

Petaluma Health Care District Launches HeartSafe Community for Businesses as Arrow Benefits Group Partners for CPR/AED Training

BY GARY QUACKENBUSH

According to the American Heart Association (AHA), sudden cardiac arrests (SCA) are the leading cause of death in the U.S., claiming more than 350,000 lives each year, and the number one cause of death in the workplace. Survival rates are highest when immediate bystander CPR is provided within 10 seconds of collapse and defibrillation occurs within three to five minutes of collapse. Companies with employees trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and to use Automated External Defibrillators (AED) may have survival rates of 70% or greater. Without AEDs, survival rates are less than 5%.

To help strengthen the community's response to cardiac emergencies, the Petaluma Health Care District (PHCD) launched the HeartSafe Community (HSC) initiative in 2013 in collaboration with health care providers, nonprofits and the public sector, and considers businesses one of the most critical environments needing to be "rescue ready".

HSC is managed by PHCD's Healthquest CPR, an AHA-authorized training center that trained nearly 3,000 local residents in 2014. The program provides residents, as well as employees of Southern Sonoma County businesses and organizations, with CPR training and access to life-saving equipment with the strategic installation and maintenance of AEDs, enabling ordinary people to confidently respond to cardiac and breathing emergencies.

"We encourage employers to see the value in creating a rescue ready workplace environment, especially considering more people are living and working longer," said Ramona Faith, PHCD CEO. "Through CPR training and an accessible AED, employees feel a sense of empowerment to act quickly in a cardiac medical emergency, and it also rein-

forces a company culture that revolves around health and wellness, an important value for any employer. Above all, it could save a life at the office."

Today's AED devices are easy to use and provide audible instructions on how to operate them. No one can "overshock" a SCA victim because sensors detect if an electric charge is needed and prevent activation if not required. In addition, PHCD started a registration program to ensure that AEDs are maintained and easy to locate, with signage telling people where they are. The goal is to have an AED accessible to every business throughout the community.

"We have documented instances where HSC training has saved lives, and this initiative has made it possible for Petaluma to meet all the requirements for official recognition as a 'HeartSafe Community' with a declaration from the Petaluma City Council issued this month," Faith said. "We are very proud of this designation, but would like more businesses to get on board, understanding the importance of CPR/AED instruction and helping us expand our network of local access sites for life-saving training."

Serving as a catalyst for promoting health in the workplace, PHCD's first HSC business partnership with Arrow Benefits Group kicked off in early 2015.

According to Faith, "While PHCD is offering training, AED placement and maintenance for all business types, Arrow became so invested in the success of HSC, that it created its own health and wellness series featuring training and education. One reason for doing so directly relates to the correlation between workplace wellness programs, related benefits and a decline in health claims and absenteeism."

"Our clients have inquired about wellness programs, and we are thrilled to utilize our position as a leading benefits provider to offer a multitude of health-related education and training opportunities," said Andrew McNeil, principal with Arrow, a United Benefits Advisors partner firm and one of the largest benefits consulting and brokerage companies in the U.S. "We see the value and importance of promoting heart health and cardiac arrest responsiveness, which benefits our community well beyond the office walls."

Arrow hosts free quarterly CPR/AED classes on a first-come basis for its clients. Upon completion of the course, participants receive the AHA two-year certification card and a copy of the AHA's Heartsaver CPR/AED course manual. Arrow also hosts a Community Wellness Training Series comprised of nutrition classes, workplace health and other related lectures and classes.

Along with Arrow, several businesses have engaged with HSC, including Carlsen & Associates, Celsius 44 Condominiums, Cinnabar Theater, Clear Blue Commercial, Daymen Corporation, Lucchesi Center, George Petersen Insurance, Soligent and Zandex Corporation, among others.

PHCD's HSC program extends beyond Petaluma to Cotati, Rohnert Park, Penngrove and Santa Rosa. For more information on CPR and/or AEDs or how businesses can partner with PHCD to further its HSC program, call 707-766-9226 or email healthquest@phcd.org.

To sign up for an Arrow Benefits Group CPR/AED class or learn about its next Community Wellness Training topic, call McNeil at 707-992-3789, or email him at AndrewM@arrowbenefitsgroup.com.

