

Tourism Industry Association of BC: E-News
**St. John Ambulance officially launches lifesaving Start Me Up BC campaign**

St. John Ambulance BC & Yukon has officially launched their newest campaign, Start Me Up BC, an initiative created to help British Columbians save more lives from sudden cardiac arrest.

The goal of Start Me Up BC is to install 1000 publicly accessible automated external defibrillators (AEDs) across the province. The community defibrillator stands can be placed anywhere, whether it’s outside of a workplace, at a beach, park, transit hub, or a tourist hot spot. The stands are kept unlocked to ensure the public can access an AED on a 24/7 basis in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest.

In BC, up to 6,000 people suffer a sudden cardiac arrest each year, with 80 per cent of cases happening outside of a hospital setting. Without any bystander action, chance of survival is only five per cent. When a bystander is empowered to use an AED and do CPR, chance of survival increases upwards of 75 per cent.

The charity has already placed four stands in the Lower Mainland: one at Crescent Beach in Surrey, one outside of the St. John Ambulance head office on Cambie St in Vancouver, and two along the bustling Canada Line, at Brighouse and Bridgeport station.

“Public AEDs are crucial to protect those residing in BC, as well as those visiting from other provinces and countries. The tourism industry is an incredible value here in BC, with over six million international visitors in 2019 - six million extra people that at any given moment could be at risk of a cardiac health emergency,” said Leanne Strachan, campaign lead for Start Me Up BC and manager of strategic partnerships for St. John Ambulance BC & Yukon. “We hope this campaign helps more communities recognize their crucial role when it comes to sudden cardiac arrest. Anyone can use an AED to save a life.”

Outside of housing an AED, every stand also comes with a first aid kit and a naloxone kit to provide even more resources and awareness for a number of emergency situations such as an opioid overdose.

“Whether it’s a sudden cardiac arrest, head injury, or a sprain, we want to provide as many tools as possible and the reassurance needed to empower anyone to step in as a bystander with our stands,” said Ken Leggatt, interim CEO for St. John Ambulance BC & Yukon. “The opioid crisis has shown no signs of slowing down, with over 1500 British Columbians dying in 2020, so adding a naloxone kit was no question. We hope these stands can make a difference in more ways than one in 2021.”

Given the fact that St. John Ambulance is a charity, community and corporate support is appreciated to be able to place more community defibrillators, added Leggatt.

To learn more about the campaign and get involved, email leanne.strachan@sja.ca or visit <https://startmeupbc.ca>.