

Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation holds firm to its goals

BY CHRISTINA DIMARTINO

Since its founding in March 2000, the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation has made tremendous strides in its efforts to garner support for and educate communities on the importance of life-saving equipment and techniques.

The foundation was founded following the death of Karen and John Acompora's son, Louis, at age 14. The young Acompora was playing goalie in a lacrosse game when he blocked what appeared to be a routine shot with his chest protector.

It was far from routine. He took a few steps and then collapsed. Paramedics arrived with a defibrillator almost 15 minutes later, but they were too late.

His death was caused by a syndrome known as commotio cordis, which occurs from blunt impact trauma during the critical cycle in the rhythm of the heart.

The couple stood helplessly by as they watched the failed attempts to save their son's life. It wasn't long after that they learned that had there been an automated external defibrillator, or AED, on hand, he would have survived.

The foundation began with a goal to promote the awareness of AEDs at public events of all kinds, but over the years its work has expanded to many life-saving techniques and has spread across the country.

Karen Acompora recently updated *The Produce News* with new avenues the foundation is delving into, as well as the progress of existing initiatives.

"We are a part of the Cardiac Safety Research Consortium, or CSRC," said Acompora. "It was created to develop a consistent data collection of national screenings for heart conditions, with an emphasis on young people. Many parents of children have no idea that their kids may have a heart irregularity that puts them at risk, and it's something that their doctors don't commonly test for. Our goal is to get more kids screened across the country, make screening more efficient and proficient and track the kids whose screening indicate they may be at risk. As with any physical condition, follow up is key."

The CSRC works diligently on the prevention of sudden cardiac death, using the acronym SCDY. It is in partnership with public screening groups including Parent Heart Watch, industry, academic institutions and other interested participants. Acompora is the chair of the program

three national meetings focused on developing a sustainable national health care resource on cardiac screening," explained Acompora. "The data warehouse will log information collected from the many screening efforts underway in this country. The accumulated data will enable powerful research and advocacy projects aimed to further understand SCDY and improve efforts for its prevention.

"Data collected across the diversity of our population will allow future improvements in the tools that are used, such as the ECG, to understand how age, gender, race, ethnicity, and activity level influence the detection and prevention of SCDY," she continued. "The success of this initiative depends on partnership between the CSRC and screening groups across the country."

One of the first steps towards its success is to conduct a nationwide pilot project with a goal to demonstrate that through the CSRC and screening group partnerships, reliable, uniform, digital data can be collected during screenings, regardless of group or location. The information collected during this pilot will enable the development of a sustainable national data warehouse.

An example of how the foundation's work has expanded in other life-saving initiatives and across the country is in Minnesota. The Minnesota High School League and the Medtronic Philanthropy Foundation formed Anyone Can Save a Life, an emergency action planning program for after-school practices and events.

Two years ago, the National Federation of State High School Associations approved a grant to finance the Anyone Can Save a Life instruction manual to be sent to every high school in the United States. Implementation is now in place and completed. The manual includes emergency action instructional curriculum and video content aimed toward athletes, parents, coaches and community members related to after school events.

"We continue our work on this program," said Acompora. "Nationally, schools are implementing programs developed around the manual. It's the same as the Cardiac Emergency play, but it focuses on the Anyone Can Save a Life initiative."

The website, www.anyonecansavealife.org, provides information and a step-by-step implementation guide for athletic directors, coaches, ath-

letes and how they can become involved and institute a program at their schools," said Acompora. "It is also supported by the Heart Rescue Project and the NFHS Foundation, which serves the interests of young people who participate in interscholastic sports and activities."

Positive news also came when the CPR/AED Education program was passed by the New York State Assembly and legislated into law by Governor Cuomo in October 2015. It requires every senior student to have this education before they graduate.

"This is a major project," explained Acompora. "There are 127 high schools in Nassau and Suffolk Counties [New York] alone. We have personally been to more than 40 of the schools, so it's evident how much more work is needed in this area alone."

"I am always amazed at what the schools have not done, despite the legislation," she continued. "My primary goal is to make sure the schools have AEDs, where they are located, how they are maintained and which people are properly instructed to use them. Signage is also important. It should stick out from the wall next to or above the AED to clearly indicate where it is from a reasonable distance, rather than a small sign placed on, above or next to the AED where it can't be seen from down a hallway."

She explained that AED pads and batteries do expire, so they must be updated. The foundation suggests they be checked weekly by the school official appointed with the task.

More information about the Louis J. Acompora Foundation and its work can be found at www.LA12.org.



AED Donation to Our Savior New American School.



AED Donation to St. Peters Elementary School.





BE PREPARED

AND BE AWARE

Undetected and unexpected, Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is claiming our youth. Cardiovascular disease is the second leading medical cause of death in children and adolescents in the United States. Data estimates that 1 in 50 high schools have a SCA in a student on school grounds each year. Affected youth usually appear healthy and normal... until they have an arrest. The good news is that early detection is possible, heart conditions are treatable and young lives can be saved. Knowledge of the observations and actions that can make the difference between life and death are key to a successful outcome.

Early detection is crucial. The Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation promotes the early detection of heart conditions in youth through heart screenings. Frequently, the warning signs and symptoms of a heart condition in youth go undetected.

Most occurrences of SCA in youth occur in public places. The increased availability of publicly accessible automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in schools and school-sponsored athletic events will dramatically increase the probability that youth and adults alike will survive a sudden cardiac arrest. Knowing and properly executing the critically time-urgent links of the Cardiac Chain-of-Survival can help save the life of someone in SCA.

In June of 2002, Governor George Pataki of New York signed Louis' Law, which requires AEDs in all New York public schools. To date 99 lives have been saved as a direct result of this law in New York public schools. Each time a vibrant, seemingly healthy child suffers a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA), the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation mission of protecting youth from SCA and preventable Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD) becomes even more critical. We know it happens and we need to collectively assure others realize it by sharing our Mission and Vision.

THESE STEPS WILL SAVE A LIFE

PLEASE TAKE THE TIME TO KNOW THEM AND LEARN CPR.

Early Recognition of SCA

Collapsed and unresponsive
Seizure like activity
Gasping, gurgling, snoring or labored breathing noises

Early Access to 9-1-1

Confirm unresponsiveness
Call 9-1-1- and follow emergency dispatchers instructions
Call any onsite Emergency responders

Early CPR

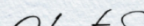
Begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately

Early Defibrillation

Immediately retrieve and use an automated external defibrillator(AED) as soon as possible to restore the heart to its normal rhythm

Early Advance Care

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Responders begin advanced life support including additional resuscitative measures and transfer to a hospital.





Contact the Louis J. Acompora Memorial Foundation for more information • www.LA12.org

FOR INDUSTRY UPDATES VISIT WWW.PRODUCENEWS.COM