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At THE READY

BY DIANN NICHOLS

AS YOU HEAD OUT THIS SUMMER

to spend time at Warren Sports Complex and a few other community parks in Frisco, you'll likely notice the large, bright blue kiosks that have been installed. Called ZapStands, their digital screens advertise local businesses, but that's not the most important feature of the kiosks. The primary purpose of ZapStands is to save lives.

Each ZapStand contains an automated external defibrillator (also known as an AED), a lifesaving device that can be used in the event that an individual suffers sudden cardiac arrest (SCA).

Unlike a heart attack, which is a circulation problem where blood flow to the heart is blocked, SCA is an electrical problem that causes the heart to stop beating and often occurs without warning. A person having a heart attack typically has a pulse and is alert, whereas a person having SCA has no pulse and is often unconscious.

SCA is the third-leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation. More than 350,000 people of all ages experience EMS-assessed, out-of-hospital SCA annually. About nine out of 10 victims do not survive.

Although AEDs are sometimes installed in high-traffic areas, they often can be hard to locate. "One significant problem with AEDs is that they're often hidden in the shadows," says ZapStand

Co-Founder and CEO Scott Johnson, who served as a Frisco City Council member from 2008-2017. AEDs, he says, are "typically on a wall somewhere tucked around the corner, kind of never to be seen again." With the ZapStand units, "Our concept was to bring them out of the shadows and put them right in the pathway where you can't miss it."

In February 2019, the Frisco City Council voted unanimously for the installation of 10 ZapStand kiosks at local parks.

ZapStands "will no doubt save Frisco lives and contribute to our culture of excellence. As you know, we pride ourselves in being 'The Best Place to Raise a Family' and, with your help, will be able to proclaim Frisco the 'Safest Place to Raise a Family' as well. As the fastest growing city in the entire country, Frisco is proud to be a thought leader in technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, and I believe ZapStand and Frisco make a perfect match," Mayor Jeff Cheney wrote that



ZapStand Co-Founder and CEO Scott Johnson

month in an announcement letter to Mr. Johnson.

Three ZapStands units have since been placed at both Warren Sports Complex and Harold Bacchus Community Park. B.F. Phillips Community Park also received a pair of kiosks, and Northeast Community Park and Frisco Commons Park each have one available for use. But that's only the beginning.

"We're going to start with growth here in Collin County," Mr. Johnson explains of plans to install additional ZapStands. "We're talking to a number of cities that are interested. We'll expand to North Texas in general and then further south into (the) Austin, San Antonio and Houston markets. Then we'll go nationally as people become more aware of the program. We'll have a dedicated sales force that will be out calling on cities and communities and teaching them about sudden cardiac arrest and the benefits of our program."

Besides often being hidden or hard to find, standard AEDs may or may not always work properly. Also, many people have no idea about how or when to use them. The "smart" ZapStand kiosk solves these problems, Mr. Johnson says, which can mean the difference between life and death.

"We are constantly connected to the unit and we provide 24/7 monitoring," he explains. "We check on its functionality, battery life, etc. We do all of that remotely, so there's never a time when the unit is in disrepair. Or, if it becomes in disrepair, we're aware of it immediately and can fix the problem."

ZapStands automatically notify the control center and place a call to 911 when someone engages the unit by pressing a button located on the front of the kiosk. This action also unlocks the compartment where the AED is stored. A person can then take the AED to the victim's location. Each AED is equipped

with a GPS tracking system, which is vital in helping first responders quickly locate a victim.

"The 911 operator can see the GPS location of the unit running across the screen and they can patch that signal directly into the fire truck or the ambulance or the response vehicle so that those first responders know exactly where the victim is in the park," Mr. Johnson says. "That minute, that 30 seconds, that two minutes saves lives. The survival of sudden cardiac arrest is reduced by seven to 10 percent for each minute that fibrillation is delayed."

ZapStands are ADA compliant and also accessible by children. The easy-to-use AEDs have voice instructions to guide users through every step of the process.

"They take the guesswork out of saving someone's life," Mr. Johnson says. "It's very different than CPR, which requires some training. Certainly, we'd

like for someone to be trained on an AED and how to use it. But if you've never used one or seen one, you could very easily walk through the steps that are being spoken to you on a speaker on the AED and save someone's life."

The ZapStand kiosk technology was developed in Australia by Reno Aprile, a founding director of the Cardiac Arrest Survival Foundation. Mr. Johnson, who is also an entrepreneur, imported the technology to the U.S. "I came on board as a consultant originally to help (Mr. Aprile) get involved in U.S. cities, and I quickly realized the potential and the

dynamism of the product and project." Mr. Aprile, who serves as ZapStand's co-founder, president and COO, became interested in saving lives at an early age. As a teen, "I was a medic teaching first aid in my high school army cadet unit, so CPR was a life skill I learned and taught early in life," he recalls. Later, he ran a system technology company be-

fore returning to his passion of helping people survive cardiac arrest through improved technology.

"The genesis of the idea was 17 years ago, however the latest iteration of the current technology occurred in 2017," Mr. Aprile says. That year, he decided to bring the ZapStand technology to the U.S. Through a friend of a friend, he met



“Frisco is proud to be a thought leader in technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, and I believe ZapStand and Frisco make a perfect match.”

Mayor Jeff Cheney

Mr. Johnson and the two became business partners.

“We have a U.S. patent for the technology. There are only a few ZapStands in Australia,” Mr. Johnson explains, adding that Mr. Aprile installed a handful of the units there “just to test the concept, but the technology behind it has been used for years under his guidance.” That technology is responsible for saving 72 lives in Australia.

Reflecting on the impact that ZapStands have had in that country, Mr. Aprile recalls the gratitude displayed by a man who suffered a cardiac arrest at a Sydney train station and survived as a result of a ZapStand having been located nearby. “He said simply and powerfully, thanks for a working and well-located AED saving his life. ‘I was given my life back.’ I don’t think you can put a value on that.”

After Australia’s COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, Mr. Aprile says he plans to relocate to Frisco. “I first learned from my Dallas mentor and friends that Frisco was a happening place in terms of growth and innovation.”

“Frisco’s known not just nationally, but internationally for its dynamism and its forward-thinking, progress-in-motion attitude.” Mr. Johnson says. Mr. Aprile “thought it would be a perfect place for his ZapStand. We’ve got more than \$4 million invested in the development of the ZapStand. Our company, ZapStand LLC, is founded in Frisco, is run by Frisco residents and is funded largely by Frisco investors, so we feel very at home here. The product is built in Collin County, and we’re proud to be a part of the Fris-



Frisco Commons Park

co business and entrepreneurial community.”

He adds, “Part of our program is a commitment to educate the community.” To honor this commitment, demonstrations of ZapStand kiosks are planned during events at Frisco-area parks this summer with the assistance of Zappy, the company’s automated training tool.

“Oftentimes, we have found that people underestimate the seriousness and vastness of the sudden cardiac arrest issue in America,” Mr. Johnson says. “The number who die each year from sudden cardiac arrest is roughly equivalent to the number of people who died from Alzheimer’s, assault firearms, breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal cancer, diabetes, HIV, house fires, motor vehicle accidents, prostate cancer and suicides combined. It’s a huge problem that is under-addressed. We’re going to do our part to make sure that Frisco citizens are educated. There’s not enough AEDs in the country,” he says. “I see a day when everybody probably has an AED in their trunk. But until then, we can certainly put them in high-traffic areas, city centers, college campuses, big city parks, and try to bring that 350,000 deaths number down as much as we can.”

Diann Nichols is a freelance writer, a music lover, an armchair traveler and an amateur photographer who never tires of learning something new.