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10-year-old earns award for saving her mom

By: Stacy Neumann, Medical Department Activity Public Affairs

Col. John McGrath asked the kids in Patriot Elementary School's cafeteria who they thought is a hero.

Hands shot up and voices yelled, "Iron Man!" "Hawkeye!" "Batman!"

The hospital commander smiled and replied, "Well, my hero is in here. Can I have McKenzie Costa come up here?"

The surprised 10-year-old walked up to the front of the room and McGrath began to tell the room about what happened on March 7th.

McKenzie woke up at about five in the morning after hearing her mother call her name once. The mother of five was home alone while her husband Sgt. Lewis Costa was in the field.

"She jumped right up. I didn't even say her name loudly but, for some reason, McKenzie came right down," recalled her mother Crystal Costa.

McKenzie went downstairs and found her mother on the floor, gasping for air. She rushed to a neighbor and asked her to call 911. Then, McKenzie ran back and administered an EpiPen and an inhaler to her mom.

Evans Army Community Hospital paramedics Jason Sexton and Daniel Curtis arrived shortly after.

"What she did was give us a few extra minutes to stabilize her mom. It could have ended in full cardiac arrest," said Curtis. "It's not every day you see a 10-year-old make a good decision like this. Her quick decision was instrumental in saving her mother's life."

"I feel McKenzie acted above and beyond what is expected of most people at any age. She showed courage and quick thinking without hesitation. This truly is a special trait that only a few have," added Sexton.

The paramedics rushed Costa to the hospital. The mother of five had been in anaphylactic shock, an allergic reaction to an aspirin she had taken. She's doing fine now and watched as McKenzie was recognized on March 20th.

McGrath asked the children if they knew what to do in an emergency and they called out the 911 number. Paramedics said it's a lesson parents should continually reinforce.



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"It's important for families to train to use 911, be aware of medical conditions within the family, and practice emergency drills so kids know what to do. Those precious minutes save lives," explained Curtis.

"It is important that your children understand how this affects the family and how to help when one cannot help themselves," said Sexton.

For her efforts, McGrath gave McKenzie a Commander's Award for Superior Service and the hospital's Command Sgt. Maj. Ly Lac kitted her out with a hospital backpack and ball cap as her classmates, moms and paramedics looked on.

"It's nice they all showed up to do this," said Costa. "It was special."

McKenzie, on the other hand, was pretty nonchalant. "It was my mom. We've talked about what to do. I had to help," she smiled. "But this is pretty cool."