. Susan Collins, Maine Emergency Medical Services Director Jay Bradshaw and a lineup of educators and first responders from as far away as St. Agatha in Aroostook County.

An AED is a small device that packs a big punch.

With essentially no training, a person can use the unit, which is not much bigger than a hardcover dictionary, to save the life of an individual who has suffered a cardiac arrest. Press the green button and a clear recorded voice “speaks” the very basic instructions. Press the red button and stand clear to deliver a powerful jolt of electricity that can restore the heartbeat of the fallen victim.

For every minute a person remains in cardiac arrest, the odds of survival decline 10 percent.

The chance of being revived with cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR, alone is less than 10 percent.

On the other hand, defibrillation works as often as 90 percent of the time to jump-start the heart and restore blood flow and oxygen to the brain and other vital organs.

That’s why user-friendly AEDs are growing in popularity across the country, especially in rural areas where it may take way too long for professional emergency responders to arrive on the scene.

Thanks to a 2000 federal law co-written by Collins and Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis., thousands of AEDs have found their way into town offices, schools, police departments, community centers, YMCAs and other high-traffic public areas. The legislation paved the way for communities and other purchasers to obtain the devices for less than half their retail price of about \$1,600.

In Maine, about 1,200 AEDs already have been purchased through the Rural Access to Emergency Devices Act of 2000. But on Wednesday, 25 Maine schools, including Caravel Middle School in Carmel, were on the receiving end of free AEDs donated by Defibtech, a Connecticut-based company that is the primary supplier of the AEDs in Maine.



Sen. Susan Collins discusses an automated external defibrillator with Robert Stickel of LifeSavers, Inc., at Caravel Middle School in Carmel on Wednesday, February 20, 2008. Caravel was one of 25 Maine schools which received the defibrillators through the Rural Access to Emergency Devices Act, which Collins co-authored with Sen. Russ Feingold. (Bangor Daily News/Kate Collins)

Speaking to the small group gathered in the school library, Collins said AEDs should be “standard equipment” in gathering spaces of all descriptions, including workplaces, gyms and schools.

She praised Bradshaw for leading the effort to get the devices into Maine’s most rural communities.

Defibtech CEO and founder Dr. Glenn Laub said Collins has been “relentless” in pursuing the distribution of AEDs statewide, making Maine “a model for the rest of the nation.” With the addition of the 25 donated devices, Laub said, the lifesaving technology will become even more readily available to students, teachers, school staff, visitors and others who may use community schools for town meetings, recreational events and other purposes.

Also on hand for Tuesday’s event was Bryan Day, 16, a junior at Hermon High School. Day, who suffers from a heart condition, was successful last year in persuading the school board to allocate funds for two AEDs — one that is mounted in the school gymnasium and one that travels to athletic events.

Schools had to apply to be considered for the free AEDs being handed out on Wednesday. Those selected were all at a significant distance from the nearest health care facility and also served as community centers in their towns.

The selected schools are in communities throughout the state, including Bangor, Caswell, Monticello, Deer Isle, Newport, Princeton, Sinclair, Swanville, St. Agatha and Lincolnville, as well as on Monhegan Island and Cranberry Island.