

South Miami Heart Center donates 129 defibrilators

BY BETHANY RUNDELL

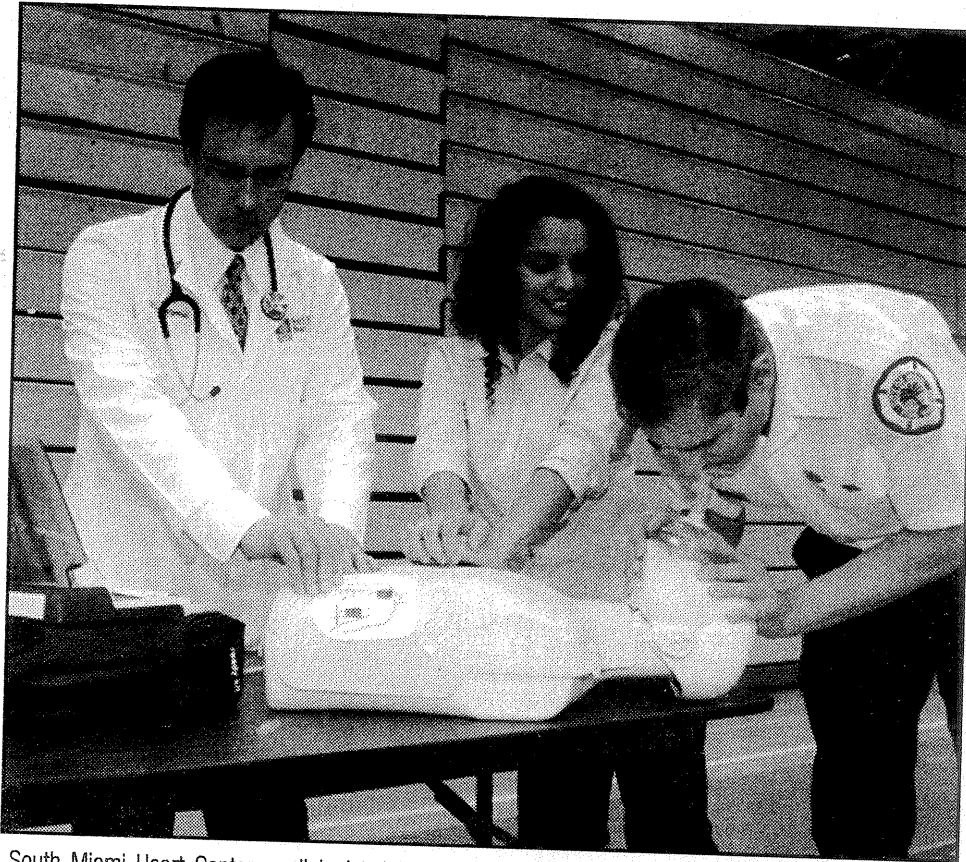
South Miami Heart Center and Miami-Dade County Public Schools recently distributed 129 automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) to the county's senior high schools.

Each school received three of the heart-saving devices following a mass training on how to use the machines at South Miami Senior High. The next phase of this donation will place an AED in each public middle and elementary school for a total of 489 defibrillators.

The idea of donating the machines to the public school system began as a casual conversation between the Heart Center's medical director of electrophysiology John Dylewski, MD, and Rachel Moyer, co-founder of Parent Heart Watch, a national organization that raises awareness about sudden cardiac arrest.

Moyer's 15-year-old son, Greg, died from sudden cardiac arrest in 2000. When Dr. Dylewski heard that Ms. Moyer wanted to get an AED in every school so that other children would be given the chance her son did not have, he offered to help.

To purchase the defibrillators, the Heart Center designated more than



South Miami Heart Center cardiologist John Dylewski, MD, (left) assists School for Advanced Studies staffer Samay Alvarez and City of Miami firefighter Juan Patron with reviving "Little Anne" using CPR and an automatic external defibrillator.

Miami-Dade School Board, appreciated the donation.

"One person's generosity will save another person's life," Dr. Perez said. "Last year, the Miami-Dade school district recognized the need to train additional staff for certification in CPR/AED, so the timing of this donation is perfect."

Last year, then Gov. Jeb Bush signed the Gordon & Muilli Act, which requires that automatic external defibrillators be available and in working condition on the grounds of every school that is a member of the Florida High School Athletics Association and participates in interscholastic athletic events. The law follows the death of Matthew Muilli, a Tampa-area teenager who died in 2005 while trying out for his high school baseball team.

South Miami Heart Center is the cardiovascular services division of South Miami Hospital, a part of Baptist Health South Florida. Baptist Health is the largest not-for-profit healthcare organization in South Florida. It also includes Baptist Hospital, Baptist Children's Hospital, Homestead Hospital, Doctors Hospital, Mariners Hospital, Baptist Outpatient Services, and Baptist Cardiac & Vascular Institute.

\$635,000 of a \$10 million donation from a patient who was diagnosed with a heart-rhythm abnormality and treated by Dr. Dylewski.

Cardiac Science, a distributor of portable AEDs, offered the machines at a discounted price, and the City of Miami's Public Access Defibrillation Program agreed to train school faculty how to properly use the machines. Each defibrillator cost the Heart Center \$1,300, and many schools cannot afford to purchase one of these machines.

"You can't put a price tag on saving a life," Dr. Dylewski said. "Part of South Miami Heart Center's aim is to raise awareness of life-threatening problems with the heart's electrical system. If we save one life with this donation, we've

fulfilled our goal."

Sudden cardiac arrest results when failure of the heart's electrical system causes the heart to stop beating. Automatic external defibrillators can be used to shock the heart back into rhythm and potentially save lives. Each year, more people die from sudden cardiac arrest than from breast cancer, lung cancer, stroke and AIDS combined.

"I'm honored that Dr. Dylewski and South Miami Heart Center agreed to help with this important awareness campaign," Moyer said. "My son's life could have been saved if his school had a defibrillator on hand, and it's my goal to make sure kids are given a fair chance of surviving."

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