



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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City of San Diego Celebrates 20 Years of Project Heart Beat

200 LIVES SAVED, MORE THAN 9,500 AED UNITS INSTALLED ACROSS SAN DIEGO SINCE PROGRAM INCEPTION

SAN DIEGO – Today the City of San Diego is marking the 20th anniversary of its nationally recognized Project Heart Beat program. Launched in November 2001, the program was developed to increase access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) citywide and to educate people on their use, ways to recognize cardiac distress and how to respond quickly to potentially save someone's life.

AEDs are portable devices that, when used in tandem with CPR, can help keep a person alive until further medical assistance arrives.

“We are very proud to celebrate this milestone anniversary with San Diego Project Heart Beat,” said Chief Colin Stowell of the City’s Fire-Rescue Department. “Project Heart Beat has made a tremendous difference in saving lives by giving San Diegans the tools and education they need to properly respond in the event they are with someone who experiences sudden cardiac arrest.”

The program’s initial goal was to place at least 250 AED units throughout San Diego ahead of the 2003 Super Bowl that attracted hundreds of thousands of out-of-town visitors . The program dramatically exceeded expectations and nearly 800 AED units were installed.

As of today, Project Heart Beat has helped place more than 9,500 AEDs in public and private facilities throughout the region, continuing the goal to make AEDs as accessible and ubiquitous as fire extinguishers. Since its inception, the program has been responsible for saving nearly 200 lives.

At the heart of San Diego Project Heart Beat is program manager Maureen O’Connor, EMT for San Diego Fire-Rescue. For the past 20 years, O’Connor has worked alongside volunteer AED advocates like Karen McElliott and other staff members to educate San Diegans about how to save people experiencing cardiac arrest.

“When cardiac arrest happens, every second counts,” said O’Connor. “Quick recognition, swift response and having an AED nearby can be the difference between life and death.”

San Diego’s Project Heart Beat program is both a nationally and internationally recognized program with other municipalities replicating the City of San Diego’s efforts, including cities in Florida, Tennessee, Minnesota and Nevada.

To learn more about the City’s Project Heart Beat program and request to have an AED installed, visit sandiego.gov/sdprojectheartbeat.

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