

Lifesaving Awards



American Red Cross
Training Services

NOMINATE NOW

Inspiring Stories by Region

Paraprofessional Helps Two Choking Students in the Illinois Region

Walsh Elementary School was grateful to have special education paraprofessional Jen Kerrigan watching its kindergarten class this past January. In a rush to finish eating a bagel, one small child started choking on it. Rushing to his side, Jen asked if he was okay, to which he shook his head “no.” She immediately started first aid for someone who is choking, but it took several back blows and at least three abdominal thrusts before the bagel dislodged. This is the second time that Jen has saved a young child from choking, and in a surprise, both boys were present when Red Cross Executive Director Brian McDaniel awarded Jen the Certificate of Extraordinary Personal Action. Jen’s reaction is captured in this [blog post and video](#) from the Red Cross of Illinois region.



Sixth Grader Saves Two Lives in One Day in the Kansas-Oklahoma Region

It was a normal day at school for sixth-grader Davyon Johnson until he spotted one of his classmates choking on a bottle cap. The 11-year-old Muskogee Academy student jumped into action, pressing on the other boy’s stomach until the cap popped up and out. Amazingly, on that same day, Davyon also helped pull a disabled woman from a burning house, another reason why he was awarded the Red Cross Certificate of Extraordinary Personal Action. “His actions embody the values and mission of the Red Cross,” said Alice Townsend, Red Cross regional CEO for Arkansas, Kansas and Oklahoma, who presented the award to Davyon in April. Take a moment to watch this inspiring [Facebook video](#) of Davyon telling his story.



A Friend to the Rescue in the Central & South Texas Region

When fourth grader Silas Timmer saw his friend choking on a piece of candy during recess this past January, he recognized the signs and moved in to assist, performing abdominal thrusts to dislodge the candy from his friend’s airway. Said Marty McKellips, CEO of the Red Cross Central & South Texas Region, “The Certificate of Extraordinary Personal Action is given to individuals like Silas who step up in an emergency situation and help save or sustain a life. The award was commemorated in these [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) posts from the Red Cross Central Texas chapter.



Instructor Spotlight

Roy Gentzler

Each month we highlight Instructors who have taught students who have then used their lifesaving skills to save or sustain a life. This month, in keeping with our theme of those who take action when recognizing someone who is choking, we recognize Roy Gentzler, who taught a student [CPR/AED for Professional Rescuers](#). On October 2, 2021, one of Roy’s students performed abdominal thrusts to help save the life of a fellow high schooler who was choking at Lyndon Diner in York, Pennsylvania. We applaud Roy for his instruction that gave this young man the skills and confidence to act when moments mattered.



Lifesaving Awards Vault

From the vault of the Times Recorder (Zanesville, Ohio), March 22, 1958

The front page of this newspaper lauded the quick thinking of three police officers who saved a 17-month-old boy who was choking on a roll. The frightened mother ran from the restaurant to police headquarters with the infant in her arms, and three patrolmen sprang into action. Dean McElfresh provided first aid, partially dislodging the piece of bread, while Floyd Lemmon alerted the local hospital to an incoming emergency, and William Criswell started the cruiser. Certificates of Merit signed by then-President Eisenhower and Red Cross Chairman E.R. Harriman were awarded to the three patrolmen, marking the first presentation (although not the last) of the Certificate of Merit by the Red Cross chapter in Muskingum County, Ohio. The gentleman presenting the award to the officers on the photo’s right is James Tarbert, first aid instructor for the local Red Cross chapter who also provided the training to the police department.



Nominate.



Recognize.



Inspire.

Saving Lives Starts Here

If you or someone you know has used skills and knowledge learned in a Red Cross Training Services course to help save or sustain the life of another individual, visit [LifesavingAwards.org](#) to nominate them.

Want to see if you have a local hero in your area? Log on or create an account to the Red Cross Volunteer Connection portal to see our [interactive map](#).

Get Inspired!

More than 4.6 million people are trained in Red Cross programs every year. That’s millions of potential lifesavers who have confidence to take immediate action when moments matter, as it does in choking. All Red Cross [Lifeguarding](#), [First Aid](#) and [CPR/AED](#) certification courses teach the skills needed to help someone who is choking. Help make communities safer with Red Cross training!