

LITTLE HAVANA

Nonprofits get free defibrillators

■ A \$200,000 grant from a South Florida health foundation will buy Miami nonprofits cardiac defibrillators and training in how to use them.

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Using only his fingers to guide him, Oseas De Leon located the mannequin's chest. He placed electronic pads over the upper right and lower left parts of its mock rib cage.

De Leon was learning how to use a portable defibrillator machine to help save the life of a cardiac arrest victim. Every minute that passes decreases a victim's chance of survival by 10 percent, so a quick response by someone nearby could be the difference between life and death.

It didn't matter than De Leon, 28, is blind.

The \$1,500 defibrillator machine recently demonstrated at the Miami Light-house for the Blind and Visually Impaired told him exactly what to do.



CARDIAC ARREST

Cardiac arrest facts from the American Heart Association:

- Cardiac arrest claims about 330,000 lives each year - or 900 per day - nationwide.
- About 80 percent of all sudden cardiac arrests happen at home.
- Brain death can occur in just four to six minutes after cardiac arrest.
- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is not a substitute for defibrillation. CPR helps maintain vital blood flow to the heart and brain until defibrillation can be administered.
- Florida has a Good Samaritan law shields people from lawsuits who provide emergency care - including CPR and defibrillation - in good faith.

"Do not touch the patient," the machine said in a man's voice. "Stand clear. Shock advised. Charge. Do not touch the patient. Press the flashing red button."

At that point, De Leon felt for the round button that would have delivered a life-saving electrical shock to a cardiac arrest victim.

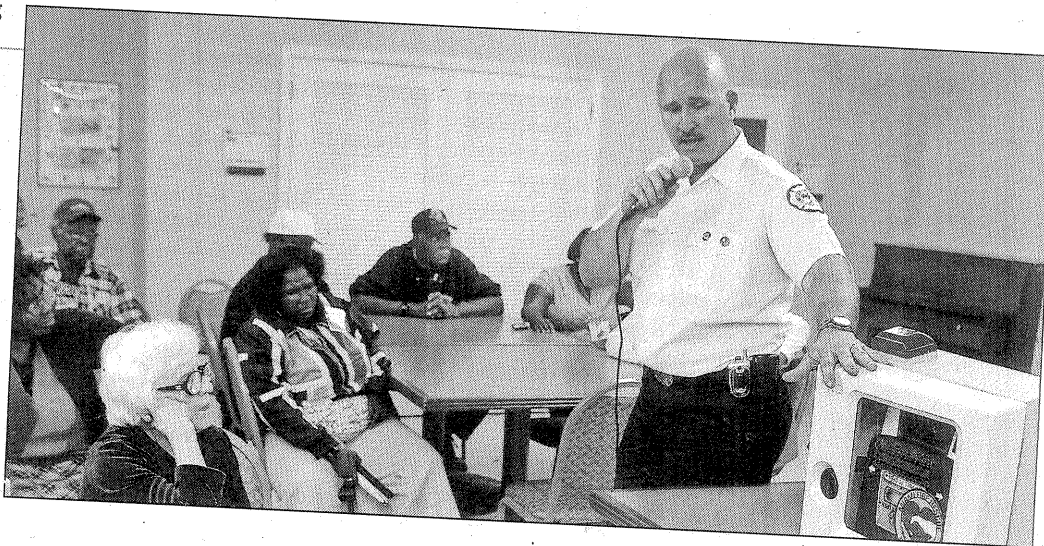
After the practice run, De Leon released the six-pound defibrillator with confidence that he soon would be able to use it in a real-life situation.

"With more practice, I would be able to do it," De Leon said. "The machine is clear when it talks."

De Leon was one of 15 Lighthouse clients trained by Miami Fire Rescue representatives on how to use the three defibrillators that will be installed on each of the center's three floors.

In July, the Health Foundation of South Florida awarded the Miami Fire Department a \$200,000 grant to install the

Anyone can save a life with a defibrillator. Above, paramedic Katia Artze trains Miami Commissioner Joe Sanchez and Oscar De Leon how. Below, paramedic Rick Mayan demonstrates at Miami Lighthouse for the Blind.



machines in public places throughout the city, including nonprofit health and youth centers.

The program helps train average citizens to do what rescue workers often cannot,

said Rick Mayan, a Miami firefighter who oversees the training program.

"Cardiac arrest is the only true emergency where we can't get there fast enough," Mayan said. "When the heart

stops, your brain dies in six minutes."

It takes about four hours to be certified, but the defibrillators are simple enough for anyone, Mayan said.

"One [pad] goes above the

[right] nipple and the other gets placed five inches below the [left] armpit," Mayan said. "The machine will tell you."

In 2001, a government mandate required defibrillators be placed in all federal buildings.

The Health Foundation made it possible for the Lighthouse, 601 SW Eighth Ave., to obtain them for free, along with the training.

Virginia Jacko, president and CEO of the Lighthouse, said her organization decided to apply for the grant because many clients are high risk for coronary complications.

"When you're blind, you're not likely to have an active lifestyle," said Jacko, who is blind. "It makes you more vulnerable to heart disease."

Other nonprofit organizations can apply for this grant. For more information or to obtain a grant application, call Mayan at 305-569-3625 or e-mail padcoordinator@miamigov.com.