

Little super son saves his mother's life

Training kicks in after 7-year-old sees his mum hit head and have seizure



Astrid Austin

Joel Johnson thought his mum was going to die. She was lying on the floor, unconscious and bleeding, with no one but her 7-year-old son to save her.

In a matter of seconds, the usual pre-school rush had come to an abrupt halt when Emma Jeffery fainted and hit her head on the pantry door, cutting her head and having a seizure.

"I was feeling worried because if I wasn't there, she would be dead and I wouldn't have a mum," Joel says.

But Joel knew what to do.

His training kicked in after having completed a school programme that had taught him basic first aid skills.

"I went outside and called for help five times," Joel said.

When no one responded, he went back inside and after a few tears, pulled himself together.

"I took 10 deep breaths and I went to search for mum's phone and then I found it so I called 111."

He followed the instructions of the

St John call handler and grabbed a towel to apply pressure to the wound on her head, tried to turn his mother into a recovery position and waited for the ambulance.

He recalls her waking up twice and giving him a hug – something she does not remember.

St John intensive care paramedic Grant Gray responded to the emergency on July 4 and says Joel was as "cool as a cucumber".

"Joel remained very calm and collected and gave us the information that we needed, and showed us around to his mum and provided care that she needed before we arrived."

Before the crew transported Jeffery to Hawke's Bay Hospital, they dropped Joel off at Onekawa School, calling beforehand and with the instruction for Joel to go straight to the school office to explain why he was late.

His mum couldn't be more proud of him.

"I was still quite foggy then. I remember Joel had a little bit of blood on his shirt but he was quite keen to



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Seven-year-old Joel Johnson received an ASB Super Saver Bravery Award for helping his mum, Emma Jeffery who fell, cut her head and had a seizure.

Photo / Warren Buckland

go to school and share what happened," she recalls.

"I think I was saying to him, 'oh my gosh, you're my hero'.

"Every day now, he says to me, 'don't call me Joel, mum, call me your little hero,'" Jeffery said.

She didn't know he had completed the programme early last year but says it is "amazing that he knew what to do".

Being able to save his mother has boosted his confidence, and now he hopes to play for the All Blacks and work for St John when he grows up.

His school held an assembly to acknowledge his bravery and presented him with a certificate, as well as put a notice in the school bulletin.

He says he's popular with his classmates now.

He is the "shortest and youngest" in his class and is proud that he's been able to save his mum's life.

Yesterday another assembly was held in his honour.

ASB Bank chief executive Vittoria Shortt presented him with a bravery award and a box of Lego, as Gray fitted on him a bright yellow cape.

St John director of community health services Sarah Manley said St

John receives more than 50 111 emergency calls from children every month.

"We are committed to building resilient and connected communities and recognise that children of all ages can play a significant part in improving the health and wellbeing of their communities."

Although it is still not known what caused Jeffery to faint that morning – and again a month later – she hopes to find out sometime soon.

Schools interested in the first aid teaching programme can contact St John online at www.stjohn.org.nz/ schools