

Could You Give CPR?

Classes and kits teach lifesaving technique

By Darla Carter

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The Courier-Journal

Deneen Cooper knows what it's like to feel helpless in an emergency situation. When her grandfather had a heart attack at home several years ago, she was just two minutes away, but there was nothing she could do but wait for emergency personnel.

"My house was very close to my grandfather's house, and I was called by my uncle to come down," Cooper said. "We made the 911 phone call, and other than that, we really did not know what to do."

Cooper's grandfather survived, but the close call was enough to motivate Cooper to enroll in a cardiopulmonary resuscitation class within a month.

"It became very personal to me to learn how to do the skills just in case something happened again," said Cooper, who today is a regional instructor and trainer for the Louisville Area Chapter of the American Red Cross.

"You never know when there's going to be an incident, whether it's within the family or you're out in public."

Would you be prepared to respond if someone collapsed near you?

Earlier this year, the American Heart Association released the results of an online survey suggesting that most Americans are daunted by the idea of performing life-saving procedures, such as CPR.

In the survey of 1,100 adults, only 21 percent were confident they could perform CPR (and only 15 percent believed they could use an automated external defibrillator in an emergency).

That's in keeping with the fact that most people who witness a cardiac arrest do not provide aid, though minutes are crucial for the victims.

Without immediate, effective CPR from a bystander, a person's chance of surviving sudden cardiac arrest decreases 7 percent to 10 percent per minute, according to the American Heart Association.

"EMS and the hospital are not the lifesavers; the lifesavers are the people willing to step up and start helping somebody right away," said Suzanne "Suzi" Bernert, a training specialist and paramedic with Louisville Metro Emergency Medical Services. But only about one-third of patients who go into cardiac arrest outside of a hospital receive

bystander CPR, said Dr. Neal Richmond, chief executive officer and medical director of EMS.

He thinks that's unacceptable. "We need a complete paradigm shift; something has really got to change."

Take classes

Cooper, who's been teaching CPR for 11 years, encourages the public to take a formal class to learn CPR and how to use an automated external defibrillator, which is a device used to restore normal heart rhythm.

Not only will you learn the skills, a class "also helps you perhaps overcome the insecurity or fear that you're doing something wrong," said Cooper, who recommends taking a refresher course each year. "It's very worthwhile. Four hours of your time could save someone's life."

For those who are pressed for time, there are shortcuts to learning CPR. For example, the heart association's CPR Anytime kits allow people to learn at home in less than 30 minutes, using a DVD and inflatable dummy.

Other shortcuts include the Red Cross' "blended learning" for those who want to do part of their training online, said Cooper, who's also a marketing associate.

Businesses step up

Some businesses also are offering ways to get trained. When members of a BB&T leadership team got together for a meeting last month downtown, the first thing on the agenda was CPR.

Wendy Jacob, an assistant vice president and regional employment manager for the bank, said she had never been exposed to CPR training until then.

The session was not a full CPR class but, rather, an introduction to CPR Anytime. Jacob and other participants watched excerpts from the DVD and followed the steps with guidance from Bernert. They also received kits from BB&T to take home.

Jacob, of Louisville, was so inspired that she shared the kit with her husband, Anthony, and sons, Kenyan, 8, and Jalen, 10, who was particularly fast at catching on.

"Safety is important for us," Jacob said. In case of fire, "we've got an escape route at the house," and CPR Anytime "is just one more thing ... in our kind of medical bag." Thanks to the kit and the session at the bank, Jacob said she is personally confident that she could respond if a cardiac arrest occurred at her home or at BB&T.

"I think if I got in the situation, and (given) the skills that we learned that day, I think I could put them to work," she said.

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To learn about Hands-Only CPR, a simplified form of rescue, go to www.americanheart.org/handsonlycpr.

Want to learn CPR?

Training at home

To get information about the CPR Anytime take-home kits, go to <http://www.cpranytime.org> or call (877) 242-4277.

You can ask about regular CPR classes, too.

Upcoming classes

American Red Cross: Classes are scheduled throughout the month at the Louisville Area Chapter, 510 E. Chestnut St. Cost: \$30-\$60. To learn about those classes and other training: (502) 589-4450 or www.louisville-redcross.org

Clark Memorial Hospital: A class aimed at non-health-care providers will be 6:30 p.m. Jan. 14 at the hospital, 1220 Missouri Ave. in Jeffersonville, Indiana. Cost: \$40.

Register: (812) 283-2033