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Kensington commercial area gets defibrillator

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Article Text:

KENSINGTON -- Speed is vital for anyone having a heart attack, and now people having a cardiac event in Kensington's hillside business district will be near an automated external defibrillator that can be used to shock their hearts back to life.

The device, which applies an electrical shock to the heart, has been placed at the Chevron station at 304 Arlington Ave., across from the retail businesses on the street.

Bystanders can often use the AEDs with little or, in some cases, no training.

The defibrillator is automated with electronic voice instructions on how to activate it and apply it to the victim's chest.

Sudden cardiac arrest is a condition when the heart stops functioning, causing a person to stop breathing and lose consciousness.

A cardiac arrest victim's chance of survival declines by 10 percent for each minute without care, according to the office of Supervisor John **Gioia** of Richmond, who represents Kensington.

"(The **AED**) is an intermediary device that can be used before the ambulance arrives," said Terrance Cheung, **Gioia**'s chief of staff. "The quicker you can have access (to the device), the quicker you can have your heart reset back to the right pace."

The Chevron station was chosen because it is open longer hours than other businesses in the area, Cheung said.

Station employees are receiving training in how to operate the device. It was donated by American Medical Response, which has the contract for ambulance services in the community.

Automated defibrillators are also available in other locations in West Contra Costa, including the Boys and Girls Club of El Sobrante and county libraries, Cheung said.

The county is placing them in areas with "high pedestrian traffic," he said.

"The other area we're considering in Kensington is at Colusa Circle," Cheung said. "We're looking for a business that would be open on Sunday when the farmers market is operating."

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