Andover electrician designs restroom alarm to help prevent opioid ODs

By Judy Wakefield | jwakefield@andovertownsman.com Nov 16, 2017

ANDOVER — An Andover electrician came to understand the opioid crisis in a deeper way because a longtime client of his that serves the homeless had several patients a week overdosing in their public restrooms. So they asked him for help. The result? That client hasn’t had a bathroom overdose in months since the electrician’s restroom alarm system was installed.

Telecommunications and electrical contractor John King, who owns A Plus Communications located in a restored Ballardvale mill on Andover Street, has worked for Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program for 20 years, he said.

Administrators there asked him to help them come up with a solution to the problem of addicts overdosing in their restrooms. King spent four months researching and designing a restroom alarm that tips off administrators to potential overdoses.

He eventually built a reverse motion detector that alerts the organization’s security staff if a restroom occupant has not moved in two minutes. The alarm goes off several times a week, alerting security that someone has collapsed and stopped moving in the restroom. Security then calls the homeless organization’s clinical staff so they can administer Narcan to the person. Nobody has died since the alarm was installed last March.

“John and his alarm system have saved many, many lives,” said Barbara Donahue, the organization’s director of facilities and security. “John has grown to really understand the population of patients we serve and their struggles.”

King said he’s just doing his job.

“Someone on the staff stops me every time I’m there and tells me I saved another life,” he said. “I feel a little weird when that happens. The staff is so nice here and they deal with the homeless and are really worried about them. They approached me to do this and it was no problem.”

Before King’s invention, security officers would have to keep track of how long patients had been in the bathroom and knock on the door for well-being checks if it had been too long. With the system in place, security officers can focus on other tasks, Donahue said.

King, who was very involved with Boy Scouts in Andover when his four sons, including three Eagle Scouts, were young, has made a video of how the alarm system works and put it on his website, Aplus.us.
Based on his work at the homeless health-care agency, the Boston Medical Center plans to meet with King about his alarm system. Drug overdoses in restrooms there are a problem as well.

“We’ll see where that goes,” said King, who lives on Hidden Road with his wife, Darlene, who is co-president of their company.

The building where King set up the bathroom alarms is the nonprofit’s main building. It’s called Jean Yawkey Place, named after the wife of Tom Yawkey, former owner of the Boston Red Sox. Jean Yawkey Place has a walk-in clinic, a 24/7 medical respite facility, a dental clinic, a pharmacy and administrative offices. It’s located in Boston’s South End.

“The opioid overdose epidemic in Massachusetts continues to claim hundreds of lives a month and an Andover electrician has played a critical and unusual role in preventing drug fatalities,” Donohue said.

0 comments

Sign in

1 person listening

Newest | Oldest

Sean_Merrill
5 days ago

May God bless you Mr. King!

Like

Reply

This Week's Circulars

Eagle Tribune Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Venue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEC 2</td>
<td>Merrimack Warriors Hockey &amp; Pro...</td>
<td>North Andover, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON 20</td>
<td>Oh Baby! Lapis</td>
<td>North Andover, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON 20</td>
<td>Restore the Road Fundraiser</td>
<td>North Andover, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MON 20</td>
<td>Little Explorers! 6-12 months-3 years</td>
<td>North Andover, MA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See all events

Add your event