



Concerned citizen raises funds for 53 AEDs

Dunwoody Police Department, Dunwoody, Georgia

Challenge

Find a way to solicit funds to arm the newly formed police department and its officers with Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs).

Solution

Create The Heart of Dunwoody, 501(c)3 organization and launch an aggressive AED fundraising effort targeted at residents, neighborhood associations, clubs, organizations, civic groups and businesses.

It was a proud moment for Bob Lundsten as he sat in on the first official council meeting of the newly incorporated city of Dunwoody, GA. As he listened to the Mayor review various points of business, a fellow resident leaned over and asked Bob if Dunwoody would be equipping its police department with Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs). “She had an article in her hand that told of a gentleman in a neighboring town who fell victim to Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). He had been saved because the officer who arrived on the scene had an AED and knew how to use it,” recalls Bob. After the meeting Bob approached the city manager and asked if the police force would be armed with AEDs. “I was told that the current budget would not accommodate AEDs and that the request would be in next year’s budget. I knew we couldn’t wait that long. So, with the Mayor’s approval, the city council’s blessing, and support from the new police chief, I took matters into my own hands.”

From personal tragedy to triumph

If anyone knows the critical importance an AED plays in the role of Sudden Cardiac Arrest, it’s Bob Lundsten. Nearly 10 years ago, Bob’s wife, Kathy, a vivacious woman and mother of three, went into SCA at her daughter Caitlin’s volleyball game. “We were at a club tournament, the Atlanta Classic, and I was on the court videotaping the match,” recalls Bob. “The teams were just about to switch

sides when I heard a horrific scream. I looked into the stands and saw my daughter looking down. My wife had collapsed.” Bob raced to his wife’s side and saw that she was unconscious and not breathing. “My CPR training went out the window. I couldn’t even remember how to unbutton her shirt. I screamed for help, asking someone to call 911. Fortunately, two nurses emerged from the crowd and began CPR.” Bob says what happened next still sends shivers down his spine. “It took 18 minutes for the paramedics to get to the campus but they arrived at the wrong building. It took them another three minutes to get to Kathy.”

Kathy did not regain a spontaneous heartbeat until she arrived at the hospital, 42 minutes after she went into cardiac arrest. “Kathy is a walking miracle,” says Bob. “We are thankful that she survived. We are also keenly aware that her life could have been different if there had been an AED on site that day.” Kathy agrees, “After two weeks of being in a medically-induced coma, I woke up and had no idea what had happened. I am grateful that I am here to see my girls grow up and thankful for my husband and his dedication to helping place AEDs in public places.” Shortly after Kathy left the hospital, Bob approached his daughters’ school and requested that the campus implement an AED program. “I thought I had done my part by helping get AEDs into the school system. Little did I know that 10 years later I’d be campaigning for AEDs in our patrol cars.”

PHILIPS

“To know that our donation has the potential to save a life provides us with an incredible sense of accomplishment.”

Ted Sims, Sr. Patrol Leader, Boy Scouts of America, Troop 764

Supporting the cause

Having won the right of incorporation, the first order of business for Dunwoody was to establish a police department. “It was a pretty exciting time, recalls Billy Grogan, Chief of Police, Dunwoody Police Department. I was hired mid-December with the task of getting my department operational – from hiring to training to procuring equipment – by the end of March. On April 1, we had 40 sworn police officers and eight civilian support staff. It was one of the fastest implementations in the country,” notes Chief Grogan.

“We were busy ordering bullets and vests and other law enforcement equipment when Bob approached me about purchasing AEDs for the police department,” says Ken Wright, Mayor of Dunwoody. “I have a medical background and I’m well aware of the life-saving potential that AEDs hold. I also had a limited budget. I knew when Bob said he could raise the funds to put an AED in every patrol car – and that he would do it in time for the city’s ‘Light up Dunwoody’ event in November – that it would happen.” Chief Grogan was also confident in Bob’s ability to deliver. “Dunwoody is a city of approximately 40,000 residents. Their sense of community is amazing. The citizens had already come together on several occasions to support the police department, so Bob’s enthusiasm didn’t surprise me.”

A man with a plan

Working towards a self-imposed deadline, Bob says he knew there wasn’t time to hold traditional fundraisers with a bake sale here and a raffle there. His first order of business? Set up a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. “Typically, this can take some time but we were fortunate that a very good friend of mine had a 501(c)3 that had been used during Dunwoody’s quest for cityhood.



