

# Saving Summer

## LIFEGUARD JOB CHANGES THE LIVES OF FELLOW STUDENTS, THE PERCEPTION ON SAFETY

by staff members **Dellilah Rivera** and **Syeda Gilani**

Being a lifeguard was more than just a job for senior Jordan Hilliard during the summer of 2014. It was an experience.

“Most people dream of growing up and doing something they love,” Hilliard said. “Each day I worked [as a lifeguard] and I had fun with what I did.”

In the spring, the school hosted a job carnival to give students more options for a job. At the job fair, opportunities to be a local lifeguard were announced. Some students took the opportunity to apply for a summer job at a pool.

“To be a lifeguard you have to go through a certification class which is usually about a week long,” Hilliard said. “While a week may not seem like a long time, it’s the eight hour days and homework you do have that train you to be your best. Most, if not all of it, is hands on.”

The lifeguard program requires a mandatory class that lasts for four days where the workers must learn life saving techniques including CPR and how to use an AED. The trainees also learn what to do when a person is in danger at the pool. It is essential that a lifeguard know how to conduct proper procedures in case of an emergency.

“They pretty much drill it into your head, and while you’re working, at least where I’m working, they have an in-service every friday to go over CPR and first aid and all the lifeguard stuff to make sure it’s still in our brains,” senior Ashley Joos said.

The program also practices how to handle life altering situations. By throwing dummies into the water, programs test how a lifeguard reacts. During training, the programs will even practice with actual people pretending to need help within the water.

“We do a lot of practices on dummies, and we also have this thing called ‘red shirts’ where they have a fake little baby that they’ll toss into the water without you seeing them to make sure you stay in the water properly,” Joos

said. “Sometimes the managers will dive in and act like a spinal victim or act as a drowning or unconscious victim to make sure we can react in time and actually apply what we’ve learned.”

The job can become highly stressful, since other’s lives become part of a lifeguard’s responsibility. In the pool, children and adults can be at risk at any time.

“The first year of my job, at first it was really stressful and kind of a big responsibility that I had to watch all these peoples’ kids and take care of all these peoples’ kids. But it’ll be my fourth year this year and now it’s become second nature and just being caring and to be responsible of the situation,” senior Hunter Lewin said.

Lifeguards on duty don’t usually deal with dangerous situations like someone drowning or severely hurting themselves at the pool on a daily basis, however, although it is rare, it can happen. When it does, it puts what the lifeguards have learned to the test.

“My first save as a lifeguard doesn’t really happen with everybody; I had to jump into the water for a little boy that was unconscious and under the water,” Joos said. “He had been under for a while. It was pretty scary because he was unconscious when I pulled him out. His mouth was swollen with water, and I had to revive him. I had to watch him go to the hospital.”

Despite being overwhelmed and scared, Joos was able to react sufficiently to the little boy in the pool. However her shaken nerves showed after the boy was revived and taken to the hospital.

“At that moment I was freaking out because I thought, ‘Oh my god, I didn’t follow everything like I was supposed to,’ but I got done what needed to be done,” Joos said.

Joos says that within her three years of working as a lifeguard, she was probably the only one who had her type of experience.

Usually lifeguards follow the basic procedure of jumping in the water and

reviving the child if needed. Since her emergency situation was different, Joos realized that book-procedure is not always what comes first.

“Instincts kick in and you’re so trained to recognize the symptoms of drowning, but it’s completely different when it actually happens,” Joos said. “Most of the time it’s little kids. You look at them and they’re so scared; their eyes are really big and they’re freaking out and your adrenaline starts pumping. It’s kind of just go with what you know. Your training, you don’t even think about it, you just kind of do it.”

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Because of the constant training that is provided by the lifeguarding program, Joos and other lifeguards are able to apply summer safety procedures to places beyond the pool.

Lewin applied his lifeguard skills during a time when he was out with his friends playing frisbee.

“My friends and I were in the parking lot and I saw that someone was looking for something. I asked them if everything was okay,” Lewin said. “They said no, we got a guy that passed out over on the courts.”

Lewin said he immediately reacted like how he had been trained during lifeguard training. He was confident and was able to handle the situation as he needed, without the worry of being uncomfortable or scared of how to procede.

“Immediately I told them ‘I’m a lifeguard.’ I ran and I saw this guy who was passed out on the ground who was laying on his side,” Lewin said. “I turned him over and checked for his pulse and saw that he didn’t have one so I had to perform CPR.”

Lewin said he did everything he could until the EMS came and got the man stable. His training had helped him to be confident in a situation for which needed to be handled in a calm and proper manner.

“It becomes second nature and they [the program] try and train you that way, really for confidence. You don’t wanna be doing something and have a serious situation where you’re second guessing yourself,” Lewin said.

Through lifeguard training programs, health science classes offered by high schools or other activities, teens are able to become aware and learn how to react to situations that can occur. Knowing such safety procedures as the heimlich maneuver and CPR come in handy when having to deal with the unexpected.

While teens studying about the medical industry and teens working as lifeguards are required to be trained in life saving procedures, students like Lewin encourage all to learn about handling a situation that involves someone’s life being in danger.

“I do think people should know about it,” Lewin said. “Definitely take a course or learn CPR, because it does happen. If you’re going to take a course from the red cross or are interested in lifeguarding, make sure you give 100 percent. Learn all of the material.”

Along with encouraging others to take safety courses, Joos also says it is imperative that everyone remembers healthy habits for summer activities, including staying hydrated.

“We have a lot of people who get heatstroke because the sun is just beating on you,” Joos said. “And a lot of people fall asleep while tanning so we have to wake people up because they’re bright red.”