Sports grounds welcome community AED stations

New Zealand Red Cross has installed its twenty fourth Community AED (Automatic External Defibrillator) station in just over a year.

Outdoor community AED stations provide 24/7 access to defibrillators and maintain the AED within the manufacturers operating conditions, particularly when it gets below zero.

The survival rate from Sudden Cardiac Arrest in communities is low, mainly due to the travel time for an ambulance to arrive. An AED can deliver a lifesaving shock when someone experiences a sudden cardiac arrest.

New Zealand Red Cross uses fully automatic AEDs that are very easy to use, even without training, by following the prompts by the machine and they have no buttons to push. It will only deliver an electric shock when required and automatically adjusts the shock to the size of the person. All community AEDs are located outside buildings and accessible to anyone at any time through a pin code obtained by calling 111.

Most of the AED stations are located at sports clubs, schools, community centres, libraries and in rural communities. Even with club facilities locked, with a community AED station help is always available.

New Zealand Red Cross Product Development Manager Marcus Bird says all devices were installed after community fundraising efforts.

"We worked with the Bishopdale Branch of New Zealand Red Cross who joined forces with St Bede's College and Redwood Seniors who fundraised for the installation of the first AED in the Canterbury region," says Mr Bird. "A North Canterbury group heard about it and began their own fundraising for an AED station and it just snowballed from there."

One of the AED stations was installed in the Rangiora Rugby Club and was mostly paid for by the Foodstuffs Community Trust. Others have been financed after fundraising efforts from local Red Cross branches.

The launch of the first community AED station by the sports grounds at Redwood library was attended by Jeff Cox, who wholeheartedly supports its installation. Jeff suffered a heart attack at work but survived thanks to an AED at his workplace.

"The ambulance staff and doctors made it very clear that in all probability I would not be alive today if the AED had not been on site," says Mr Cox.

Heart disease is New Zealand's number-one killer with one person dying on average every 90 minutes. Many of these deaths could have been prevented if an AED had been close by. The community AEDs are registered with 111 who will automatically direct people to a community AED if one is nearby.

A community AED costs $6.030.60 plus installation which varies per site. Any person or group wishing to fundraise for the installation of a community AED can contact New Zealand Red Cross by emailing save@redcross.org.nz, calling 03 339 7111 or visiting redcrossshop.org.nz.