

Hello, my name is Michelle Tipton

I am speaking to you today as a mom, but my background for 36 years was in emergency response, as a ND Emergency Medical Services Instruction and an American Heart Association Instructor. I personally experienced a cardiac arrest tragedy with my oldest son at 17 in March 1999. We did not find out a cause for almost a year. My remaining son and I were genetically and clinically diagnosed with Long QT Syndrome.

At the time of our tragedy (in 1999,) AEDs were not in the public setting. AEDs became public access in the year 2000, with airlines being the first.

If you are from ND, you may have heard of these other tragic stories:

April 2005 – 15 years old Bishop Ryan HS Minot ND on the track

September 2006 – 17 years old Drake ND on the football field during practice

November 2006 - Fargo North Fargo ND in PE doing sit-ups (he did have a diagnosed heart problem and treatment accordingly)

After hearing of those 3 cardiac arrest deaths of students on ND school properties between 2005-2006, I encouraged my local senator to present a Bill to get AEDs in all ND schools. I had already compiled information on which schools had AEDs and a partial list of where more AEDs were needed in ND. I requested that we allocate dollars to provide AEDs to ND Schools and help schools implement effective AED programs.

An effective AED Program includes:

Cardiac Emergency Response Plan as part of the Emergency Action Plan

Annual Drills (to include EMS arrival and involvement)

AED placement (highly visible and easily accessible)

CPR/AED training for all

The bill passed the 2007 legislative session unanimously and 436 or 365 (I have seen both amounts listed) AEDs were placed in ND Schools (public and private). But, without AED programs. I connect with a few schools a few years after distribution of the AEDs and the following comments were made: “you mean we have to replace parts?” “When do the batteries need to be changed?” “We placed the cabinet out of sight and up high so a child can’t mess with it.” There are many more comments that I could share.

I have since assisted in maintaining AEDs to whomever becomes aware of my free services. I assist 23 ND Schools and 4 ND Universities with AED maintenance, recommendation and support.

In 2009, there were 2 more young cardiac arrest deaths in ND:

Fargo Shanley sophomore September 2009 (not on school property)

Divide County High School 17-year-old August 2009

I spoke with the mother from Divide County High School 5 months after the incident, she was still questioning the timeframe of response as the event was not recognized immediately, it was thought to be just a simple faint. The mother's question for ND legislators was "How can we put a price on this?" (Meaning training and AED program implementation.)

In 2011, another legislative bill was presented to address the need for effective AED programs in our schools. I do not know the exact outcome of that bill. I do know that the schools that I assist do not have the solid AED programs needed to be fully prepared for cardiac arrest responses.

Responding to emergencies properly and timely requires an effective plan, training (which gives us muscle memory), review, and changes to the Emergency Action Plan as you learn from practice drills. The National Athletic Trainers Association came out with recommended guidelines on how to prepare for and manage sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) during high school and college athletic practices and competitions June 14, 2006. We still are trying to adhere to the recommendation presented then.

ND schools have AEDs, there may not be enough, they may not be up to date, they may not be in appropriate locations and/or visible, and they may not be practiced with. 17 years later, I am hoping we can finally finish the process that was started in 2008 to be fully prepared to act during sudden cardiac arrest emergencies in all ND schools and athletic facilities.

Thank you for your time.

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