

THE PRESS

PELICAN RAPIDS, MINNESOTA

More than just a newspaper



Pelican Drug owner and Mason Don Perrin, along with fellow Masons Blake Meland, Tanner Nelson, Tom Marty and Harold Holt, gather beside the new public-access AED cabinet at the corner of highways 59 and 108. The Pelican Rapids Masons, Otter Tail Lodge 284, sponsored the unit, with Meland and Nelson pouring its concrete foundation.

PHOTOS BY NICOLE WK



Mounted at the corner of highways 59 and 108, the temperature-controlled cabinet keeps the AED ready for use at any hour, with instructions available in English and Spanish.

Heart help at hand thanks to Pelican Masons

New public AED installed outside Pelican Drug

By Nicole WK,
Managing Editor

A new automated external defibrillator is now available around the clock outside Pelican Drug at the corner of Highways 59 and 108 in Pelican Rapids, giving bystanders quick access to emergency equipment during a cardiac arrest.

The AED and its outdoor cabinet were sponsored by the Pelican Rapids

Masons, Otter Tail Lodge 284, and installed by Advocates for Health, a St. Cloud-based nonprofit volunteer organization. Masons Blake Meland and Tanner Nelson poured the concrete foundation for the unit.

The Masons are holding a raffle through Sept. 30 to raise money for another unit in Pelican Rapids. Raffle tickets are available at Pelican Drug and Park Region Co-op.

Cabinet alerts emergency responders

The outdoor cabinet is temperature-controlled and continuously monitored, so the AED remains ready despite Minnesota weather. To use it, a person pulls down the cabinet door and removes the AED.

MASONS INSTALL AED
Continued on page 11

MASONS INSTALL AED

Opening the cabinet activates an audible alarm and red lights and causes the system to take a burst of photos. When the AED is removed, a sensor triggers an automatic call to a monitoring center, which can contact 911 when needed and provide the cabinet's location. A call button on the front can also connect with the monitoring center.

The cabinet monitors its electrical power, cellular connection, and internal temperature, as well as whether the door is open or closed. An optical sensor monitors whether the AED is present and ready for use. A rechargeable backup battery keeps essential functions operating during a power outage.

Illuminated signage marks the new public-access emergency cabinet outside Pelican Drug at highways 59 and 108, which stocks an automated external defibrillator, Stop the Bleed trauma supplies and naloxone for opioid overdoses, all monitored and climate-controlled for Minnesota weather.

Instructions inside are available in English and Spanish. The stainless steel cabinet is designed to withstand heat, cold, and moisture, with illuminated panels to make it visible at night.

Nonprofit has installed hundreds of AEDs

Advocates for Health has installed about 400 AED units across the country, including roughly 250 in Minnesota. Volunteer Jay Pitonyak traveled from the Twin Cities to install the Pelican Rapids unit.

Only about 15 of the organization's Minnesota units are in the Twin Cities metro area, with most concentrated in central Minnesota. The nonprofit also has installations in South Dakota, Florida, Texas, Virginia, Michigan, and Connecticut, with Florida having the most installations outside Minnesota.

According to Advocates for Health, none of the roughly 400 AEDs it has installed has been stolen. The



The cabinet's contents include an AED defibrillator alongside naloxone and Stop the Bleed pouches, giving bystanders multiple emergency tools in one location.

AEDs are tracked, while photos and electronic alerts provide additional monitoring.

Project grew from a cardiac emergency
Advocates for Health traces its roots to a 2004

heart attack suffered by Joel Vogel. Vogel survived after treatment at St. Cloud Hospital and later began promoting CPR and AED education and raising money to place defibrillators in community organizations.

Continued from front

His longtime friend Rich Feneis later researched ways to make AEDs accessible outdoors at all hours while protecting them from extreme temperatures. A pilot project using temperature-regulated, monitored cabinets began in 2018.

After the cabinets made it through the extreme cold of the 2018-19 winter, Vogel and Feneis expanded the effort across central Minnesota. Advocates for Health was formed as a nonprofit in 2019 and became a 501(c)(3) charitable organization in 2020.

The organization said one of its early cabinets played a role in a 2024 emergency when an 80-year-old man collapsed while playing pickleball. His partner retrieved an AED from a nearby concession stand and began CPR and AED use within five minutes. The organization said the man was alert and talking by the time emergency medical personnel arrived.