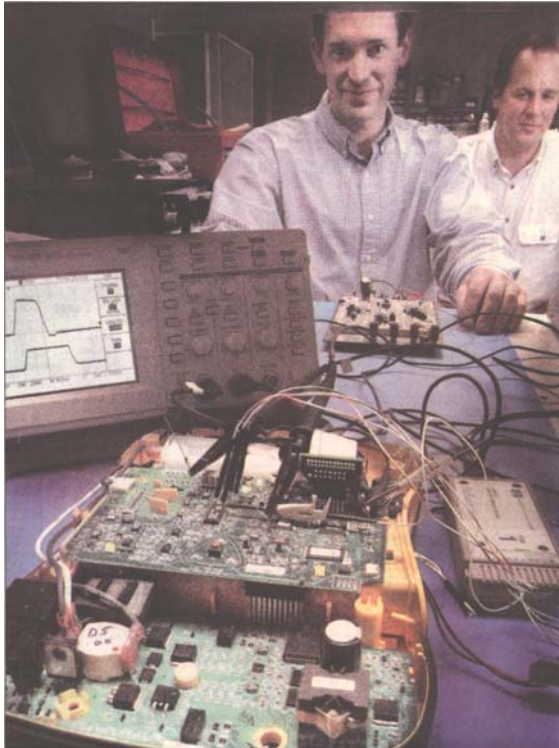


STARTUP

"The goal from the beginning was to design a piece of equipment that would allow the average American to save lives."

Dustin Roller, vice president of sales for Defibtech



Giovanni Meier, left, vice president of engineering for Defibtech in Guilford, and engineer Scott Smallshaw reveal the inner workings of the company's Life Line defibrillator.

HEART SMART

♥ 95 percent of sudden cardiac arrest victims die before reaching the hospital.

♥ Survival is directly linked to the amount of time between cardiac arrest and defibrillation.

♥ If no cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is provided, the victim's survival chances drop 7 to 10 percent with each passing minute.

♥ When bystanders provide immediate CPR and deliver the first shock to the victim within three to five minutes, survival rates rise to 48 to 74 percent.



Defibtech wants to place its Life Line defibrillator in homes, schools and businesses.

Source: The American Heart Association

Guilford company wants to place defibrillators in schools, businesses

By Maria Garriga
Register Staff

GUILFORD — For many of the 250,000 people who suffer sudden cardiac death every year in the United States, a nearby automatic external defibrillator could be a lifesaver.

"Time is what matters in cardiac arrest. For every minute that passes by, the chance of survival drops 10 percent," said Giovanni C. Meier, vice president of engineering at Defibtech LLC. "The goal is to have (defibrillators) everywhere."

Hospitals and ambulance services are the chief buyers of automatic external defibrillators. But Guilford's Defibtech, a small 4-year-old company, wants to get these heart starters into every school, fitness center, sports facility and business.

Through the Survival Group in North Haven, Defibtech has entered into a partnership with the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce to market its products to area businesses.

The chamber recently bought a unit to be placed at its offices at 900 Chapel St. in New Haven.

"We believe in this product so strongly that we are encouraging all of our 1,700 member companies to buy one of these and put it in their locations," said chamber spokeswoman Lynn Fredricksen.

Survival Group provides life-saving emergency products, emergency training and program administration. The chamber will receive a small commission on sales for its efforts.

Founded in 1999 by Dr. Glenn Laub,

a cardiac surgeon in New Jersey, and Gintaras Vainys of Chicago, Defibtech managed to break into national and international markets this year after three years of research and development. (The headquarters is in Guilford because Meier lives in nearby Madison.)

"The goal from the beginning was to design a piece of equipment that would allow the average American to save lives," said Dustin Roller, vice president of sales.

The Defibtech model has two buttons: on/off and "shock."

The electrodes come attached to the unit and tuck into a back pocket, along with an instruction manual.

All a user has to do is turn the unit "on" to receive operating instructions. The machine immediately tells the user what to do, where to attach the electrodes, and whether the user should press the shock button.

The machine delivers 150 joules of energy to the heart, more than 10 times the amount of energy in a typical household electrical socket.

It's just enough to reset the heart's internal rhythm, said Roller.

"The only treatment for cardiac arrest is electric shock. The defibrillator sends a shock that resets your internal pacemaker," Roller said.

"It's like rebooting a computer," Meier said.

The company charges \$1,495 for each unit. Units sold to med-

See Heart, C3

Heart: Guilford company has a hot product

Continued from C1

ical institutions usually cost \$2,500 to \$3,000.

The market for automatic external defibrillators expanded in January, when Medicaid and Medicare approved reimbursement for the purchase of defibrillators by those with qualifying medical conditions.

Since January 2003, Defibtech has shipped 5,000 of its machines across the nation, and shipments to Europe are slated to begin Monday.

The company has managed to grow quickly by contracting out most manufacturing and sales functions.

Defibtech employs 14 people. Only the core functions — engineering, research and

development — remain in-house. The other departments have in-house managers who work with outside companies.

On the manufacturing end, Defibtech uses a Connecticut manufacturer that employs 150 to keep up with orders.

"Manufacturers do what they do best," Meier said.

Roller points out that by cutting out the direct sales force, the company saves massive overhead expenses. The company's distributors have a sales force that would equal 2,000 agents for Defibtech, he said.

Roller said he focuses on building relationships with those key distributors.

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