

# In Less Than A Minute

One Katy Family's Story of the Day Their Son Nearly Drowned

Kimberly Holt with her son Judson Jr.

Ponds, lakes, rivers, pools and spas. All are wonderful resources for enjoying good weather. Yet, they pose potential, often overlooked dangers. Even still water areas such as bathtubs, toilets, irrigation ditches, post holes and wells offer hidden hazards to children that parents need to be keenly aware of at all times. The fact is: It can take less than 30 seconds for a child to drown and most children drown while they are being supervised. In fact, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission reports, "Nearly 80% of child drowning victims are out of their parent's sight for five minutes or less."

## An Ordinary Summer Day

Meet Katy family Kimberly and Judson Holt. On an ordinary summer day in the comfort of their own backyard, their three year old son drowned. Like many drowning victims, Judson, Jr. was not left unsupervised. He was within a few feet of his father's reach and he only looked away from his son, for a brief moment to watch his daughter, Madison, dive into their pool. When he glanced back up, Judson Jr. was gone. He assumed his son who was sitting outside

with them, had wandered around the corner of the house to where the pool toys were located or maybe into the garage. He was wrong—his little boy was submerged in the family's spa; unconscious and unable to cry for help.

## A Race for Time

Judson Sr. picked up his son's tiny body and rushed him to the next door neighbor's home. It was there, that close friend, Andrea Macmeil, a trained Nurse, began CPR on his lifeless body. Meanwhile, Kimberly was in their neighborhood passing out birthday invitations when suddenly, like a tidal wave rushing through her body, her motherly instincts told her to return home immediately. As Kimberly drove down the familiar street, the first thing she noticed was her neighbor's daughter flagging her down; frantically waving her arms. Instantly the fear set in. "I knew in my gut something terrible had happened--but nothing prepared me for what I saw."

## Answered Prayers

Kimberly watched while Andrea tried desperately for minutes to revive Judson Jr. as they waited for more help to arrive. "He was completely dead. He had no pulse and he was not breathing. In less than a minute we lost our baby. Prior to him regaining consciousness, I remember seeing Andrea working on him and hearing her plead with God, 'Please do not take this baby...please save him, Lord...please breathe life into him!'" Kimberly says that after two full sets of CPR, her baby began spitting up water and coughing.

## A Family Forever Changed

Thankfully, with the life saving help of Andrea and the assistance of the paramedics, trained LifeFlight Staff and Memorial Hermann Hospital personnel, little Judson survived the drowning and made a full recovery. Yet, the road to recovery was not an easy one emotionally. "After the accident, Judson was in evaluation for several days at the hospital, we were interviewed by Child Protective Services, to assure there was no wrong doing and even after he was released, we had to return to the hospital once a week, for two straight months to check on the fluid that remained



"August 1st is the Anniversary of the day Judson drowned and August 12th is his calendar birthday. Now, we celebrate both days! The 12<sup>th</sup> is the day that God first gave him to us and the 1st is the day he gave him back to us!"—Kimberly Holt

in his lungs," recalls Kimberly. With much appreciation she explains her families' road to healing from this event. "Our family has attended Trauma Therapy and we have met with counselors, to help us heal from the shock of almost losing Judson. Our church, Second Baptist, was also instrumental in aiding us in this recovery process. An incident like this changes you forever."

## Looking Back on the Accident

After the accident, the Holts pondered all the factors that led up to the drowning. The Holt's remembered Judson expressing interest in a thermometer in the family spa. "After the incident Judson told me, 'Mommy, I wanted to see that thing in the water,'" recalls



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Kimberly. Since their son's accident, the Holt family now works diligently to educate neighbors and family members about water safety, by holding CPR training classes in their home. Kimberly has also spoken about water safety publicly. "I now believe that the number one safety measure is for all people to be CPR certified. If Andrea had not been home that day, I can't say with certainty that our son would still be here today". Judson and his family now enjoy the water again, but Kimberly firmly states, "No child is allowed in our backyard without wearing a safety device- that is the rule. We do not deviate from it. The risk is too great!"



Today Judson Jr. is a happy, healthy 5 year old.

Judson was very lucky; many children are not as fortunate. According to the Safe Kids- a National Study of Childhood Drowning, "Drowning remains the second leading cause of injury-related death among children ages 1 to 14". For children who do survive, the consequences of near drowning can be devastating. "As many as 20 percent of near drowning survivors suffer severe, permanent neurological disabilities, the effects of which often result in long lasting psychological and emotional trauma for the child, his or her family and their community," reported the Safe Kids National Research Team.

## Reasons to Celebrate

The lessons learned from this experience have been many for the Holt family. One of them is to truly appreciate every day with your child. "August 1st is the Anniversary of the day Judson drowned and August 12th is his calendar birthday. Now, we celebrate both days! The 12th is the day that God first gave him to us and the 1st is the day he gave him back to us!" Kimberly tearfully states.

## A Time for Reflection

Looking back, Kimberly tearfully states, "I now believe God wanted us to go through this terrible event so people would be called to action. I always knew that God had a plan for Judson's life-- now I see that more clearly and I realize he saved him that afternoon."

*Jennifer Counter is a freelance writer. She lives in Katy with her daughter, Lauren Aleena.*

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## How to Stay Safe

### What Parents Can Do

The American Red Cross urges families to take proper steps to decrease the likelihood of water accidents and death by drowning. "Each year approximately 5,000 drowning accidents are reported in the U.S., with a high percentage of these victims being under the age of five."

- Teach children to swim at an early age.
- Learn CPR.
- Constantly supervise kids when any kind of water is near.
- Have a rule that no child gets near the pool without wearing a safety device.
- Keep a phone near the pool.
- Purchase and invest in pool covers and pool alarms.
- Build a fence around the perimeter.
- Make sure your house door is alarmed so you can hear children heading outside.
- Keep pool water clean and clear.