A matter of fact

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a leading cause of death in the United States.¹ SCA is often brought on by ventricular fibrillation, a condition in which the heart’s electrical activity malfunctions. It can happen to anyone at anytime, anywhere. For the best chance of survival from the most common cause of SCA, a shock from a defibrillator should be delivered within the first few minutes of collapse.²

- There are over 350,000 deaths each year due to Sudden Cardiac Arrest. This equates to almost 1,000 a day
- The likelihood of a successful resuscitation decreases by 7 to 10 percent for every minute that passes without CPR and defibrillation³
- Sudden cardiac arrest kills more people each year than car wrecks, cancer, handguns, house fires and AIDS combined
- Just over 13% of workplace fatalities are a result of SCA⁴
- In cities where defibrillation is provided within 5 to 7 minutes, the survival rate is as high as 45 percent⁵

He agreed to give me ‘Doing Business As’ rights. We went to the courthouse, filed the necessary papers, and became the ‘Citizens of Dunwoody doing business as The Heart of Dunwoody’. We then met with my banker of 30 years, and set up a non-profit account with a tax ID – this is critical not only for corporations making large contributions but it’s also nice for the individuals who donate \$20.” Bob explains, “They can file the amount under charitable donations on their tax returns.” With the organizational elements in place, Bob was ready to launch his campaign.

“Our sense of urgency required a grassroots, take-it-to-the-street effort. We went to people with a clear and compelling message. One they couldn’t argue with. We also had Kathy,” notes Bob. “I am one of the fortunate ones,” says Kathy. “I survived SCA without defibrillation but not without permanent limitations. I am here to see that what happened to me doesn’t happen to someone else.” Bob says introducing potential donors to the hard cold facts of SCA is key to a successful campaign. “As I met with local civic groups, church leaders, schools and other potential donors, I would share our family’s story and then present the facts.

“I am one of the fortunate ones. I survived SCA without defibrillation but not without permanent limitations. I am here to see that what happened to me doesn't happen to someone else.”

Kathy Lundsten



Staying true to its “Be Prepared” motto, Boy Scouts of America Troop 764 donated \$1,500 to cover the cost of one AED. Pictured left to right: Brian LaRose, Scout Master; Kathy Lundsten, Ted Sims, Senior Patrol Leader; Chief Grogan, and Officer William Furman.



Within six months – thirty days ahead of schedule – The Heart of Dunwoody raised enough money to purchase 53 Philips HeartStart FRx AEDs. “I had no doubt Bob and Kathy would make this happen,” says Ken Wright, Mayor. “Our citizens came together when we needed them most.” Pictured left to right: Bob Lundsten, Kathy Lundsten, and Mayor Wright.

It's hard to turn away when someone tells you that the \$20 bill in your wallet holds the potential to save a life.”

Bob also worked with the local television stations and community newspapers to get the message out en masse. “Despite the nation's economic turmoil, we were a brand new city, we had a brand new police department, and we were excited to start things off on the right foot. That meant arming our officers with AEDs.”

A city with heart

According to Bob, hundreds of individual contributors, civic groups and businesses made donations ranging from \$18 to \$7,500. Local Boy Scout Troop 764, sponsored by St. Luke's Presbyterian Church, was one of the first organizations to step forward. “Learning life-saving skills and doing one's duty are part of the Scout heritage,” says Brian LaRose, Scout Master of Troop 764. “When one of our leaders heard about the campaign to provide our police officers with AEDs, we presented the opportunity to our boys; the response was not surprising.”

Ted Sims, Senior Patrol Leader explains. “Every year our troop holds a fundraiser where we truck in pine straw for residential landscaping in early spring and sell it for \$4 a bale. We had some funds left in that account and decided that there was nothing better to do with that money than to use it to support the AED campaign.” Following scout protocol, the idea was presented to troop members and put up for vote. Ted says the decision was unanimous and a check for \$1,500 was presented to The Heart of Dunwoody. “To know that we had a direct hand in placing an AED in one of our city's patrol cars is incredible,” says Ted. “It may not be this year or next year, but that AED may one day be used to save a life – I think that's spectacular.”

