

Automatic defibrillator installed at police station

By GEOFF CUNNINGHAM Jr.

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A combined effort by the Laconia Police and fire departments has furthered the city's efforts to place portable defibrillators in all of its most heavily-used public buildings.

A grant through the State Bureau of EMS helped provide an AED — or automated external defibrillator — in the police station at a cost of only \$700 to city taxpayers.

An AED is a portable electronic device that automatically diagnoses potentially life-threatening cardiac arrhythmias and is designed to literally instruct users what to do in an emergency.

The devices — currently located in the library, city hall and all five public schools — can deliver a lifesaving shock to those experiencing a cardiac problem.

Laconia Police Lt. Matt Canfield said his department decided to seek out such a device after finishing CPR training with the fire department that saw all officers getting educated in lifesaving techniques.

Canfield said the police department is a busy place and such a device could prove lifesaving should a problem arise.

"There are a ton of people coming in and out of here," said Canfield.

Laconia Deputy Fire Chief Deb Pendergast said the AED is very important in providing immediate care to those suffering from cardiac arrest, which needs immediate treatment for the best chance of survival.

"The first four to six minutes are critical," said Pendergast.

She noted that having an AED on hand could mean the difference in providing care even if the hospital is only minutes away.

Pendergast noted that the chance of surviving a serious cardiac event rises from four to six percent with just CPR to 36-37 percent if an AED is used on a victim. All fire department ambulances are equipped with such devices.

AEDs that originally cost \$3,000-\$4,000 when they arrived on the market have dropped in cost in recent time, though they are still expensive, with the police department's models costing roughly \$1,700 a piece.

Canfield and Pendergast said the grant helped cut a significant amount from that cost and Canfield credited the fire department with helping police to apply and obtain the grant.

"If it wasn't for them, we probably wouldn't have one," said Canfield.

The device is now mounted on the wall in the hallway behind the police station's main lobby.



LACONIA DEPUTY Fire Chief Deb Pendergast, left, and Laconia Police Lt. Matt Canfield said the police station's new automated external defibrillator could be a lifesaver in the event of a cardiac emergency. (Citizen Photo/Geoff Cunningham Jr.)