

In crisis, child made the right call
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By KATHY A. GOOLSBY

Kristy Wickliff practiced dialing 911 over and over on a paper phone last spring. So when she found her daddy convulsing on the floor of the family's Southlake mobile home in April, the 5-year-old had no problem dialing the number on a real phone.

"She told the dispatcher, 'My daddy's dying, and he's shaking. He's diabetic,'" said her father, Randy Wickliff, 40.

He was home with the flu, he said, and his illness probably caused his sugar levels to plummet. He had just headed to take a shower when Kristy heard him making "funny noises."

"He shook the whole house," said the kindergartner at Beck Elementary School in Trophy Club.

Kristy reached for the phone as soon as she saw what was happening, garnering her the first Citizen in Action award from the **E9-1-1 Institute**. The group, based in Washington, D.C., promotes education and provides support for the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus formed last year.

Kristy was to receive her award in the nation's Capitol on Tuesday and also has been recognized by Southlake's Police Department and City Council.

But Kristy, now 6, is nonplussed by all the attention. After all, she had seen her mother, Julie Wickliff, handle her father's diabetic shock episodes several times.

That's why she hung up the phone after initially talking with the dispatcher.

"I had to get his medicine," she said matter-of-factly.

Kristy pushed a chair against the kitchen counter, climbed up and retrieved her dad's glucose tablets from the cabinet. She pushed several into his mouth, then again called 911.

"She told the dispatcher, 'I gave my daddy his medicine. I think he'll be all right,'" said Mr. Wickliff, a refrigeration specialist for AmeriCold near Alliance Airport.

Greg Rohde, executive director of the E9-1-1 Institute, said it's unusual for someone as young as Kristy to handle a life-threatening emergency so calmly. She was chosen from dozens of nominees in part because she overcame what would be considered tremendous challenges even for adults.

"This young girl had the fortitude and sense of mind to know exactly what to do," Mr. Rohde said. "Kristy's very amazing. She basically saved her father's life, and what greater import can there be than saving a life?"

The paper phone Kristy used for practice came from the Primrose School of Southlake where she was a preschooler. Children there are taught life skills from age 3, said owner Nancy Cangelosi.

"If they can recognize a 9 and a 1, they can learn to call 911," she said. "Kristy just proves how smart little children are. You think they don't know much, and then they turn around and do something like this."

Knowing that Kristy was taught to dial the emergency number in preschool is encouraging to Alisa Simmons, manager of public education for Tarrant County 9-1-1 District. Ms. Simmons, who nominated Kristy for the national award, said it's important to teach young children to dial 911 so they don't panic when they need it.

"She was very calm for a young child who had just seen her daddy shaking, and she did exactly what she was supposed to do," Ms. Simmons said. "Not only did she call 911, she got his medicine. I see a lot of kids who don't even know their own addresses."

Kristy also credits her 12-year-old sister, Kandace, for teaching her how to help their father. Kandace often helps her mother when Mr. Wickliff experiences diabetes-related problems, and she felt it was important for her sister to also know what to do for him.

"I tried to teach her something about it," said Kandace. "Dad has had some [problems] when I was home, so I thought for prior knowledge she should know what to do, too."

Mr. Wickliff is grateful that his youngest daughter paid attention and that she asked to stay home that day in April. Otherwise, help would not have arrived for hours, said Mr. Wickliff, who was sitting on the porch by the time police arrived to check on him.

"I don't know how long it lasted, but it takes a while for the sugar to come back up," Mr. Wickliff said. "It happened pretty early in the day, and the doctor said brain damage usually sets in first, so I couldn't have lasted very long."

Child hailed for saving dad's life
Fort Worth Star Telegram
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By ELLENA F. MORRISON

Yellow-and-black spiders the size of an adult's fist scare 6-year-old Kristy Wickliff.

"But nothing else," said Kristy, who is being honored today for calmly dialing 911 when her father, Randy Wickliff, went into diabetic shock in April.

"I wasn't scared," said Kristy, alternating between tugging some pink ribbons on her dress and climbing onto the arm of the sofa at her Southlake home.

Heroic. A lifesaver. Unflappable. Adults heap praise on the actions of the then-5-year-old child. But Kristy, one of three nationwide recipients of the first **E9-1-1 Institute** Heroes Award, just shrugs.

The little girl with lively hazel eyes and bouncy brown hair had seen her 12-year-old sister call 911 before because of her father's illness.

"But she never got an award. Why?" she asked her father, who has had diabetes since he was about Kristy's age.

People like Kristy demonstrate the importance of the 911 system, said Gregory Rohde, executive director of the **E9-1-1 Institute**, a nonprofit group that provides administrative and educational support for the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus.

The bipartisan caucus works to enhance 911 systems and increase funding for such efforts. It was established last year by Sens. Conrad Burns, R-Mont., and Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., and Reps. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif., and John Shimkus, R-Ill.

"We want to remind ourselves that lives are being saved every day because of our 911 system," Rohde said. "We really want to celebrate this fact."

Last April, Kristy stayed home with her father, who had the flu. He was unable to keep food down, and his blood sugar plummeted, causing him to collapse in the bathroom.

"You made so much noise. You shook the whole house," Kristy told her father, who doesn't remember much of the day.

Kristy called 911, telling the operator, "My dad is dying."

She pushed a dining room chair to the kitchen cabinet where her father keeps his glucose tablets.

Wrestling the bottle open, she gave him about three tablets, which saved his life, police

later said.

"I start thinking about it, and I start crying," said Randy Wickliff, who was already regaining consciousness when police arrived.

Monday, Kristy played with the orange-flavored tablets while cartoon characters sang about helping others on the television.

"We tell him to get different flavors, but he doesn't. I can see the sugar," said Kristy, staring at the tablet for a second before moving on to the next question for her dad. "What happens if you get too much sugar?"

With a modesty many adults try unsuccessfully to imitate, Kristy denies she did anything requiring much talent or intelligence.

"There is a girl in my class who is smarter," she said.

Nationwide, 200 million calls are made to 911 a year. Kristy was chosen for the award out of 40 nominees. She and her family flew to Washington, D.C., today to take part in the awards.

Of course, the ceremony doesn't scare her.

"I have already seen a lot of people," Kristy said.