Fremont students breathe life into learning

County Health Care Services provides CPR training to 7,500 Fremont seventh-graders

By SHANNON BARRY

Hundreds of junior high students in the Fremont Unified School District are literally breathing life into their curriculum.

More than 800 seventh-graders at Walters and Horner junior high schools participated in the CPR7 program, which is working to provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation training.

The program, developed by the American Heart Association, is designed to prepare students to provide CPR and emergency medical services to those in need.

The program includes an instructional video of how to properly administer CPR and then practicing on their manikin.

“The great thing is the teachers are just the facilitators for this,” said Jamie Hintze, community relations coordinator for Alameda County Health Care Services.

She said the students were following the instructions.

Trained in CPR as a teenager, Alves was happy to watch her group of students learning the valuable lesson of how to take care of someone who has fallen into sudden cardiac arrest — generally occurring after a heart attack or as a result of electrocution or near drowning.

The person typically collapses, stops breathing normally and is unresponsive.

Survival rates from cardiac arrest outside the hospital vary across the country, from 3 percent to 15 percent, according to the American Heart Association.

The American Heart Association recommends that chest compressions be the first step to revive victims in this instance in order to begin moving oxygenated blood to the brain and heart muscles where it is most needed, according to new guidelines issued in October.

Another recent change to the guidelines, noted in the instruction, was the recommendation of a ratio of 30 compressions to two ventilations. Formerly, a 15:2 ratio was recommended.

Before talking about taking these steps, the video advised students to first tap and talk to the person while looking for movement; call 911; and check normal breathing before proceeding with CPR.

The kit also incorporates the new guidelines — which details rescuers should be pushing deeper with their hands by at least 2 inches in adults — with two different tabs that can be pulled out in the mini-manikin noting “adult” or “child.”

Some say a good guide is the beat of the old disco song “Stayin’ Alive.”

“I just think it’s a skill we should all know,” Alves said.

According to 2009 Alameda County data, only 28 percent of residents who sustained sudden cardiac arrest at home or in the community received CPR in the critical moments before first responders arrived.

The community capacity for bystander CPR has dropped dramatically since public high schools discontinued providing driver education courses in the 1990s and, along with them, CPR and first aid training.

While the program at these Fremont junior high schools is a first in Alameda County, all 18 school districts in the county are participating.

Brought to Fremont Unified through the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, the program’s ultimate goal is to train 15,000 students throughout the county.

It is then hoped these students will go on to train at least five family and friends each themselves with the life-saving skills, widening the pool of those people reached to 75,000. After the training, the kits (retailed at $35 each) were taken home for the students to train family and friends as well as continue practicing on their own.

“We want to increase the CPR bystander participation from 30 percent to 60 percent in three years,” said Mike Jacobs, an emergency medical services specialist with Alameda County Health Care Services Agency.

“We need our community to be skilled and willing to provide CPR until emergency medical services arrive.”

Pediatric cardiologist Andrew Maxwell emphasized the importance of this project.

“Teaching this skill to seventh-graders is ideal; they are old enough to understand physiology of the heart and circulation, they are strong enough to perform the skill and are impressionable enough to retain the skill.”

Using specialized manikins, Walters students learn the skills needed to save a life during their cardio pulmonary resuscitation course last Thursday. Photos by Shannon Barry

Dutra appointed to fill two years on city council

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“Our constituents are expecting the council to represent a new reality,” he said. “We can’t continue to do what we’ve done in the past, because we simply can’t afford to.”

After interviewing all six candidates, which took about 25 minutes per applicant, the four sitting council members were asked to rank their preferences.

The applicant with the lowest total once preferences were added was then declared the new council member.

Dutra received top votes from Mayor Bob Wasserman, Vice Mayor Sue Chan and Natarajan, while Harrison ranked the former council member second.

Adding those totals, Dutra earned five points.

Bacon, who had several residents speak on his behalf at previous council meetings, received a second place vote from Wasserman and a third place ranking from Natarajan.

Harrison and Chan gave him a fifth and sixth, respectively. Ultimately, Bacon ended the process ranking third overall for council preferences.

Zlatnik, who served on the council for 10 years beginning in 1992, received the lowest totals — ranking last for Wasserman and Harrison and receiving fourth place from both Chan and Natarajan for a total of 20 points.

Salwan and Bonaccorsi both earned totals of 12 points for second priority while Chugh received 19 points and a fifth-place preference for the council.

“I want to remind people that we were not voting against anyone tonight,” Natarajan said after the votes had been tallied. “This was one of the toughest decisions I’ve ever had to make as a council member.”

Wasserman agreed with Natarajan, saying the council was voting for the most qualified candidate.

“It’s always a tough decision,” he said. “Some cities go through these things and people in the audience start cocking their guns. But I think we’ve done pretty well here tonight.”