

# REMINDER

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## Vernon named HEARTSafe Community

By JESSICA CIPARELLI Staff Writer

VERNON — Vernon is one of just seven towns in the state that has received the designation of being a “HEARTSafe Community.” A “HEARTSafe Community” promotes and supports CPR training in the community, public access to defibrillation through strategic placement of automated external defibrillators for use of public safety professionals and other trained community members, and early advanced care.



**Proud of Vernon.** Representing the town of Vernon at the HEARTSafe Community press conference were, (Front, l-r) state Rep. Claire Janowski (who along with Sen. Tony Guglielmo, presented a legislative citation to the mayor), ambulance supervisor Jean Gauthier, Fire Chief Bob Kelley, Mayor Ellen Marmer, (holding the official certificate stating Vernon is a HEARTSafe Community), and Sgt. Paul Miffitt of the Vernon Police Department. (Back row, l-r) Michael Purcaro—Emergency Management Director, Sen. Tony Guglielmo, assistant ambulance supervisor Clint Marth, Police Chief James Kenny, and CEO of Eastern Connecticut Health Network, Peter Karl. The HEARTSafe distinction is good for three years. *Photo by Jessica Ciparelli.*

Qualification criteria was based on the number of “heartbeats” (points) earned against the community’s total population. Vernon needed 240 “heartbeats.” The town had more than 300. “We far exceeded the requirements to become a HEARTSafe Community, and it’s something we’re proud of and the residents can be proud of,” said Michael Purcaro, Vernon’s Emergency Management Director.

The program started in Massachusetts five years ago, and is now in Maine and is pending in Rhode Island, New Hampshire and New York. —Vernon joins Greenwich, Ledyard, Westport, Norwich, Lisbon, and Mansfield in this community distinction. HEARTSafe was introduced in Connecticut last spring. The program was developed through the Department of Public Health’s Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, the Office of Emergency Medical Services and in collaboration with the American Heart Association. It began as a way to foster

community environments that improve the survival odds for people suffering sudden cardiac events, such as cardiac arrests or heart attacks. The key is the “Chain of Survival,” and its four vital links: early access to emergency care, early CPR, early defibrillation, and early advanced care.

“The town of Vernon has demonstrated its commitment toward ensuring that its residents and visitors receive the early lifesaving response that has proven to increase the chances of survival for heart attack victims,” said DPH Commissioner, J. Robert Galvin.

Currently, there are AEDs in all Vernon schools, the public safety complex, town hall, senior center, police station, in the ambulances and several police cars. The machines in the police cars are moved from shift to shift. In addition, the town plans to expand its community CPR and AED training programs.

Mayor Ellen Marmer, who by trade is a pediatric cardiologist, also plans to reintroduce a plan to the school board to have all Rockville High School seniors learn CPR before they graduate. “If not a requirement, then an offering,” Marmer said of the plan.

On hand for the Jan. 26 State Capitol press conference were: Mayor Marmer, state Rep. Claire Janowski and Sen. Tony Guglielmo, Vernon Police Chief Jim Kenny, Police Captain Steve Clark, Fire Chief Bob Kelley, Deputy Fire Chief Chris Hammick, ambulance supervisor Jean Gauthier, assistant ambulance supervisor Clint Marth and EMS staff, Eastern Connecticut Health Network CEO Peter Karl and his staff, Comm. Robert Galvin, Gary Havican, of the American Heart Association, Gary St. Amand of the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, and Leonard Guercia, Jr., operations/EMS chief for the DPH.

“I think it’s wonderful for the community – it’s a real tribute to her [Marmer] and her community,” said Roseann Williams, director of Safety and Health for ECHN. “Peter Karl [our CEO] encourages the relationship [and] is a supporter of Dr. Marmer and the EMS system.” “It’s not very often in one’s lifetime that you get a chance to combine your life’s work with a passion for your community,” said Marmer.



Congratulations. Mayor Ellen Marmer accepts the “HEARTSafe Community” plaque from Department of Public Health Commission Robert Galvin. Vernon is one of seven Connecticut towns to receive the distinction so far. *Photo by Jessica Ciparelli*

According to HEARTSafe statistics, cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the nation and state. Approximately 4,500 state residents die each year due to sudden cardiac arrest. Most of these deaths occur out of the hospital, away from advanced medical assistance, and usually in the presence of a family member or friend.

Visit [www.dph.state.ct.us](http://www.dph.state.ct.us) or contact Gary St. Amand at 509-7581 for more information on becoming a HEARTSafe Community.

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