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Five-year-old Courtney Maxfield, center, received a commendation and a wrist watch from Lake Stevens Fire Prevention Specialist Robert Marshall last week. Courtney saved her younger brother, Zackary, left, using the Heimlich maneuver, which she saw demonstrated in her preschool class a month earlier as part of the new Risk Watch program. Her teacher, Cindy Brengman, right, is an avid proponent of Risk Watch.

Photo by Kavita Makhijani



Girl, 5, recognized for saving choking brother

Safety program taught in preschool credited

by Kavita Makhijani

Journal news editor

Last Dec. 21, 5-year-old Courtney Maxfield and her brother Zackary, 2 1/2, asked their mother if they could have a treat. Michelle Maxfield, who was on the telephone, gave them each a piece of candy. She suddenly heard Courtney say "Zackary, you will be okay. Let's go see mommy."

As Courtney was pulling Zackary toward their mother, Michelle noticed her son's face was red and he was choking. She quickly hung up the telephone and turned around. By then, Courtney was standing behind Zackary, her arms around his stomach, trying to give him the Heimlich maneuver. Just as Michelle

bent down to see why Zackary was choking, he let out a small cough along with the remaining piece of candy and began to cry. Courtney said, "Did I save his life?"

Last week, Courtney was presented with a certificate and a wrist watch for her heroism by the Lake Stevens Fire Department.

But this is no ordinary hero story.

Had Courtney's preschool not been involved in the Risk Watch program, she likely would not have known what to do.

Risk Watch is a comprehensive injury prevention curriculum developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) for students in preschool through eighth grade.

See Risk Watch on page 6

Local News

The Herald Friday, February 26, 1999

Honors given to safety classes, girl who learned lessons well

By LESLIE MORIARTY
Herald Writer

LAKE STEVENS — A safety curriculum taught in local schools has won honors for the fire district that brought it to students.

But 5-year-old Courtney Maxfield doesn't need a national association to tell her that the lessons are great.

Last December, she used what she'd learned to help save her brother's life.

Courtney and her brother Zackary, 2, were eating pieces of candy their mother Michelle Maxfield had just given them, when Courtney noticed that her brother was choking.

Courtney remembered the Heimlich maneuver her preschool teacher Cindy Brengman had shown in class about a month before, and put her arms around her brother's tummy.

Mrs. Maxfield was talking on the telephone, but heard Courtney telling her brother he would be OK. Courtney had begun to do the Heimlich maneuver when her

mother bent down to Zackary, who coughed and spit out the piece of candy.

Courtney's teacher said while Heimlich is not an official part of the Risk Watch safety lessons, she showed photos of it to her students.

"The kids knew that if they saw somebody choking they should get an adult's attention and that an adult would put their arms around their tummy. I wanted them to know that, so they wouldn't be scared if they were choking and an adult began to grab them."

Courtney was honored by Fire District 8 officials this week with certificates and a Risk Watch wrist watch for her to wear.

Then, she and her classmates got to see a new fire truck that was brought to her preschool, Sunnyside Preschool.

The program has been taught well in local classrooms, said Robert Marshall of Fire District 8.

The National Fire Protection Association recently awarded Fire District 8 the "Champion Award"

for its use of the Risk Watch safety curriculum.

The district is one of 20 in North America to receive the award, said Marshall, fire prevention specialist. The program has been used in 43 classrooms in the Lake Stevens area and Risk Watch lessons will continue for the next three years.

Risk Watch addresses eight areas that kill or injure children, including strangulation, poisonings, falls, firearms, bike and pedestrian hazards, water hazards and fire and burn injuries.

It is based on the philosophy that preventable injuries are a community problem. The curriculum creates opportunities for a variety of community safety experts to visit local classrooms to reinforce lesson plans with real-world perspectives.

In the Lake Stevens classrooms, a coalition helps sponsor the Risk Watch lessons. It includes Providence General Medical Center, Snohomish County Fire District 8, the Lake Stevens Police Department, the American Red Cross, the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office and the Washington State Patrol.

Risk Watch (Cont'd from pg. 1)

Under the direction of Robert Marshall, fire prevention specialist for the Fire Department, Lake Stevens last month received one of 20 Risk Watch Champion awards. As part of the criteria for the award, Marshall submitted Courtney's story as a Risk Watch "success incident report."

Courtney's class at Sunnyside Preschool completed the Risk Watch unit on choking the month before. Courtney's teacher, Cindy Brengman, had demonstrated the Heimlich for the class and told them that it was what a grown up would do if someone was choking on something in their mouth.

Brengman is a huge supporter of Risk Watch and says she teaches the program to empower children.

"It's important that the children themselves gain the knowledge, understanding and skills to practice and use so that they can feel confident about their own personal safety and well-being, and develop awareness and compassion for other safety as well," she said. "And that's exactly what the Risk Watch program does."

Brengman heard of the program from Marshall and began teaching it once a month to her two classes of 3- to 5-year-olds last October.

Risk Watch covers eight areas: fire safety and burn prevention; motor vehicle safety; choking, suffocation and strangulation prevention; poisoning prevention; firearm injury prevention; water safety; bicycle and pedestrian safety; and fall safety.

"The kids are very excited about the program," Brengman said. "They're interested in learning new skills."

Currently, 43 Lake Stevens classrooms in preschool through eighth grade currently receive Risk Watch lessons which will continue over the next three years. The curriculum is taught by the teachers, with support from police and fire department personnel.

Brengman said she will "most definitely" continue teaching the Risk Watch program to her classes. "Children need to be safe at all times and this gives me more tools, as well as the community support to teach them."