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Quick-thinking teen uses Heimlich training to save toddler brother's life

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By Jennifer Smola

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NEWARK — Years ago, doctors told Lisa Grove to keep her pregnancy quiet.

"They said, 'You're not going to be able to carry him,'" the Newark mother recalled recently. When Grove did deliver her son, the umbilical cord was wrapped around his neck and he wasn't breathing.

"They told us to take him home and love him, but they said he would have no quality of life," Grove said.

Now, more than 15 years later, Grove's son, Josiah, has not only defied the doctors' expectations by living a full and healthy life, he recently helped save another.

Josiah rushed to the rescue two weeks ago when his year-and-a-half-old brother, Ezra, began choking on a banana at the Groves' home.

Josiah's older sister, Rachel, 18, was holding Ezra as he ate in the family's living room when his face began to turn purple, Josiah said.

"I looked at him, and something wasn't right," Josiah said.

He scooped up his brother, ran him into the kitchen, flipped him over and began performing the Heimlich maneuver. Using a version of the maneuver intended for babies, Josiah began striking Ezra's back between his shoulder blades until he dislodged the piece of banana from his throat.

Ezra probably would have choked to death if Josiah hadn't swooped in, said Lisa Grove, who'd been in the bathroom washing her hair at the time.

"I came running in, and at that point he already had Ezra upside down," Lisa Grove said. "I was just in shock."

Josiah recently learned the Heimlich procedure during first-aid training with his faith-based outdoor adventure and Christian leadership program, Trail Life USA, which meets at Community Church in Newark. Josiah's troop wrapped up training for their first-aid badge in December, said troopmaster Dwight Newell.

"Of all the badges they would work on, this would be, in my opinion, the most important," Newell said. "A few weeks later, Josiah found himself in a situation where he was able to use those skills, so I'm very proud of him."

Josiah's quick thinking to save his brother's life was no surprise to Newell.

"He's very matter-of fact. He does things deliberately," Newell said. "He just takes things in stride."

For Josiah's parents, their "miracle son" is the gift who's kept on giving.

"I've always told (Josiah) since he was young: God has big plans for you," Lisa Grove said. "I always knew he was going to do something big, I just didn't know it was going to be saving his brother."

Ezra's life likely won't be the last one Josiah Grove saves. His own emergency trip to the hospital last fall after suffering a lacerated liver inspired the 15-year-old to one day become a paramedic.

But the teen shrugs off any praise for being a lifesaver.

"I did what had to be done," he said. "I'm not a hero."

<http://www.dispatch.com/news/20170313/quick-thinking-teen-uses-heimlich-training-to-save-toddler-brothers-life>