



Kindergartner saves the day

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It was a normal day at Compass Academy and little did students know that a hero would emerge.

Richard Tomlin was delivering flowers for Valentine's Day. He grabbed an arrangement, walked to the office, set them down and headed back to his car.

"I felt really tired," Tomlin said. "So when I got out of the school I saw a pole and thought I would rest against it outside, but I never made it there."

Tomlin collapsed in front of the school. But, as if it was meant to be, 6-year old Derek Hefner, a kindergartner, was walking down the hallway.

"I was just walking and I looked outside and saw him fall on the ground," the young hero said.

What happened next saved Tomlin's life and created a bond between a Good Samaritan and a man in need, as Derek ran to teachers and the principal.

Odessa Fire and EMS arrived after teachers had rendered aid. Tomlin only remembers bits and pieces.

"I just remember waking up with those guys (EMS crews) in my face, and I said, 'Who are you?' Derek saved my life that day," Tomlin said.

To honor Derek's heroism, OFR presented the Life Saving Award to him on Wednesday.

"Derek did a remarkable job that day and was so brave," Principal Debra Stewart said.

Dr. Sudip Bose with Medical Center Hospital, who was on hand to help present the award, agreed and said Derek serves as a great example to the community.

"Even if you have the top doctors and EMS personnel like we do here in Odessa, you still need the community involvement," Bose said. "It really is a team effort to save a life and this is a great example of that."

As Derek was recognized and presented a plaque, his classmates praised him, yelling out "good job, Derek" and "way to go, Derek," as they exchanged high-fives and hugs. He also shared a

photo with EMS and his principal, but the best moment was the reunion of Tomlin and Derek for the first time since that day.

“I have already gone through two handkerchiefs so it’s just really emotional for me,” Tomlin said, fighting back the tears of joy. “I wanted to meet him so when I heard about this ceremony, I was not going to miss it. I am just so thankful for what he did for me that day.”

Tomlin and Derek, the men of the hour, exchanged a hug, took photos together and Derek proudly exclaimed to his classmates, “I saved his life,” pointing to the man as Tomlin laughed and thanked him.

Tomlin also took time to meet his family and express his thanks saying, “You have a great son and grandson,” as the story came full circle.

Tomlin is feeling better but says he remains thankful for the response that day.

“I thank God that Derek saw me that day, there really are angels among us,” Tomlin said.

As for the hero, well he was busy being congratulated, but modestly said, when asked if he felt like a hero, “Yes, and it feels really good.”

http://www.oaoa.com/news/education/ecisd/article_5a5a452a-dbb6-11e3-8292-0017a43b2370.html