

SPOTLIGHT

By Pete Northway

MATTERS OF
THE HEART

If something went wrong with your heart, would you know it? Not all heart problems come with clear warning signs. There is not always an alarming chest clutch followed by a fall to the floor like you see in movies. Some heart symptoms don't even happen in your chest, and it's not always easy to tell what's going on. Dallas Doctor Alex Black and his team of local firefighters/paramedics is providing lifesaving AED training.

THE BEAT GOES ON

DALLAS DOCTOR IS SAVING LIVES



It is the scariest moment of your life. Your loved one collapses on the floor, and you immediately spring to action. You call 911 and start doing CPR as the ambulance rushes to the scene. They take your family member to the hospital where a cardiologist diagnoses a heart attack, provides life-saving treatment and crisis averted.

According to Dr. Alex Black, this is pure fiction. He should know. At 41 years old, Dr. Black has spent the majority of his life in the Emergency Department. Volunteering in the ER at 13 years old, Dr. Black was scrubbing surgeries at 16 and became a Dallas Firefighter Paramedic in his twenties. Now, six years out of an Emergency Medicine Residency at UT Southwestern and a staffed Emergency Medicine Physician at a Level 1 Trauma and Stroke Center, Black is not satisfied with the current treatment for cardiac arrest.

"We can do so much better. The idea that you call 911 and



start CPR is 30 years old. Those are both still correct things to do, but there is a third piece of the puzzle. You have to add an AED."

Dr. Black started Firehouse AED based on the premise that there are not enough AED devices (automated external defibrillators) in the community.

DHM: Why are the lack of AED's a problem?

Dr. Alex Black: If you spend the majority of your time in an airport or a school, it's not. Unfortunately, cardiac arrest is an extremely common

cause of death in the United States that we can treat in a much better way. The majority of cardiac arrests occur in the home or business, and that is where we need to have AEDs. The problem we have run into is that people either are not aware that they can own one, or are not comfortable with the idea of using one on their family or friends.

DHM: What is Firehouse AED doing to change this?

Dr. Alex Black: Most importantly, we are providing the training. Our team consists of local firefighter/paramedics



that come to your home or business and train you to use your new AED. These are truly the only people who regularly use an AED and are perfectly suited to train a lay person on the device.

DHM: How did this all start? Why do this?

Dr. Alex Black: Basically, it started with getting my parents an AED. I am so tired of seeing patients die from cardiac arrest, who likely would have been saved had an AED been present. I bought my parents two AED devices, one for the home and one to keep in the car. I thought it was a small price to pay for the reassurance that they would be more likely to survive the most common cause of death in the United States. I like to use the example of an airbag. Would you drive a car without an airbag? Likely not. Your chances of dying of a cardiac arrest are ten times more likely than dying in a car crash. For what we spend on phones, watches, and other technology, it seems foolish to risk our lives not having this life-saving technology.

DHM: So how do AEDs work?

Dr. Alex Black: We have partnered with Philips Healthcare, who I

believe have the superior device for home use. The Philips Onsite has smart pads that interpret the heart rhythm and make a quick decision as to whether a shock is indicated. I love that there is no decision for the user to make. The device literally will not shock the patient if it is not indicated. One of the most common questions I get is whether the user can accidentally shock the patient. The device has a micro-processor that makes this impossible. I am confident that even a child could use this device. If you can open a shoe box and push a button, you can use this AED!

DHM: So what is next? What is going on with Firehouse?

Dr. Alex Black: We are using the Dallas Fort Worth area as a test



market. Our team is so incredible; our first ten fire fighter/paramedics have a combined 140 years of experience. This is simply irreplaceable. Our goal is to become a household name in Texas, and spread the concept that AED devices are life-saving equipment that is not only necessary, but essential in preventing cardiac arrest. Most importantly, we are not just selling equipment, but the knowledge and experience of our amazing team! **DHM**