
West St. Paul Girl Scout saves friend's life

BY MEGAN ANDERSON - SUN NEWSPAPERS

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When Anna Erickson started choking, 8-year-old Bree Osborne of West St. Paul used her Girl Scout training to save her friend's life.

The third-graders at St. Matthew's School in St. Paul were enjoying dinner and pie at Baker's Square with the other members of their Brownie Troop 163.

"[Anna] was waiting for another drink and was chewing on a piece of ice," Bree said.

"At first, I thought she was faking it," Bree said, but she realized her friend was choking when Anna, 9, put her hands up to her neck.

Bree stepped in and performed the Heimlich maneuver, also known as an abdominal thrust, on Anna.

Anna's sister, Lexie, 11, and Bree's sister, Sheala, 10, were also there when the incident happened. Lexie said she didn't know her sister was choking "until everyone got really quiet."

Anna said she was grateful for what Bree did to help her. "I thought it was really neat that someone could do it really fast," Anna said. Bree didn't realize that she helped save Anna's life. "Right afterward, she went right back to her pie," Anna said.

Remembering that she reacted immediately to help Anna, Bree said, "I really only thought about it afterward."

The Heimlich maneuver was a technique Bree and the other five troop members learned while completing their Safety Sense Try-It badge in 2006. The girls also learned basic first aid skills, how to find assistance in an emergency, and fire safety.

Learning the Heimlich maneuver is valuable, Anna said. "It would be really good because you never know when you're going to need to use it."

Estimating they've been friends for almost eight years, both Bree and Anna said they enjoy swimming, roller-skating, hockey and going over to friends' houses.

Anna's mother, troop leader Kristine Erickson of West St. Paul, has been a first aid instructor with the American Red Cross for 12 years. She emphasizes emergency preparedness and first aid training for her troop to learn.



Bree Osborne (right), 8, of West St. Paul used her Girl Scout training to perform the Heimlich maneuver and save fellow Scout Anna Erickson, 9, when she started choking during a dinner outing with their troop. (SCOTT THEISEN • SUN NEWSPAPERS)

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She didn't expect that what she's been teaching would help her daughter. "Now when I teach, this will be even closer to my heart," she said.

"I'm just so proud of both of them," Erickson said. She said she was glad that neither of the girls panicked and that Bree was able to remain calm and remember her training. "She was calmer than some of the parents," she said.

The troop learned the first aid skills a year ago and went through the training two months ago, Erickson said. "Keeping the kids up with their first aid is so important as a Girl Scout."

Anna was so purple, she said it was obvious that she had been choking for a while before Bree helped her. "She wasn't breathing for at least 40 seconds for her to be that purple."

"Bree was like, 'it wasn't a big deal,' but in reality it was," Erickson said. "As an adult, it was a big deal. That ice cube that got stuck was huge and it wasn't melting anytime fast."

Erickson encouraged people to keep up their first aid skills and for parents to keep their daughters in Girl Scouts where they are able to learn these skills. "I think the girls learning what they've learned in the troop is such a positive thing."

Bree will receive a medal for her actions at Scout Sunday Feb 3.

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