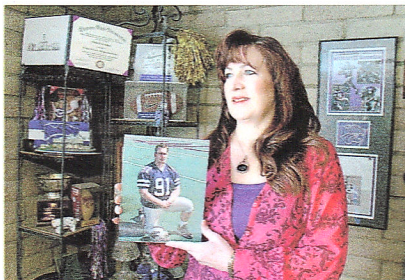




## Foundation offers free heart screenings to 1,000 young people

[Joy Slagowski](#)

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Every three days, a seemingly healthy child dies from sudden cardiac arrest.

In response, an event next month has a lofty goal: to save 100 young lives.

The Anthony Bates Foundation is offering free heart screenings for up to 1,000 youths to detect abnormalities that could lead to SCA.

Sharon Bates, founder of the organization, said in the eight years of conducting about 6,000 screenings, approximately 10 percent of those tested were found to have some sort of detectable, serious, but treatable heart abnormality.

"Lives change and are saved because of our efforts," Bates said.

Should the Surprise event follow the same trend, about 100 young people could find out they, too, have a potentially life-threatening condition, if left untreated.

The event will be from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 17 at Willow Canyon High School, 17901 W. Lundberg St. in Surprise.

Participants will undergo the simple, painless tests of echocardiograms (ultrasound), which normally cost \$1,600, and \$500 electrocardiograms), which will be administered and reviewed on site by cardiac physicians at no cost. Participants and their families will receive the results and any follow-up instructions and referrals at the event.

Though the tests are administered at no charge, a tax-deductible donation of \$30 is suggested, which helps fund future screenings.

The event is open to anyone ages 12 through 22 who pre-registers in advance at [www.anthonybates.org](http://www.anthonybates.org).

But students in the Dysart and Peoria Unified School Districts, as well as Wickenburg, are being targeted for this event, which is the first in Surprise.

The two schools that have the highest turnouts for the event will each receive two automatic external defibrillators.

The foundation was formed by Sharon Bates of Phoenix. Her son, Anthony, a 20-year-old football player at Kansas State University, died in 2000 from hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, or enlarged heart, after a workout. The genetic condition, which was undetected, is the leading killer of young athletes.

Bates formed the nonprofit so other young people don't suffer the same fate.

"You need to have the knowledge of what is going on with your heart, and then you have life," she said.

The Surprise event was spearheaded by Jamie Wasden, an emergency department nurse at Banner Del W. Webb Medical Center in Sun City West, who has volunteered for the foundation since she was in nursing school.

The Surprise mother of five — which includes three football players at Willow Canyon High School and one Pop Warner player — said she was inspired to rally the far Northwest Valley to screen kids and save lives.

Support has been overwhelming.

"When Willow Canyon (athletic department members) heard about it, they were so enthusiastic to help host and do whatever they can to make sure kids get checked and screened," Wasden said. "And it's a great community outreach for them as well with their medical foundations classes."

Wasden will be speaking at the Dysart High School medical classes about SCA in the weeks leading up to the event.

Banner Del E. Webb emergency room nurses and cardiologists are donating their services for the event, and Banner Good Samaritan will be providing EKG machines and technicians.

In 72 hours, 350 volunteers had signed up to take part in the Surprise event.

Bates said she never had so many volunteers before, but also never hosted a screening with 1,000 participants either.

Volunteers are still needed for registration, traffic monitoring, helping medical professionals and other tasks.

Wasden wants residents to know the screenings are for everyone, from any school.

"The screenings are open to anybody," Wasden said. "We have a school in Mesa which is doing fundraising to hire a charter bus to get their athletes out here for the screenings."

But the screenings aren't just for athletes, either.

"Only 15 percent of the youth who die of SCA are athletes," Bates said. "Everyone has a heart, everybody deserves a heart screening."

For information, call 602-482-5606 or e-mail [Sharon@AnthonyBates.org](mailto:Sharon@AnthonyBates.org).