

MONTGOMERY
COUNTY

Sheriff's staff gets cardiac devices

Three zone cars
have defibrillators

BY JESSICA HARDING
Gazette Reporter

The odds of county residents surviving sudden cardiac arrest are likely greater now that the county sheriff's department has equipped all three of its zone cars with automated external defibrillators.

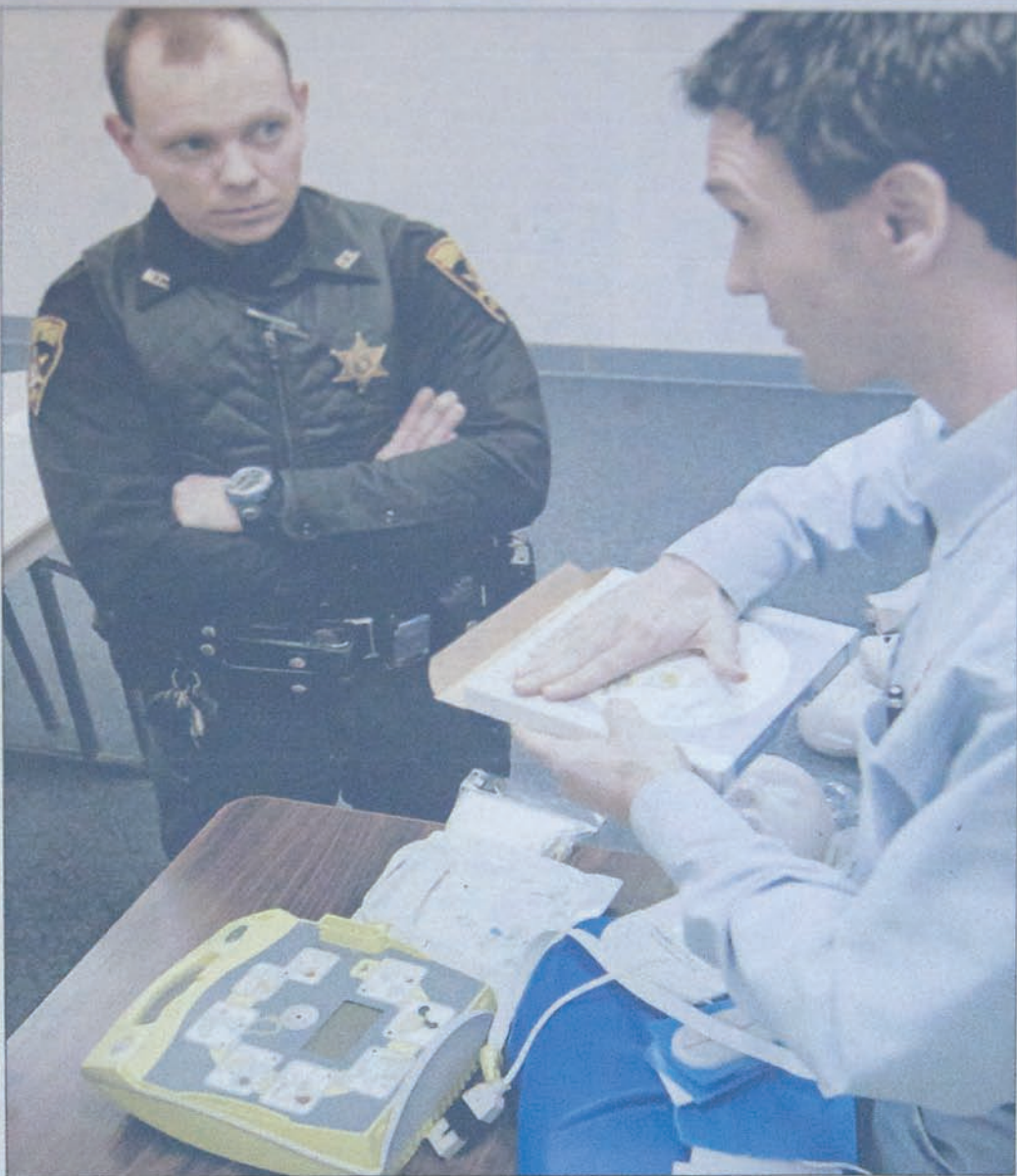
The department was able to purchase two Zoll AED Plus automated external defibrillators with Real CPR Help technology along with Philips Heartstart, through a \$5,000 grant arranged by former Assemblyman Paul Tonko, D-Amsterdam.

The grant money, which required no local match, also covers the cost of training sheriff's deputies to use the AED device and train the entire department staff to be CPR certified. Only four out of the 24 deputies in the department were previously CPR certified, according to Undersheriff Jeffrey Smith.

The grant also paid for computer software that alerts Smith when a deputy's certification expires, or when a pad that goes along with the equipment needs replacement.

The AEDs were purchased from local company Eastern Medical Support, which is also providing the training services.

President and co-owner of Eastern Medical Support Sean Piasecki said the sheriff's department will now be "100 percent compliant with providing this essential care



PETER R. BARBER/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Eastern Medical Support president Sean J. Piasecki explains the operation of a portable Zoll AED Plus defibrillator to Montgomery County Sheriff's Deputy Nick Prusky on Tuesday at the Montgomery County Public Safety Facility in Fultonville.

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to Montgomery County."

The department has used one AED for a few years. Normally the device was sent out to the western part of the county where ambulance response times have typically been longer. With the purchase of two additional AEDs, the entire county will be served, Smith said.

"Usually the EMS provider or ambulance is responsible for using this equipment, but if a deputy gets there first and they have the tool we can better assist the public," Smith said.

Cardiac arrest is an abrupt disruption of the heart's function, causing blood to stop flowing to vital organs, which results in the loss of blood pressure, pulse and consciousness. In nearly half of all

victims the incident is caused by an abnormal heart rhythm called ventricular fibrillation, which occurs when the nerves in the heart malfunction, causing the left ventricle to quiver. The quiver causes the heart to stop pumping blood to vital organs effectively.

In about half of cardiac arrest cases the victim requires defibrillation, the other half require CPR. The AEDs that the sheriff's deputies will be using require minimal training to operate because voice and text prompts guide rescuers through the appropriate defibrillation and CPR steps.

According to Piasecki, a rescuer has between three and five minutes to shock the heart after someone collapses. If done within that time, the victim has a 75 percent survival rate, but for every minute that elapses after the initial five minutes the survival rate decreases by 10 percent. Piasecki said the national average response time for emergency responders is eight to 10 minutes, so having

AEDs in patrol cars which are patrolling throughout a region is very useful.

As more agencies are realizing the importance of early acting during a cardiac arrest, police and sheriff's departments throughout the region are purchasing AEDs.

Timothy Mirabile, director of the Regional Emergency Medical Organization of the Hudson Mohawk Valley, which serves a six-county region, said there is a major push among police departments throughout the region to outfit their vehicles with AEDs because they realize the importance of rapid defibrillation during a cardiac arrest.

"Based on our research it is proven that rapid defibrillation is what is saving people in emergencies," Mirabile said. "If you outfit the patrol cars, they are on the road, often times they can get there faster."

Mirabile said the technology is also relatively inexpensive. The AEDs purchased by the Montgom-

ery County Sheriff's Department cost roughly \$1,300 each. Mirabile said schools, shopping malls and gyms are purchasing the equipment as well.

"Everyone is acting as a patient advocate," Mirabile said. "It is in the best interest that the patient has this technology and it is available."

Smith agreed that the push to outfit patrol cars with AEDs is so the department can better serve the community.

"We just want to public to know that we are out there doing everything we can to help them," he said.