In the upcoming weeks, residents of Kent, OH will have access to a life-saving phone app, known as Pulsepoint. Pulsepoint connects CPR certified users to emergencies where their assistance is needed. Here’s how it works: CPR-certified users register for the app. When they are out in public, the app will alert them to a nearby heart attack victim. They can then perform CPR until the paramedics arrive.

Pulsepoint spokesperson Shannon Smith spoke with me about the origins of pulsepoint.

Smith: The concept behind the app started with our founder and president Richard Price. He was the fire chief for San Ramon Valley which is a fire department on the east bay near San Francisco.

Using smartphone and GPS technology, Chief Price innovated a new way to save heart attack victims.

Smith: You know, everyone’s sort of carrying these smartphones now, they’re all GPS located - they have software for GPS location - and he thought, ‘you know, what if we could alert people based on their location, to start CPR before the paramedics arrive. And so, that’s kind of the concept of how Pulsepoint was started in San Ramon Valley - right there in his jurisdiction. And it started spreading around to other pilot markets in the bay area. We’re currently now in 42 states with more than 3000 connected communities and we have about 1.1 million users.

The reason Pulsepoint has been so successful is becuse how crucial the moments are directly following the heart attack. Kent Fire Chief John Tosko discusses this phenomenon.

Tosko: Early CPR has been proven to be one of the biggest indictators of save, you know. Whether you’re going to save someone. If you don’t do CPR for 5-6 minutes before we get there, chances for save are pretty dismal. So the earlier you can do CPR, the better the chances are.

Me: In April of 2018, University Hospitals presented Kent City Council with a donation towards implementing the app in Kent. The council accepted the donation. Gwen Rosenberg from city council expresses her excitement for the app.

Rosenberg: Anytime the city has the opportunity to participate with kind of the new technology, I think that our residents are very interested in using things like that - using our phones and apps on our phones and just kind of emerging technology. I think it’s something that’ll be a nice fit in our community. And I certainly hope that it’s something that inspires more people to learn how to give CPR so they can participate too. The more people that know, the better, because it’s so critical in those very first few moments of a cardiac incident that people get attention right away, and our first responders - you know, it’s going to take them a few moments.

Dan Ellenberger, director of the EMS Institute of University Hospitals, hopes to have the app live by June 1. Ellenberger says that University Hospitals has implemented the app across Cuyahoga County and is now working on getting into Geauga and Portage County.

Rosenberg believes that even if the app only saves one life, it’s worth it.

Rosenberg: Honestly, our fire chief summed it up pretty well that if it saves one life, we’re coming out ahead, so it’s absolutely worth it.

With Reporting Public Policy, this is Alec Slovenec, signing off.