



615 Elsinore Place, Suite 901 • Cincinnati,
Ohio 45202 • 513.559.2468 • fax 513.487.3668

Media Contact: Kim Geiger
Email: kim@makermarketing.com
Phone: (513) 460-0159

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7-Year Old Saves Brother's Life & Credits Heimlich Heroes

Heroes come in all shapes, sizes—and ages.

Take for example seven-year-old Anthony Colmenero, who recently saved his younger brother's life.

Anthony was eating dinner alongside his brother, Ryan, when suddenly Ryan fell off his chair. The toddler fell flat on his back, hitting his head.

His mother, Tracy, rushed to Ryan.

As soon as she picked him up—concerned about his head—the toddler began to show signs he was choking.



Anthony, quick to recognize the emergency, rushed behind his little brother and performed the Heimlich maneuver.

Immediately, Ryan's obstruction was cleared, and the toddler was able to breathe again.

Tracy said the entire incident happened in a matter of seconds—so fast that no words were exchanged between her and Anthony. “I wasn't speaking, I was just in ‘go mode’. Anthony and I worked as a team,” she said. “That is what surprises me the most. Anthony knew what to do without me saying anything.”

Just months prior, Anthony, a second-grader, had been taught at school how to identify a choking emergency and how to respond with the Heimlich maneuver.

Anthony's school, located in north central Texas, taught all of its students, from second through fifth grade, how to use the Heimlich maneuver by going through the Heimlich Heroes educational program. Supported by the Deaconess Foundation and other generous donors, Heimlich Heroes teaches young people the proper way to identify a choking emergency. The program also teaches when and how to perform the Heimlich maneuver and ways to prevent or minimize the risk of choking. The lessons can be taught to children as young as seven years old, according to program manager, Terri Huntington.

Though the program's offices are located in Cincinnati, the program's reach is international. "In fact, our program has trained and equipped more than 29,000 children across 159 schools and afterschool groups in the Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky region alone," said Huntington. "And, though we've trained a few groups overseas, we are excited that more than 208,000 people nationwide have participated to date," she said. "We've found that school nurses and health teachers especially embrace this lesson for their students. And when we hear from them that because of our training one of their kids has saved a life, we are so thankful that we could offer them this program.

Anthony credited the specially designed training dolls, provided by Heimlich Heroes, in helping him to have the confidence to know how to respond in-the-moment with his brother. "I liked practicing the Heimlich maneuver on the doll. That helped me know how to get stuff out [of the throat] when someone is choking," he said.

Reflecting on how he saved his brother's life, Anthony said he hopes other children learn the skills he and his peers were taught at school. "My dad always has me rank things [in terms of their importance]. So, on a scale of one to 10, I would say it's a 10 on how important it is for kids to learn these skills."

Tracy said she is thankful for her son's quick response and how Anthony's teacher, Ms. Bradshaw, taught children the skills to help them save lives.

She hopes other schools also teach students these life-saving skills, in the future, too. "We're so thankful that the Heimlich Heroes program is offered at young ages," she said. "Kids are never too young to learn a new skill."

About Deaconess Heimlich Heroes

With offices located in Cincinnati, Ohio, Heimlich Heroes was developed through a cooperative effort of the Deaconess Foundation and the Heimlich Institute. Heimlich Heroes' education-based program can be used in any classroom, club, organization, or group setting to educate people on how to recognize and respond to a choking situation. Heimlich Heroes regularly works with schools, scouting organizations, the YMCA, 4-H, and Boys and Girls Clubs of America among other groups.

For more information about the Deaconess Heimlich Heroes program or to register a school, class, or organization for training, visit the website at: www.heimlichheroes.com.

