



A heart for saving lives

By BETHANY BLITZ Staff Writer | Posted: Saturday, November 5, 2016 12:00 am

About eight years ago, Paramedic Ryan Asher responded to a middle school student in cardiac arrest. He and his team, Kootenai County Fire and Rescue, did everything they could for the boy, but couldn't bring him back.

Since then, Asher has been determined to get an automated external defibrillator, more commonly known as an AED, for every school in Post Falls.

Greensferry Elementary School just received its AED, marking the last school in the Post Falls School District to get one.

"They do make a difference in the lives of not just the students, but staff, parents and any other person in the school," Asher said.

The AED is an automated machine that sends shock waves through a person's body in an attempt to re-stabilize the electric current in one's heart. When hooked up to a body, it analyzes the heartbeat to determine if a shock is necessary.

The AED is intended to be used with CPR during cardiac arrest.

When the machine is opened, an automated voice leads the user through the proper steps to set it up and gives instructions for if, when and how to initiate a shock.

"To me it's like an insurance policy, you never know when you might need one for a child, or an adult," said Greensferry Principal, Kathy Baker. "Can you imagine needing it and not having it?"

Asher reached out to family, friends and community members for donations for the AEDs. Many people and local businesses offered their support to help Asher reach his goal.

"People are so willing to jump on a good cause," said Kootenai County Fire and Rescue Fire Chief, Warren Merritt, who works with Asher. "It's so important for the community to have access to AEDs because there's a better chance of survival for that person in cardiac arrest."

Each AED costs about \$1,000, depending on the manufacturer, Asher said. But because he knows people in the industry and they know the AEDs are going to schools, he can sometimes get them at a discount.

As a collaborative effort, the Kootenai County Emergency Medical Services has offered to replace schools' AED batteries and pads at cost.

They've also provided free AED training to school staff.



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CONTINUED — Now that all the schools within the Post Falls School District have AEDs, Asher has begun approaching the Northern Lakes Fire District and the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department to follow suit.

"I want all schools in Kootenai County to have an AED," Asher said. "It's important to me, and important for everybody else."