News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Friday, July 21, 2006

AED Purchased with Department of Health Grant Saves Life

An automated external defibrillator (AED) purchased through a Wyoming Department of Health grant program was used during a recent Albany County bicycle race to save a man's life.

"Using input from local ambulance services to find the best locations, we've been able to place about 300 AEDs across Wyoming over the last three years," said Jim Mayberry, manager of the Wyoming Department of Health's Emergency Medical Services Program.

Jay Bruhnke, an EMT with the Centennial Valley Fire Department EMS, had one of the devices with him as he was on standby during the recent Dead Dog Classic bicycle race about 13-14 miles west of Laramie. One of the racers, Dean Mason of Littleton, Colorado, collapsed with a sudden, massive heart attack not far from Bruhnke's station.

Two local nurses, who were providing additional medical support for the race in a follow car, began immediately providing CPR for Mason and called for help. Bruhnke rapidly arrived with the AED and used the device to revive Mason.

"The state helped save this man's life by providing the AED," Bruhnke said. "He was several miles outside of Laramie when his heart stopped and no other AED would have reached him in time."

Mason said, "I wouldn't be here today if you guys didn't have your act together. I'd like to thank everyone involved and I'll be eternally grateful the race organizers had the foresight to be prepared with medical support."

Using about \$600,000 in federal funds, the Department of Health has purchased AEDs for placement with ambulance services, law enforcement vehicles, schools, libraries and nursing homes around Wyoming.

"Doing everything possible to save time is critical when medical emergencies occur. Our state's rural nature can make it more challenging to reach a hospital or other healthcare facility as quickly as in some other areas," Mayberry said.

"With this AED grant program we wanted to get the help out there where it could do the most good," Mayberry continued. "Hearing Mr. Mason's story has been exciting and has shown us we went the right direction with this program."

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