

One Mother's Mission: Why Every Parent Should Know CPR

Becket Neeley is like many 3-year-old boys, he's full of energy and never seems to stop moving. He loves everything dinosaur and can cite multiple characteristics about the various species. Hard to imagine, but if not for the swift action of his mother – and a CPR class she took – Becket might not be here or running around with boundless energy.

The Neeley family, including Becket and his younger sister, lives in Bloomington, Illinois. In the fall of 2017, they were visiting family friends in Chicago. In a moment of miscommunication, Sarah Neeley thought her husband was keeping an eye on Becket and he thought she was. When they realized he was missing – they weren't sure exactly how long but probably only a matter of minutes – they ran outside calling his name and getting no answer. When they pulled back the cover of an above ground pool, they saw Becket's lifeless body at the bottom.

Without hesitation, Sarah jumped in and pulled her son from the water. As her friend called 9-1-1, Sarah started doing CPR on Becket, alternating between chest compressions and breathing. Sarah had taken a child CPR class just a month prior as part of a moms' support group.

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Sarah Neeley, CPR Advocate, Bloomington

"It wasn't a very step process. It wasn't we do this and then we do this. It was just there, the knowledge was just there and I think had I not taken the class I would have been a lot more lost and I wouldn't have had a clue of where to start or even what to do." (:14)

Cassi Adkins is the CPR instructor who taught Sarah's class. As the birthing center supervisor at OSF HealthCare St. Joseph Medical Center in Bloomington, she knows the importance of parents being CPR trained in case of such an emergency. She says she was proud of Sarah for doing *something*, a point she stresses in all the classes she teaches.

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Cassie Adkins, RN, OSF HealthCare CPR Instructor

"Most important don't be afraid - you know your skills. I taught that that was the key point I wanted my moms to go home with and my dads to go home with that night. They were all like 'I can't do this I can't do this' and I'm like yes you can. In the situation don't be afraid to jump in and do it because there may not be anybody else who knows how to do it so don't be afraid and then get help there as quickly as you can." (:22)

By the time the first police officer arrived and ran with Becket to a waiting ambulance, the toddler was crying – a good sign. He spent the night in the hospital. His mom says there's been no residual effect, Becket even loves to run and jump in the pool wearing his water wings and tells his mom he needs to hold his nose if he's putting his head under.

For Sarah, putting the incident behind her has been a little harder.

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Sarah Neeley, CPR Advocate, Bloomington

"There's a lot of mom guilt that comes with it, I didn't know where my son was and there he was at the bottom of the pool. Also there was a lot of had I done this, had I just followed him or been watching him more closely this wouldn't have happened. And there was a lot of self-blame. And everybody said, well, you're a hero mom. Just keep in mind had you not known what to do then he might not be here or he might not be awake now." (:20)

Sarah makes sure anyone who cares for her children is CPR trained, and she's on a mission to spread the word about getting trained to as many people as possible. Cassi Adkins plans to offer the CPR class to parent groups on a regular basis.

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Cassie Adkins, RN, OSF HealthCare CPR Instructor

"We come to work every day as nurses and we teach the same skills over and over again and sometimes don't think about the impact we have on the community as a whole and to know that a skill you taught a family in turn went and saved a little boy's life is pretty incredible." (:17)

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Sarah Neeley, CPR Advocate, Bloomington

"You never think you're going to use it until you do. I couldn't be more thankful that I did." (:09)

Learn more about the benefits of CPR training and to find a class near you, visit osfhealthcare.org.