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School Daze: Raising awareness for 'Sudden Cardiac Arrest'

By [Jeanie Corral](#)
Reporter/Columnist



At a recent school board meeting, trustees were given an eye-opening viewpoint into the problem of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). The father of Travis Roy of Murrieta gave trustees a massive amount of information and a father's impassioned plea to join in with nearby school districts in getting the Automated External Defibrillators (AED) into the public schools and getting people trained in their proper use.

Recently, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed AB 254 that amends the Health and Safety Code and the Civil Code as relating to acquiring AEDs. Because more than 325,000 Americans die yearly from sudden cardiac arrest, having an AED available can protect children and adults alike because of the machine's ability to restart the heart.

Young Travis was three weeks away from completing his 8th grade year when he suffered SCA at his middle school. The 14-year-old spent four weeks in an ICU where an MRI showed he had gone 23 minutes without circulation, leaving him blind, completely paralyzed, unable to speak, chew or swallow. The accident happened on May 20, 2005; a month later, Travis died.

As his father poignantly stated, the family wanted to protect other families from the trauma and pain they endured, setting up the Travis R. Roy Sudden Cardiac Arrest Fund to educate and implement the layman's knowledge about what can be done.

Trustees learned that SCA kills close to 1,000 people daily, or about one every two minutes; that it happens in the general population at a rate of at least one in 500, and kills more each year than AIDS, breast cancer, colon cancer, prostate cancer and motor vehicle accidents combined.

Trustees also learned that this type of attack strikes boys four times more often than girls, and usually happens between the ages of 10 to 19, often during exercise periods such as vigorous physical education programs.

In Travis' case, he suffered from an undiagnosed heart condition. Had there been an AED available, he might have survived. According to his father, the application of an AED could save countless people. He notes that, because SCA is a time-critical emergency, brain death begins in four to six minutes after circulation stops; when an AED is used within three to five minutes, the overall survival rate is almost 75 percent.

Murrieta Valley Unified District implemented AED programs in 2006, using a 3-2-1 formula: three at each high school, two at each middle school and one at each elementary site.

This past March, Temecula Valley Unified District placed AEDs on each of its 30 campuses as well, modeling the 3-2-1 formula of Murrieta. This past month, San Jacinto Unified started placing the AEDs on its 12 campuses. Several other California school districts have AEDs on their campuses with personnel trained in their use.

The LEUSD board of trustees will be actively exploring buying the AEDs for its campuses as well. Currently, federal law mandates their placement in every airport and on every commercial airliner and, now, California law requires them in all health clubs.

Good Samaritan laws, at least in California, protect AED users from liability in the case of death.

Losing one child is one too many. LEUSD trustees will be part of program to be proactive when it comes to SCA prevention.

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