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Carlmont High School freshmen trained in CPR

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Only a few hands went up when Woodside firefighter/paramedic Steven Silici asked Carlmont freshmen if they had taken a CPR class before.

Soon after, all 50 of the freshmen in fifth period were trained in the hands-only portion of CPR as well as how to handle a person who is choking and use an automated external defibrillator -- which all the schools in the Sequoia Union High School District now have on campus. The 40-minute safety presentation won't result in the students being certified. However, it will mean about 500 students on campus can help in their community. The training, which took place Thursday at Carlmont, is through a grant-funded partnership with the Sequoia Healthcare District. By the end of May, more than 2,000 freshmen in the district will have completed the training, said district Wellness Coordinator Karen Li.

These are skills trained individuals will most likely use on someone they know -- family, friends, co-workers, said Woodside Fire Battalion Chief Emil Picchi. In less than an hour, a group of 50 teens can be trained in these basic skills that can help a person's survival rate, he said. Picchi was happy about the partnership but would like to see the effort expanded throughout the county and conducted annually with the incoming freshmen.

Students watched a short informative video then took turns practicing the skills shown on dummies on the gym floor. Teachers, district staff and representatives from Woodside Fire Department and the Sequoia Healthcare District circulated to give guidance like to keep elbows straight and the correct placement of hands.

Li said the idea came from Sequoia Healthcare District, which approached her. Then, after working with Woodside Fire, the plan moved forward with a focus on the hands-only portion. Silici explained that lesson is much shorter, but it's also something people are generally less afraid to try. The lesson fits in as part of the required health unit, said physical education teacher Irene Oliveire-de Wood.

Picchi told students not to be afraid to use the CPR skills, something many people say keeps them from helping a person.

"You're really trying to help them," he told the class, adding that could be what saves a person's life.

heather@smdailyjournal.com

(650) 344-5200 ext. 105

Info box:

How to give CPR

1. Make sure the person is lying on his or her back on a firm, flat surface.
2. Move clothes out of the way.
3. Put the heel of one hand on the lower half of the breastbone. Put the heel of your other hand on top of the first hand.
4. Push straight down at least 2 inches at a rate of at least 100 pushes a minute.
5. After each push, let the chest come back up to its normal position.

Source: American Heart Association
