Coventry EMS aims to 'Stop the Bleed'

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COVENTRY — Injuries happen in every town and city, big or small, rural or urban — especially in this unfortunate era of mass-casualty incidents such as shootings.

That sentiment was echoed by Coventry Town Councilman Jonathan Hand this morning.

“injuries happen,” he said. “injuries happen to residents and visitors. It can really be life-saving to literally know how to best stop a bleed.”

Hand was speaking in support of a fire department class in which the general public is taught how to stop bleeding, a lifesaving action.

Local “Stop the Bleed” courses began in December and are offered monthly, with the next class scheduled for Tuesday, Feb. 11, at the North Coventry Fire Department, Station 11, 3427 Main St., from 7 to 9:30 p.m.

Stop the Bleed was initially launched in October 2015 by the White House as a national awareness campaign.

Instead of being a passive bystander amidst an emergency medical incident, local firefighters and emergency medical technicians want as many people as possible to know how to take action and help during a bleeding situation through a free training course.

“The course is lifesaving. (From) household accidents to large-scale incidents, the first step of (emergency medical services) is stopping the bleeding,” Coventry Town Manager John Elieser said. “Glad we are offering it and urge residents to sign up.”

With strong bipartisan support from the Coventry Town Council, according to Hand, North Coventry Volunteer Fire Department Deputy Chief DJ Figiela and firefighter/EMT Alex Bohr are working together to educate residents and non-residents for free on how to safely, quickly and effectively stop external bleeding in the absence of first responders.

Locally, these classes, although taught by Figiela and Bohr, are being coordinated and promoted through the Coventry Parks and Recreation Department, where interested participants must register through.

“To know these life-saving techniques and to offer that to townspeople free of charge is a very worthwhile endeavor and we’re lucky to have this as a resource,” Hand said this morning.

The classes are appropriate for all ages, according to Figiela, who took the initiative to become a certified instructor through the Town of Manchester.
Figiela said class size is typically between six to eight residents, who will all learn updated and effective techniques to stop bleeding through visual, verbal and hands-on training.

“Everybody wants to help,” Figiela said. “That’s the key.”

Figiela and Bohr will teach attendants first aid safety basics as well as consent laws along with how to apply different types of tourniquets to major areas of the body, how to dress gunshot wounds, how to pack a deep cut wound/gouge and more.

A unique aspect of the class is Figiela’s use of a raw pork loin as an educational tool.

“That’s actually what human skin feels like,” Figiela said as he placed his gloved hands onto the pork.

“You can feel the cartilage and the tendons,” he explained, stating this is what he was also trained on to become certified, except his trainers used fake blood.

He made a deep cut into the pork and instructed students how to correctly pack a wound with gauze so the blood will clot correctly.

“The key is to start stuffing and packing because you’re going to see a lot of blood coming out of there,” Figiela said. “You want to make sure you get all the way down, push it all the way down.”

He demonstrated Tuesday the amount of gauze he used to pack the wound was at least 6 to 7 feet long.

Former town council member Carolyn Arabolos initially brought the idea before the town council following her experience attending a “Stop the Bleed” class in Manchester with her husband, who is a former Hartford firefighter and EMT.

“(We) were highly impressed with the event itself,” she said. “It’s a benefit to our community, certainly in this time of heightened awareness, whether it’s a mass event or singular incident.”

To register for future “Stop the Bleed” classes, visit the Coventry Parks and Recreation Department’s website at coventryct.org/457/Parks-Recreation or call 860-742-4068.

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