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Teddy bear teaches the gift of life

By *Emily Wagner, Berkshire Eagle Staff*
Article Last Updated: 08/18/2007 02:59:57 AM EDT

Saturday, August 18

GREAT BARRINGTON — Teddy Ruxpin, the animatronic teddy bear of 1985, could blink and sing along to the television — but could he save a life?

Ruxpin cannot bat an eye at the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad's newest addition to the team: CPR Teddy.

CPR Teddy is an actual teddy bear that talks and gives CPR instruction.

About 2 feet in length, CPR Teddy sports a satin heart on his chest and a bow tie. On the left paw, the word "infant" is embroidered and on the right, the word "child."

"You press the paw, and they talk you through the steps," said Crystal Dumont, a Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad member. "Then you press the heart to practice compressions. A green light comes on and tells you if you are pushing hard enough."

CPR, also known as cardiopulmonary resuscitation, is an emergency medical procedure for a victim of cardiac or respiratory arrest.

According to the American Red Cross, CPR is a cycle-series of 30 chest compressions



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followed by two rescue breaths. Chest compressions help to circulate blood containing oxygen to the vital organs, and rescue breaths supply the blood with oxygen.

Although defibrillation and

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advanced life support are usually needed to restart the heart, CPR maintains a flow of oxygenated blood throughout the body, delaying tissue death and extending the window of time needed for successful resuscitation without permanent brain damage.

Dumont and squad member Jen Bennett picked the bears up on the way back from a conference in Baltimore, where they were taking continuing-education classes designed for medical emergency services.

"When we were coming back on the plane from Baltimore with the bears, people kept saying, 'Oh, what a cute kid!' before they realized it was a toy bear," said Dumont with a laugh.

Marketed to new parents and grandparents, baby-sitters and child-care providers, CPR Teddy walks users through CPR for infants and for children.

Although it is a cute and cuddly way to learn CPR, it is not a replacement for actual certification.

"We still provide certification through the squad," Dumont said.

The bears have been distributed to South County libraries in Monterey, Sheffield, Egremont, Alford, Housatonic, Great Barrington and Ashley Falls as a hands-on way to teach child and infant CPR. They are available to check out.

"We're excited to get them out there and help people to learn about CPR," Dumont said. "When you get into the situation and the moment (of emergency), you freak. To have these bears available to practice with at home helps that to be less scary."

There will be an open house today at Fairview Hospital where the bears, along with other emergency equipment, will be on display. To become CPR-certified, contact the Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad at (413) 429-6563.

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