

# They take preparation to heart

Local heart association pushes for more CPR training, defibrillators

By Tracy Wheeler  
Beacon Journal medical writer

Dr. Terry Gordon doesn't believe in coincidences.

He doesn't believe it was a coincidence that Rebecca Holben was in a position to save her 72-year-old neighbor when he had a heart attack last year. And he doesn't believe it was a coincidence that an automated external defibrillator (AED) was on hand to save Terry Brett's life when he collapsed at a Kent State basketball game last month.

Coincidence, after all, implies dumb luck. And luck, Gordon said, had nothing to do with it.

Holben saved her neighbor's life because she had been trained in CPR. Brett was saved because AEDs are kept near the players' bench at Kent State.

That's planning, Gordon said. He, along with the local chapter of the American Heart Association, used Valentine's Day to honor Holben and Brett, and to publicize efforts to train more people in CPR and to put AEDs in public places.

Akron police cruisers are the next targets for AEDs.

The Akron/Canton chapter of the heart association gave the Akron Police Department three defibrillators on Friday. And the association hopes to give the department 47 more, at a cost of \$2,000 to \$3,000 per unit, paid for with donations.

In 2001, the local chapter put an AED in every Summit County high school and middle school - 59 in all. That effort that earned Gordon the American Heart Association's highest honor, the na-



JOCELYN WILLIAMS/Akron Beacon Journal photos

Dr. Terry Gordon (above, left) hands Terry Brett an award Friday at a Heartsaver Day ceremony in Akron. A portable defibrillator saved his life while Rebecca Holben (left) saved her neighbor with CPR.

tional 2002 Physician of the Year Award.

Police cars are the next candidates, Gordon said, because national surveys have found that 58 percent of the time, police get to the scene of medical emergencies before ambulances.

When a police car has an AED, the shock from the defibrillator can be delivered an average of three and a half minutes earlier. That translates into a 10-times-greater chance of a heart attack victim leaving the hospital alive.

"The earlier a person can get defibrillated and shocked," Gordon said, "the better the chance of survival."

Akron fire Lt. Michael Lozowy applauded the move to put AEDs in squad cars. For one thing, he said, police cars are always out on patrol, making it more likely that they'll be closer an emergency. In addition, para-

medics can get tied up at fire scenes, car accidents and other calls.

"We can't be everywhere at the same time," Lozowy said of paramedics.

The AEDs require little training. An electronic voice walks users through every step of using the device.

"All you've got to do is turn it on and listen," he said.

Brett is living proof that AEDs work. The 67-year-old Portage County man passed out when he and his wife, Barbara, reached their seats for a Jan. 11 KSU basketball game.

Security guards called for help, and a trainer behind the players' bench grabbed an AED and rushed over.

"The defibrillator definitely saved my life," Brett said.

At an American Heart Association news conference Friday, he held up an 8-by-10 photo of

his family, including six children and 11 grandchildren, with another on the way.

"If it wasn't for the defibrillator," he said, "I never would have seen them again. At least, not in this life."

Holben's rescue of her Barberton neighbor, Thomas Bower, on Oct. 13 was less high-tech, but just as effective. She simply ran across the street and started performing CPR until paramedics arrived.

At the time, she didn't even know Bower, except from an occasional wave if she saw him outside. Since that day, though, they've developed a grandfather-granddaughter type of relationship.

"Now, all of a sudden, I have a new person in my life," she said.

Tracy Wheeler can be reached at 330-996-3721 or [tawheeler@thebeaconjournal.com](mailto:tawheeler@thebeaconjournal.com)