

Ultrasound students help give heart screenings

Eastwick College partners with The Sean Fisher Memorial Foundation to provide free heart screenings for HS students



A sonography student learns how to identify key details in scan imagery in a hands-on scan laboratory classroom at Eastwick College Ramsey. The cardiovascular sonography program can be completed in as little as 24 months.

By all appearances, Sean Patrick Fisher was a healthy teenager. He never complained of chest pain, light headedness or any other symptoms that might have indicated any heart issues. But on his 13th birthday in 2008, he passed away unexpectedly from Sudden Cardiac Arrest, or SCA. In Sean's memory, his parents established The Sean Fisher Memorial Foundation to screen children over the age of 10 for undetected heart conditions.

The foundation is teaming up with Dr. Scott Alenick and diagnostic cardiovascular sonography students at Eastwick College for the 7th Annual Heart Screening to provide complimentary no-cost electrocardiogram (EKG), echocardiogram, and blood pressure screenings for all freshmen students at Waldwick High School on March 24th and 31st.

One in 300 children have an undetected heart condition that can put them at risk for sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), so screenings like these could potentially be life-saving for some of these students. SCA is one of the leading causes of death in the US: it claims one life every 90 seconds, taking more lives each year than breast cancer, lung cancer or AIDS. Unlike a heart attack, there is no blockage in the arteries; the most common cause of SCA is a dangerous and abnormal heart rhythm called ventricular fibrillation (VF). In VF, the electrical signals that control the lower chambers of the heart (ventricles) become chaotic. This sends the ventricles into fibrillation, an extremely rapid and irregular quivering that cannot effectively pump blood to the body.

As there are often no signs or symptoms

for SCA, screenings like the ones being offered at Eastwick College are especially important. As the college has a long history of charitable efforts, it was a natural fit for this partnership, explains President Thomas M. Eastwick.

"It has been an ongoing vision for my organization to contribute to the community in direct and meaningful ways that extend beyond the traditional limitations of corporate philanthropy. One of the best ways we do that is through the use of unique student volunteer efforts, and this alliance with The Sean Fisher Memorial Foundation is an excellent fulfillment of that approach," explains President Eastwick. "Our cardiovascular sonography students train extensively in specialized hands-on ultrasound scan labs, and these screenings provide them with an opportunity to apply their skills and training in a real-world scenario and for a good cause."

Diagnostic ultrasound is one of the most widely used medical tests in the nation and continues to increase in popularity due to its use as a safe and versatile detection

method. This is especially true as the elderly population grows and heart disease remains a significant risk for many. In order to fulfill the growing demand for medical professionals trained in this popular field, Eastwick College is offering a



Pictured: Eastwick College President Thomas M. Eastwick and Jim Fisher, father of Sean Fisher

specialized cardiovascular sonography degree program at their Ramsey and Nutley campuses. The program is accredited by CAAHEP (Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs) at both campuses, making it a strong option for those interested in training as a sonographer.

Cardiovascular sonography is used to create internal images of the heart and vascular system through the use of sound

waves, which bounce back and are translated into images by a computer. Ultrasound does not involve the use of radiation, making it an appealing option to patients. Students learn to check the heart for subtle differences between healthy and diseased areas, determine if scanned images are satisfactory for diagnostic purposes, and record additional medical history.

What surprises many is the level of skill and finesse required for the job. It's more than just scanning an assigned area of the body, as a sonographer cannot capture the entire object at once. Instead, they must collect a series of images and assemble them into a logical sequential order for a physician to read. As a result, an eye for detail and strong spatial reasoning is required to note abnormalities in the scan imagery. All this makes the diagnostic sonographer one of the most important members of the staff, ensuring that patients receive an accurate diagnosis and effective treatment.

The Department of Labor reports that the employment of diagnostic medical sonographers is expected to increase by 26 percent by 2024, more than three times the national job growth rate. And on average, cardiovascular sonographers in the NJ/NY Metro Area make \$61,820 according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. It's easy to see then why the cardiovascular sonography program has become one of the most popular paths of study offered at Eastwick.

"If you're looking to enter the medical field or take the next step up in your training, our sonography degree is a great option," explains President Eastwick. "There are simply not enough trained ultrasound techs to meet current employer demand, which means strong career opportunities for our graduates. And our students are well-prepared when they start their new careers. In fact, employers consistently report that our graduates are some of their best trained employees."

In addition to their sonography degree, Eastwick College offers a variety of healthcare programs, including licensed practical nursing (LPN), occupational therapy assisting, medical assisting, and surgical technology.

To learn more about The Sean Fisher Memorial Foundation and the screenings they help provide, visit seanfisher.org. For more information on Eastwick College's cardiovascular sonography program, call 201-327-8877 or visit them at eastwick.edu/ultrasound. Follow them on Facebook at [facebook.com/EastwickEducation](https://www.facebook.com/EastwickEducation) or on Twitter at [@EastwickCollege](https://twitter.com/EastwickCollege).