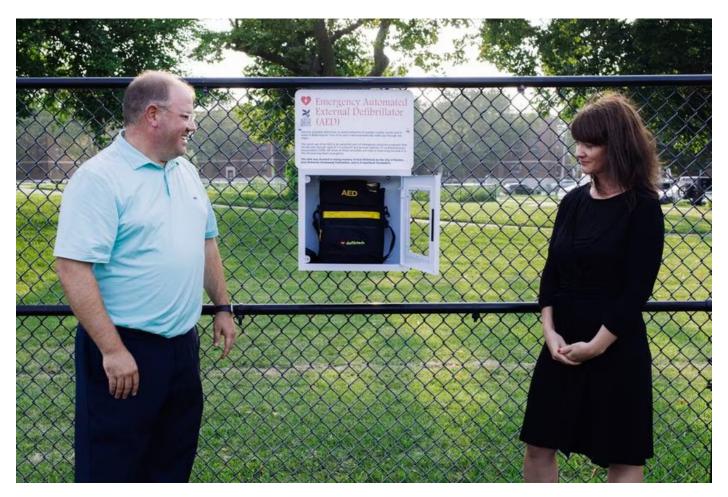
## To combat sudden cardiac arrest, Moakley Park gets Boston's first public defibrillator

By Jackson Tolliver Globe Correspondent, Updated July 27, 2023, 2:25 p.m.



Suzanne McKenzie, founder of the Ucal McKenzie Breakaway Foundation (right), and Ryan Woods, commissioner of Boston's Department of Parks and Recreation, revealed a new AED at Moakley Park in Boston, Mass. on July 26.Carlin Stiehl for The Boston Globe

Fourteen years after her husband died from sudden cardiac arrest while playing soccer at Moakley Park, Suzanne McKenzie returned for the first time.

Now, she hopes to make sure it doesn't happen to anyone else. Through the <u>Ucal McKenzie Breakaway Foundation</u>, named after Suzanne's late husband, Boston will have an automated external defibrillator (AED) located at Moakley Park, available for anyone to use.

"This is the one thing that restarts your heart and resets you," McKenzie said last week. "If you don't have access in a timely manner, your chances of survival are very very low."



Suzanne McKenzie, founder of the Ucal McKenzie Breakaway Foundation. Carlin Stiehl for The Boston Globe

The addition of the defibrillator comes at a time in which cases of sudden cardiac arrest, particularly among young athletes, continue to make national news. At the beginning of this year, Bills safety <a href="Damar Hamlin went into sudden cardiac arrest">Damar Hamlin went into sudden cardiac arrest</a> after taking a hit during a game against the Bengals.

Last week, <u>Bronny James Jr., the son of NBA superstar LeBron James,</u> <u>experienced a sudden cardiac arrest</u> while practicing. While both survived, many aren't as lucky.

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According to the <u>American Heart Association</u>, around 365,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur each year. Of these cases, only 10 percent survive.

With the use of a defibrillator, the odds of survival greatly increase. According to the <u>Food and Drug Administration</u>, probability of survival decreased by 7 to 10 percent each minute that passes without a defibrillator. By avoiding the time spent waiting for an ambulance to arrive with an AED, people experiencing sudden cardiac arrest at Moakley Park are immediately more likely to survive.

According to Ryan Woods, the commissioner of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, the city will look to add AEDs to more public parks. Since it is the first of its kind in a public outdoor setting, challenges can indeed arise.

"We are going to look at the seven or eight other sites where we have staff full time," said Woods. "If that goes well, we have 332 parks throughout the city of Boston."

Ryan Woods, commissioner of the Boston Parks and Recreation department. Carlin Stiehl for The Boston Globe

The field at Moakley Park is used by a variety of recreational leagues and high schools. The staff in charge of the park will now be responsible for the

AED, including changing the batteries a few times a year.

Moakley will be receiving a turf upgrade in the coming months, which will likely make it even more populated. Woods says that's all the more reason to have the safety measure in place.

To unveil the AED, McKenzie and Woods spoke to a group of teammates, family, and friends of Ucal, who was a soccer coach and guidance counselor at Newton North High School.

"Ucal didn't have any underlying heart condition that he was aware of," said McKenzie of her husband, who died at 32. "Regardless of age, this happens to people every day."

Suzanne McKenzie embraced a friend. Carlin Stiehl for The Boston Globe

The foundation aims to promote expanded education about cardiac arrest through its <u>summer camp</u> and by hosting events.

Using the AED is quite simple, according to Woods and McKenzie. When you open the case and activate the device, it will walk the user through the process. There is general information written on a plaque above the defibrillator.

The defibrillator, which typically costs more than \$1,000, was funded by the foundation. McKenzie hopes to continue to expand the program throughout Boston, with her eyes set on New York City next.

The AED is located on the Moakley Park soccer field, near the entrance in a mounted white box.

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