

KRUM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT RESCUES YOUNGER BROTHER WHILE DRIVING

Health Curriculum Prevents Choking Disaster and Saves Life

When people think of Krum heroes, they most often think of our volunteer firemen, teachers, police officers, and adults in similar positions. But for 7-year-old Avery Knipfer, his hero came in the form of a quick-thinking older sister.

Krum High School student Cayaana Knipfer didn't plan on saving a life as she set out to drive her two brothers and sister to church.

The trip began like any other. A model student, varsity tennis player, academic UIL competitor, and bass clarinetist for the Bobcat band, Cayaana often taxied her younger siblings—KMS eighth-grade student Brytan, EEC first-grader Avery, and kindergarten student Gretchen—around town.

It is typical for the ride to get a little rowdy. After all, two brothers and two sisters under 18 is a lot of energy for one car. So when Avery began to loudly choke on a piece of bread, Cayaana naturally assumed that he was joking.

But after 20 long seconds of gasping for air, Avery began to turn blue and it was apparent that this was no joke.

Cayaana wasted no time pulling over to the shoulder. While Brytan dialed 911, Cayaana tried feverishly to get Avery out of the vehicle while keeping her younger sister inside the car under the protection of child-safety locks and off of the busy highway.

It was on the side of the narrow road, with trucks flying by and no time to waste waiting for an ambulance, that Cayaana performed the Heimlich Maneuver; a life-saving exercise she learned at school.

Cayaana learned the Heimlich as a freshman at Krum ISD in a health class.

"I am very thankful that they teach us that because it saved my brother's life," says Cayaana. "I was scared but I remembered learning that even if you can't remember anything else, just to push on the diaphragm."

Choking accounts for nearly 4,600 deaths each year. According to the Heimlich Institute, the Heimlich Maneuver has saved more than 50,000 lives. Luckily, Cayaana managed to dislodge the bread before the ambulance could arrive on the scene, although the operator remained on the phone with Brytan throughout the entire ordeal.

While Texas recently withdrew the mandate requiring high schools to teach health, Krum ISD will continue to offer the course as a part of their curriculum.

“Cayaana is one of the good ones,” says KHS Principal Mike Pierson. “She is a leader in the school and I am thrilled that she represented Krum High School in such a positive manner. What could have been a tragic situation had a happy ending thanks to the quick thinking of a smart big sister and the proper training from a high school course,” he says.

Incidentally, Cayaana has plans to enter the health care field upon graduation and dreams of becoming a labor and delivery nurse. She plans to volunteer this summer at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Denton.

Cayaana’s mother, who is both proud and relieved, notes that perhaps this is a sign that her daughter will be prepared for the high-pressure situations she is likely to encounter in a delivery room.

As for Avery, the experience hasn’t traumatized him too severely. When asked about how he felt after choking, Avery simply said—with all the wisdom a 7-year-old has to offer—“I should probably learn to chew better.”