



TORONTO STAR

Transit hubs to install defibrillators

Union, GO stations
get life-saving devices

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In Union Station's cavernous upper hall, the small blue machine sputtered to life: "Begin by removing all clothing from the patient's chest," it said in a detached, robotic voice.

Listening to the defibrillator in front of reporters, Sheryl Jackson, manager of the Toronto EMS "Cardiac Safe City" program said, as if to children: "I'm going to cut the clothing."

She snipped away a dummy's golf shirt and proceeded to show just how simple it is to operate a "Mikey" public access defibrillator,

100 of which are to be installed on GO trains and in GO stations across the GTA. Three of those machines will be at Union Station and one in the GO bus terminal.

The move is part of a partnership between GO Transit, Toronto EMS and The Mikey Network, a private organization dedicated to funding a dispersed network of "Mikey" defibrillators in public spaces. The defibrillators dictate instructions all the way through to CPR.

When the machine commanded her to, Jackson pushed a button.

"Shock delivered," the voice said.

Toronto EMS already oversees a network of 550 public "defibs" in police and fire stations, community centres, city hall and Metro Hall, and other areas. They respond to

roughly 2,000 cardiac arrests each year, 18 per cent of which occur in public spaces.

But now they will be on each GO train's accessible middle car and at stations, turning each of the 200,000 daily riders and GO staff into potential lifesavers.

Margarett Best, Ontario's minister of health promotion, said defibrillation and proper CPR could increase the chance of surviving a sudden cardiac arrest to around 50 per cent from about 5 per cent. "These numbers are too compelling for us to overlook," Best said.

Go Transit will begin installing the devices next week. It plans to have them on all trains by the end of October, and in all stations by the end of November.