

# Trying to start hearts

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By **JULISSA MCKINNON THE PRESS-ENTERPRISE**

Bob Roy won't be satisfied until every school in California is equipped with at least one defibrillator - the tool that might have saved his 14-year-old son's life on May 20, 2005.

From his son Travis' room, papered with the boy's colorful drawings and "Top Gun" posters, Roy writes speeches and letters to school, city, state and federal officials about the risk of sudden cardiac arrest, which kills more than 294,000 Americans every year.

"I don't want any family to have to experience a loss like this. It's like an athlete that never quite heals from an injury," said Roy, who lives in the DeLuz area west of Temecula. "We'll be playing hurt the rest of our lives."

Roy said his "therapy" has been organizing the Travis R. Roy Sudden Cardiac Arrest Fund, which spreads awareness about sudden cardiac arrest and raises funds to place defibrillators in public places.

So far, Roy's efforts have led to every campus in the Temecula Valley, Murrieta Valley and San Jacinto school districts acquiring defibrillators. In most cases, school officials set aside money to buy the kits. Roy has donated 17 devices through the fund.

Roy said that, in the coming year, he hopes to address Menifee school officials and work his way north, talking to educators.

Roy's goal for 2010 is the same as it has been for almost five years. He wants to see California join the 10 other states that require automated external defibrillators, commonly called AEDs, in all schools.

"Unfortunately with the budget the way it is, it's hard to get that kind of mandate funded," Roy said.

The biggest hurdle is educating people that they can't just rely on the paramedics to save someone in a case of sudden cardiac arrest, Roy said. That's because permanent brain damage starts to occur four minutes after a heart stops beating, according to the American Heart Association.

Temecula fire Capt. Phil Rawlings said the department strives to respond within five minutes of an emergency 95 percent of the time. He said waiting for paramedics to save someone who collapsed from sudden cardiac arrest won't work.

"There's no replacement to someone being trained to do CPR. That CPR buys us time to get an AED or for paramedics to get to a patient," he said. "Any type of CPR ♦ something is always better than nothing."

Rawlings said that until there are regulations making defibrillators as common as fire extinguishers in public buildings, today's death rates won't decrease.

The cost of a defibrillator ranges from \$1,400 to \$1,900.

"It's as simple as (a school district) putting off the purchase of two desktop computers," Roy said.

**WHAT:** Travis R. Roy Sudden Cardiac Arrest Fund

**INFORMATION:** [www.thetravisfund.org](http://www.thetravisfund.org)

**CLASSES:** The Temecula Fire Department offers CPR and first aid classes. Visit [cityoftemecula.org](http://cityoftemecula.org) for information.

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