

# BASIC LIFE SUPPORT SKILLS TO KEEP THE HEART PUMPING

By Douglas H. Stutz, Naval Hospital Bremerton Public Affairs

Last February at Naval Hospital Bremerton (NHB) – under the expert tutelage of Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Dominique Chesley – I successfully completed the American Heart Association Basic Life Support (BLS) (CPR and AED Program).



*(Photo courtesy of Doug Stutz, Naval Hospital Bremerton Public Affairs Officer)*

As an accredited Military Treatment Facility with qualified personnel, NHB is an American Heart Association (AHA) affiliated training site. I'm just one of 2,249 Sailors, civil servants and contractors certified in the BLS Program by NHB since Feb. 1, 2017 – and there are more trainees in the pipeline.

NHB's Staff Education and Training Department (SETD) offers the BLS Program to active duty personnel and civil service employees roughly three times every month to help prepare for a cardiovascular emergency, like cardiac arrest. There are a total of 26 instructors at NHB. Not all are hospital corpsmen – instructors include several masters-at-arms assigned to NHB's Security, as well as Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class Destiny Battle, who pushed herself to learn the basics, then qualified as an instructor.



*Newly qualified Basic Life Support Instructor Aviation Ordnanceman 3rd Class Destiny Battle, assigned to Naval Hospital Bremerton Staff Education and Training Department, hones her BLS cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillator program skills with Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Jodiann Tracey. (Official Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz).*

As a BLS Provider, the qualification earned from NHB is good for two years. You never know when that training might be needed.

According to the AHA, more than 350,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur in the U.S. each year. Approximately 90 percent of those people don't survive. But the more people who are capable of performing CPR, the more lives that can be saved. CPR rendered in the first few minutes of cardiac arrest can double or triple a person's chance of survival.

Lt. Cmdr. Erika Schilling, an NHB nurse midwife, recently demonstrated Basic Life Support proficiency during an unexpected situation in the middle of Puget Sound.



*Lt. Cmdr. Erika Schilling, Naval Hospital Bremerton nurse midwife, is interviewed by Seattle radio and television stations for recognition by Washington State Ferries with the Life Ring Award certificate for her life saving efforts on December 2, 2017. Schilling saved another passenger's life that day by administering CPR for 14 minutes on the Kingston to Edmunds M/V Spokane ferry (U.S. Navy photo by Douglas H Stutz).*

Schilling was traveling on the Kingston-Edmunds ferry route when she overheard another passenger frantically comment that immediate medical attention was needed. A man had slumped over and appeared to be not breathing. The man's heart had stopped. Schilling maneuvered him from seat to floor, instructed another passenger to tell the ferry crew, who arrived quickly at the scene with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED).

Schilling started performing CPR, aided for part of that time by another passenger with Basic Life Support skills. She provided emergency CPR for 14 minutes, saving the man's life.

Schilling credits her Navy training – 21 years of combined Navy Nurse Corps and hospital corpsman with Fleet Marine Force qualification experience – for her quick response to the emergency.

We don't all have the benefit of decades of experience. But the AHA notes that the person most of us are likely to need to save is someone we know. Approximately 70 percent of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happen at home.

Of course, the BLS Program instruction might prove just as useful outside the home. My chosen hobby is running distance. I'm not very good at it, but I am rather determined.

Hikers, mountain bikers, dog-walkers, strollers, and runners from the Cascades to the Olympics are all actively engaged in their interests, and I often encounter enthusiasts who frequent the mountain trails and back roads near where I reside. Helping with a sprained ankle is one thing, but responding to a cardiac arrest is obviously a lot more serious.

The BLS Program definitely gave me the skills and confidence to assist someone if needed, because a heart attack is one life-threatening emergency that waits for no one.

*In addition to giving the course on premises, NHB also maintains the oversight of Navy Region Northwest BLS Instructors. Tenant command personnel may attend NHB courses or schedule special courses for their units. Additionally, BLS – Instructor courses are held periodically to allow for increased outreach and continuity of the program. If you're interested, you can contact SETD at 360-475-4323.*

###