

AEDs Do Belong in CT Schools and on Playing Fields

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Most deaths in Connecticut schools can be avoided. Bill No. 981 can and will make this happen. This collective effort to keep CT schools safe from sudden cardiac arrest is by providing a very simple device to be available in every school and on every playing field. It is called an automated external defibrillator (AED). If it had been available in the new \$70 million school where my son had been playing in a Varsity basketball game, he would be alive today. The condition that is killing our children is the number 1 killer in the United States. My son, Greg, was a healthy athlete who played three sports every year, passed three required sports physicals and never missed a day of school.

So why did Greg die in school during halftime during his Varsity basketball game? Greg had an enlarged heart that no one knew he had, it was never picked up on the routine sports physicals, this condition called hypertrophic cardio-myopathy (HCM) would have been picked up by an echo-cardiogram or EKG. No one had ever told me that one child out of 500 who walks through the front door of a school has this condition, but doesn't know it. Greg had no symptoms, he did not suffer from high blood pressure, dizziness, chest pain, fainting spells or shortness of breath. We did not know that somewhere between 7000 and 10,000 healthy looking children (source: Northern Pediatric Association) die each year from sudden cardiac arrest. The number of SCA deaths in kids is probably higher, but no state or federal agency is required to report or keep a database on these statistics.

Greg was playing basketball in a \$70 million school without an automated external defibrillator. When he collapsed, the athletic director and trainer thought he was having a seizure. SCA is exactly what a seizure looks like because of the lack of oxygen to the brain. CPR was not started because they kept insisting that Greg had a pulse, however, he wasn't breathing normally. The first ambulance arrived thirty minutes later without a defibrillator. Five minutes later, a second ambulance arrived with an AED and shocked Greg's heart back about five times. However, it had been too long before he was able to be shocked by an AED since He died in route to the hospital. My son was only 15 years old.

We learned the hard way what an AED was and how it probably would have saved Greg's life or at the least given him a second chance.

What is an automated external defibrillator (AED) and why are they needed in schools?

An AED is a medical device that can be used by students as young as those in 4th or 5th grade without fear or concern. It is needed in schools and on playing fields. Sudden Cardiac Arrest

an happen anytime and anywhere. This fatal irregularity to a normal heart rhythm is what most often leads to death if not treated within three to five minutes with an automatic external defibrillator. It does not discriminate against age, race or healthy looking individuals and athletes. No one is immune from suddenly being stricken by sudden cardiac arrest.

The victim will lose consciousness most often without warning, if a normal heart rhythm is not restored, death will follow within a matter of minutes. Many victims have no history of heart disease. Sudden cardiac arrest is unlike a heart attack, which causes the death of the heart muscle tissue from loss of blood supply, many victims of SCA also have no prior symptoms.

The American Heart Association states that as many as 900 people die each day from sudden cardiac arrest, which includes adults and children. If AEDs were more prevalent and publicly accessible, as many as 50,000 lives could be saved each year with the use of AEDs.

During the school year, 20% of America's population is found on a school campus every day.

They may be teachers, students, administrators, coaches, parents, grandparents, neighbors. They can be picking up or dropping off kids. They could be spectators at sporting events but at some point of the day, they all find themselves on school property.

The first AED bill in the country was passed in Pennsylvania on what we called a coincidence or serendipity?) on what should have been Greg's 16th birthday. It was April 25th, 2001. The legislature provided \$2.4 million for the purchase of at least two AEDs for every school district in the state.

In New York State on December 1, 2002, a law mandating that AEDs be in all public schools and on all playing fields was enforced. Two weeks later, the first student in NY (17 year-old Andrea LaFleur) was saved in her school less than two hours from where we sit today.) Since that date, over 55 lives have been saved by a NY school owned AEDs.

In 2006, sixteen students died in Texas schools. A law was passed in TX in 2007 mandating AEDs in all schools and at all sporting events. School AED legislation has been passed in many states which also includes but not limited to: Florida, Maryland, Illinois, Colorado, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, so why would Connecticut want more kids to die to pass this AED school bill, when too many have died already?

The Centers for Disease Control state there are approximately 10 deaths per day caused by fires versus 900 people who die per day from sudden cardiac arrest. I taught school for twenty-two years, I took my students out for fire drills four times a year, yet I have never witnessed a fire in a school. We had water sprinklers in our schools, fire alarms, strobe lights to warn fire victims and fire extinguishers every so many feet apart, why? This was because too many people had died from fires and smoke inhalation that standards had been enforced and fire safety has become a priority.

Budgets are now extremely tight, there is always too little to spend on our children's educational needs but a laptop computer, a new white board or even a new sports uniform will not save your child's or loved ones' life, an AED might.

What should your school board spend their budget? A life-saving, easy to use \$1500 automated external defibrillator that would save a life? Or a \$50,000 scoreboard ?

I work with former Connecticut resident, Ryan Gomes of the MN Timberwolves. Ryan has given AEDs away and broaden awareness about SCA across the country. Ryan lost a close friend, Stanley Meyers, to SCA before a basketball practice during a summer league. He made a promise that if he ever became an NBA player, he would encourage SCA awareness and AED deployment across the country. Connecticut should be so proud, because Ryan has done just that with the gift of over 30 AEDs across the country in memory of Stanley.

You can also do something about SCA, don't let another child die in your schools in Connecticut.

Support this bill and encourage other legislators to do just the same. Encourage your school districts to be heart-safe. You never know, your own child's or grandchild's life may depend on it.

Thank you for your support of SB 981.

