

Parishes eye purchasing defibrillators

A15

Sister Eileen Connelly/CNS

CINCINNATI — Does a Catholic church really need to have an automatic external defibrillator on hand? Anyone at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Cincinnati is likely to answer that question with a resounding yes.

According to Mercy Sister Carole Temming, health ministries pastoral associate and parish nurse, the parish was in the midst of a dinner dance in celebration of its 60th anniversary Sept. 18 when Keith White, a parishioner, suddenly collapsed on the dance floor.

A paramedic and several nurses who were in attendance rushed to aid him, using the defibrillator that was hanging outside the school gym.

"They were able to save his life," Sister Temming told *The Catholic Telegraph*, Cincinnati's archdiocesan newspaper. "If the defibrillator wasn't there, he wouldn't have survived. The paramedics wouldn't have been able to get to him in time. I'm very glad we were able to save a life."

Despite some concerns about the need and feasibility of obtaining the life-saving machine, Sister Temming was able to convince Father Jan Schmidt, pastor, of its usefulness. The parish acquired two defibrillators through the generosity of a parishioner; one is located outside the gym, the other in the church.

"I thought we'd never use them," Father Schmidt said, "but Sister Carole kept pushing for them, and I'm glad she did. I want people to know

it's important to have them on hand."

Sister Temming also recommends other parishes consider obtaining the devices, which are portable and simple to use, with a built-in safety feature that ensures the machine won't work unless the individual is in ventricular fibrillation.

Training in the use of the defibrillator and in CPR have been provided for parish staff members and volunteers and offered to all parishioners, she added.

White, now recovering at home, said he is feeling better every day and appreciates the measures that were taken to save his life.

"If it wasn't for the (defibrillator), I don't think I would be here today," he said.

Meanwhile, the Diocese of Green

Bay, Wis., is hoping to get a defibrillator into every parish and school in the diocese through its new Heart to Heart program, which offers defibrillators at a reduced rate.

"We have 20 now installed, three on campus and 17 in parishes," said Kevin Brunner, former diocesan director of facilities and properties. "Some parishes had them prior to the program, so I would estimate that 25 to 30 parishes have units."

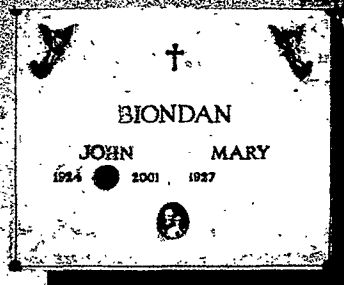
Brunner said a cardiologist at St. Pius Parish in Appleton had paid for a unit at his parish and "agreed to provide all the training for the parish staff because he thought it was a necessity."

"I encourage all parishes to have one. It saves lives," he said in a statement.

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