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Mayor's message: Warwick named HeartSafe community

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As you may know, February marks national American Heart month, an effort to improve citizens' cardiac health, increase awareness of risk factors, and work to increase survival rates for those who have suffered a cardiac emergency.

It's an appropriate time, then, to announce that, just last week, city officials, along with representatives from the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH), the American Heart Association, Kent Hospital, and the Kent HeartSafe Foundation, celebrated the city's designation as one of the first HeartSafe communities in Rhode Island. (The Town of Westerly shares this distinction with Warwick.)

The award, presented by HEALTH in partnership with the American Heart Association, is meant to help communities strengthen their so-called cardiac "Chain of Survival" by focusing on a number of areas related to emergency response readiness. HeartSafe communities must meet a number of criteria, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training programs; placement of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) throughout the community; trained first responders, with AEDs and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) certification on emergency response vehicles; effective emergency response plans for municipal and school buildings; and a demonstrated commitment to continually evaluate the community's response to cardiac emergencies.

Each of the areas earns a community a certain number of points - or "heartbeats" - based on its population. In order to receive the designation, Warwick, based on a population of 85,000, had to achieve 700 heartbeats, and, in fact, earned 1,255.

These efforts are particularly critical in the United States. According to statistics from the American Heart Association, cardiovascular disease is the nation's leading cause of death, with direct and indirect costs estimated to be \$503.2 billion in 2010. Cardiovascular disease accounts for over 34% of all deaths nationwide, with nearly 2,300 Americans dying of cardiovascular disease each day, an average of one death every 38 seconds. Additionally, 785,000 people in the U.S. will have a new coronary attack, an estimated 470,000 people nationwide will have a recurrent attack, and an additional 195,000 "silent" heart attacks will occur this year.

This collaborative effort of the city of Warwick, the Kent HeartSafe Foundation, educators, EMS leaders, clinicians, Kent Hospital, the Central Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, the New England Institute of Technology, HEALTH and the American Heart Association and the community at large will help us further our goal of reducing the number of cardiac emergencies and to improve our survival rates.

If you are interested in learning more about the HeartSafe Community program or providing CPR or AED training for your business, I encourage you to contact the American Heart Association or your

local Department of Health.

Scott Avedisian is the mayor of Warwick.

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