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Nurse saves boy's life

By Jennifer Amsler, Independent Newspapers

A Cherokee Elementary School student heart stopped beating on campus the morning of April 16 but a modern breathing device make the incident a success story.

Paradise Valley Police and the Rural/Metro Fire departments responded to the emergency call that an 8-year-old boy had collapsed around 7:30 a.m. at the elementary school, 8801 N. 56th St. The student had prior heart trouble.

But before paramedics arrived, Cherokee nurse Donna Musser administered an Automatic External Defibrillator, a modern life-saving device that assists an individual when monitoring CPR.

Ms. Musser used the AED to assess the child's condition and the device reported to her the boy did not have a heartbeat. The registered nurse also used the device to shock the student's heart and performed CPR for up to 10 minutes before paramedics arrived at the school.

"My training just took over," Ms. Musser said.

Paramedics took the student to Phoenix Children's Hospital where he was doing fine hours later, said responding Paradise Valley Officer Rick Cookemboo.

Mr. Cookemboo said Ms. Musser's actions were lifesaving.

"Prior to this shock, the child was in Ventricular Fibrillation, which can cause sudden death," Mr. Cookemboo said.

In her five years at Cherokee Elementary, this is the most serious health incident that happened on campus and Ms. Musser said luckily the defibrillator could assist the child.

Cherokee Elementary received the defibrillator in early February from Dr. Himanshu Shukla, who donated the device to the elementary school and other district schools.

Ms. Musser said the entire Cherokee Elementary staff is trained to use the AED but after seeing it in action, some want a refresher course.

"Nobody should have any fear of using these in public," Ms. Musser said. "These machines make it easy to help someone."

She said the Cherokee Elementary community had already offered words of gratitude.

"The parents here are great, they're so supportive," Ms. Musser said.

Officer Rick Cookemboo said the nurse deserved the credit for saving to the student.

"I have known Musser for two years and I can tell you that this act of heroism does not surprise me," he said. "She is a very talented, caring and knowledgeable nurse who reacted immediately in this dire situation."

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