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MEDIA ADVISORY

Johnson County, Iowa, is Now Recognized as a HEARTSafe Community Designation

Johnson County, Iowa — HEARTSafe Community, a national preparedness program dedicated to improving outcomes of sudden cardiac arrest led by Citizen CPR Foundation, is proud to announce Johnson County, Iowa, as one of its newest designations.

Johnson County joins other cities — most recently Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. and La Crosse, Wisc. — in achieving HEARTSafe Community status.

Initiated by the Rotary-Kerber HeartSafe Community Campaign, Dianne Atkins, MD, Medical Director of RKHCC, first learned of HEARTSafe Community while attending Citizen CPR Foundation's biennial Cardiac Arrest Survival Summit.

"As we organized the Rotary-Kerber Campaign, we made becoming a HEARTSafe Community one of our goals," says Atkins. "[It] was exciting since I could see how far along our community already was."

Atkins approached Fiona Johnson, Director, Johnson County Ambulance Service, to submit an application. "The challenge was gathering all the data from so many partners in particular, determining how many people are trained in CPR annually was a challenge since so many entities in our county provide this lifesaving training," says Johnson. "It was a good problem to face."

Richard Shok, HEARTSafe Community Program Chair, says becoming a HEARTSafe Community is no easy accomplishment. This accreditation is a collaborative effort.

"The HEARTSafe approach combines the talents from numerous agencies and tasks them each with making specific changes in their readiness with the goal of increasing their level of preparedness," says Shok. "Johnson County had already thought of and implemented a strong HEARTSafe foundation before they applied," says Shok. "The designation team asked several clarifying questions and shared some additional advice on ways to improve survival. They were quick to respond and were subsequently awarded designation."

To become HEARTSafe, the community must fulfill 13 criteria. Some of these requirements include establishing a lead organization to guide and coordinate local efforts, training 15 percent of the community population every year, developing and implementing strategies to improve public awareness and bystander intervention, permanently placing automated external defibrillators (AEDs) that can be quickly and reliably accessed, recognizing rescuers for their lifesaving efforts among other critical requisites. For a comprehensive list of criteria in order to become a HEARTSafe Community, click [here](#).



“We are hoping the bystander CPR rate will increase and that overall survival will also increase,” says Linda Kerber, member of RKHCC and Steering Committee. “We already know of several individuals who are alive now because of bystander CPR. This is a model that inspires others.”

To launch the announcement of Johnson County being a HEARTSafe Community, the county plans to have a press conference at 10 a.m. CST on February 14. “Moreover, the Iowa City Noon Rotary Club raised approximately \$150,000 to purchase large numbers of AEDs, which we offer to non-profits and businesses for deep discounts if they promise to train their staff in CPR and AED use,” says Kerber. “We educate those staff and many groups in the community so that we are increasing the numbers of competent bystanders who are prepared to step into a crisis situation.”

On February 16, Johnson County Board of Supervisors will make a proclamation declaring February ‘American Heart Month’ while also highlighting the HEARTSafe Community status. “We are also providing many CPR certification classes in addition to Hands-Only CPR classes throughout the year,” says Johnson.

Additionally, RKHCC and Johnson County are donating CPR mannequins and educational materials to public libraries so families are well-informed of lifesaving tools and practices.

“Cardiac arrest survival requires immediate response and cannot wait for EMS to arrive,” says Atkins. “We want to make sure that every victim receives CPR as fast as humanly possible.”

The Citizen CPR Foundation thanks Johnson County for the very hard work with regard to the recognition, response, care and outcomes of sudden cardiac arrest.

“This is a beautiful example of how communities work so very hard and leverage resources to save hearts too young to die,” says Stuart Berger, MD, President of the Citizen CPR Foundation Board and Division Head of Cardiology at the Children’s Hospital of Chicago. “Thank you so very, very much to all of those who have worked to achieve this designation.”

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About the Citizen CPR Foundation

The mission of the Citizen CPR Foundation is to save lives from sudden cardiac arrest by stimulating effective community, professional and citizen action. This mission is put into action through three core values: We know that CPR and AED use saves lives. Collaboration among citizens, professionals, communities, and organizations is key to survival from cardiac arrest. Action based on best practices in science, education, and implementation improves outcomes. www.citizencpr.org

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