

CPR Training, Increased Readiness Among Community of Windham Foundation Goals

Story and Photos
By Jonathan Ment

Community members from in and around Windham gathered Saturday morning to learn or refresh their training in CPR, “cardiopulmonary resuscitation.”

The half-day class in the community room at the Windham Wastewater Treatment Plant on South Street attracted so much interest a waiting was created.

Trainer B. Reay Mahler, administrator for the town of Cairo and president of Durham Rescue, said about 1,400 to

1,500 people are trained in CPR in and around Greene County annually.

It can cost \$75 per person, or more but was free for participants Saturday. Thanks in part to the late T. Patrick (Pat) Meehan, who served as Windham Town Supervisor for 38 years.

Roughly 16 years ago, a friend asked the longtime public servant what Meehan wanted his legacy to be.

After mulling the question for about a year he conceived of a foundation dedicated to meeting the unmet and unfulfilled

needs of the citizens.

Though Meehan would serve through 2009, until his untimely death fighting complications from surgery, the Community of Windham Foundation was formed shortly after the idea was hatched.

“I think we met at the Center Church and more than few people showed up,” said Foundation board member Jeri Miltenberger, two evenings ahead of Saturday’s training session.

“We winnowed it down to 20 or 30 people and Pat went around and pointed, saying ‘you’ll be

the chairman,’ ‘you’ll be the secretary,’ and so forth,” said Miltenberger.

A 501(c)(3) non-profit was formed and has since taken on a wide range of projects within the community.

That includes high profile things like decorating the fence at that same Church each Christmas, restoring the fountain in Hensonville, and presenting an annual tree-lighting there. It’s also included partnering with the Veterans of Foreign Wars and Rotary Club for the flagpole installed at the Windham Path. Behind the scenes the foundation supports numerous concerts and performances – and these CPR training classes now in their third year.

The classes are an extension of the foundation’s Emergency Shelter Initiative. That project arose after members heard opportunity knocking at the dedication of Windham’s new Highway Building.

“We thought this building would make a good shelter in an emergency,” said Denise Meehan who supports her late husband’s legacy through her work as a foundation board member.

The lodge at Windham Mountain Resort and the Wastewater Treatment plant are also designated shelters..

In January 2016, the foundation brought in the Red Cross for training on how to run a shelter. “These designated shelters need to be self-sufficient,” said Meehan, adding “If (someone) needs to leave home, this is where they can go.”

The town of Windham contributed \$1,500 to buy and fill plastic bins to stock shelter resources at the Highway Garage and treatment plant – such as toothbrushes, disposable towels, flip-flops for sanitary showers, coffee, tea, first aid supplies, and hand sanitizer.

Windham Mountain Resort cited sufficient stores of its own, according to Meehan and Miltenberger, enabling the funds go further.

The Windham Pharmacy donated bottled water and six large capacity coffee makers. And Karl Gonzalez, a former town board member and now Windham police chief, helped secure cots from the National Guard; new, more versatile radio systems and AEDs, Automated External Defibrillators.

The devices are so-named because they do much of the work of determining if a shock through the chest to the heart could potentially stop an irregular heart beat and allow a normal rhythm to resume following sudden cardiac arrest. Once turned on, the devices narrate a course of action for those using them.

Once AEDs were positioned, at Town Hall, the treatment plant and highway garage, the foun-

dation was able to pursue its goal of CPR training.

These are supported by the separate Windham Foundation, which helps fund the work of other groups focused on the wellbeing of the community.

Of course, achieving readiness goes beyond one Saturday morning. Three CPR classes will be held each year.

Additionally, 15 to 20 volunteers for the shelter initiative are also needed. Best practices that are contained in several red notebooks – such as handling privacy and confi-

dentiality, need to be shared with “team leaders.”

Residents who weathered Irene in 2011 tuned to WRIP will be relieved to know station President and General Manager Jay Fink already has a copy of the information.

Hopes are to inspire others to purchase AEDs and get people trained in CPR.

The next Community of Windham Foundation CPR training will be held Oct. 20, 2018. To register, email denisemeehan14@gmail.com or jrwest4335@gmail.com.

Five reasons to Train in CPR and Use of an AED

1. “Brain death” doesn’t wait. While waiting for emergency personnel to arrive after a call to 911, CPR can help minimize the risk of brain damage during the first critical minutes – even if no AED is available. Mahler explained the chance of survival decreases by 7 to 10 percent with each passing minute, once the heart stops sending blood and glucose to the brain.
2. By some estimates more than 80 percent of cardiac arrests occur while the patient is at home. You’re more likely to use CPR skills to help someone close to you than assisting a stranger. While many folks think of the elderly or ill as being those most likely to need this sort of aid, infants and children can also be saved by CPR – and ‘Infant CPR’ are part of the training given in Windham.
3. CPR is fairly easy to learn and can be administered by just about anyone, at any time if needed.
4. Confidence in an emergency comes from training (and retraining) and preparation – and it can mean the difference between life and death.
5. You could save a life! Cardiac arrest is a leading cause of death in the United States; with less than 30 percent of those experiencing it outside of a hospital receiving CPR.



Training mannequin with a pocket mask. A check-valve (not shown) prevents the person administering CPR from receiving backflow from the patient.



The Automated External Defibrillator sitting atop one of boxes built by the highway department to house them.



Mahler demonstrates the proper hand position, before beginning chest compressions on an adult mannequin.



Much of the training is delivered through a combination of live action and animated video followed by hands-on instruction and practice with training AEDs that do not deliver actual shocks.