On September 15, one month ahead of schedule, The Heart of Dunwoody delivered a total of 53 Philips HeartStart FRx AEDs to the city. “We looked at a number of vendors and compared various features. Ultimately, the Philips unit won us over with its extremely user-friendly design,” notes Chief Grogan. “Not only does it provide step-by-step voice coaching for CPR and AED use, but

it's also easy to maintain and rugged enough to ride in the trunk of our cars.” Within a month of receiving the units, the Chief, his staff, and all 40 police officers were trained and ready to go. “Our goal was to put an AED in every police car,” says Bob. “We were thrilled to discover that we had raised enough money to include an AED in the police department's spare vehicle, to place two units at the police department, and to install two units in city hall.” Bob says another unit was installed at a neighborhood swim club and the other is located at the Dunwoody Farmhouse, a public meeting place.

Realizing the potential

“I don't think there's anyone who's not feeling the impact of a weakened economy,” says Mayor Wright. “Dunwoody is no exception. A successful fundraiser is all about how you get people to understand the importance of what you're doing and then convince them to dig a little deeper. Bob and Kathy, through The Heart of Dunwoody, did a remarkable job on that front and we're all the richer for it.” Chief Grogan agrees, “You can't put a value on saving a life.”

If, heaven forbid, someone in Dunwoody goes into cardiac arrest and one of our officer's is able to use the AED to revive him, then each and every dollar donated toward this effort was worth it. Even if these units sit idle for months, it's still the best investment ever made." Mayor Wright concludes, "Whether you're a visitor, a resident, or simply driving through on the superhighway, it's comforting to know that Dunwoody cares enough to have these safety devices available when seconds count."

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Bob Lundsten

Tips for successful AED fundraising



Bob Lundsten with his daughter Caitlin.

When asked about the key to his hugely successful AED fundraising campaign, Bob Lundsten doesn't hesitate. "My strategy was to reach the greatest number of potential donors for the lowest cost possible. My goal was to ensure that every cent we raised went toward the purchase of an AED and to see that not one penny was spent on marketing." To that end, Bob looked within the city and reached out to organizations that represented large populations of members, customers, and constituents who would benefit from having AEDs deployed in the city's police vehicles.

First, Bob approached the two largest homeowners associations in the city. "Combined, these two organizations represent nearly 4,000 households – and just as many potential donors." Bob continues, "A direct mail campaign to 4,000 homeowners was out of the question. Fortunately, the homeowner associations provided me access to their neighborhood meetings to pitch our message. Each homeowner association included our plea in their respective newsletters and websites – and even in their blogs. They provided The Heart of Dunwoody with a cost-effective way to get the message out to a wide audience and our only investment was time. In the end, we received sizeable contributions from both the homeowners associations as well as donations from individual association

members. In essence, we were double dipping and doing so in a friend-to-friend, neighbor-to-neighbor way." Bob says the personal approach provided the immediate recognition and validation that he needed.

"It wasn't too long after I met with the homeowners associations that we received our first write-up in the local paper. A short time later, we landed the first of two television news spots. Again, not one direct mail piece went out."

Bob also approached Dunwoody's local business associations. "Dunwoody is a leading business district with more than 150,000 people working and shopping in the city per day. For businesses unable to purchase their own AEDs, this was an opportunity to share in the benefits of arming our police officers, who just happen to have a response time of less than 4 minutes, with an AED." According to Bob, that message resonated with a number of businesses and groups and resulted in generous donations, including the Dunwoody Chamber of Commerce who elected to donate \$25 of its membership fee for every new Chamber of Commerce member enrolled during the AED campaign.

"At the end of the day, no one can argue the value of a life," says Bob. "Find a champion, someone who can make a personal appeal. Take advantage of relationships; you won't know unless you ask. Think outside the box. And remember, the potential to affect a life for good is always within reach."

1 <http://www.heartrhythmfoundation.org/facts/scd.asp#2>
2 Cummins R.O., et al. Improving survival from sudden cardiac arrest: The 'Chain of Survival' concept. A statement for health professionals from the Advanced Cardiac Life Support Subcommittee and the Emergency Cardiac Care Committee, American Heart Association. Circulation 1991; 83:1832-1847.
3 American Heart Association. Cardiac arrest: AHA recommendation. Available at: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4481>.
4 Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA). www.osha.gov/dts/tib/tib_data/tib20011217.pdf
5 American Heart Association. Cardiac arrest: AHA recommendation. Available at: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4481>.

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