



AAA AWARDS STRAWBERRY KNOLL FIFTH GRADER WITH ITS HIGHEST NATIONAL HONOR FOR SAVING THE LIFE OF SOMEONE ELSE *Award Presented In Socially Distanced Event Today at Noon*

WASHINGTON, D. C. (Friday, September 4, 2020) — As the new academic year unfolds amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic for hundreds of thousands of K-12 students across the Greater Washington region, a student in Montgomery County was presented AAA's most prestigious national award for saving the life of an unattended toddler in a busy school drop-off zone.

At noon today, September 4, the student, Cortlynn Graham, a AAA Safety Patrol, was awarded the 2020 Lifesaving Medal in a socially distancing event on the school grounds of Strawberry Knoll Elementary School in Gaithersburg, Maryland. A local hometown hero, Cortlynn Graham, is one of four students in the whole of the United States to receive the prestigious Lifesaver Award for the 2019-2020 academic school year.



On the morning of January 29, 2020, Cortlynn Graham, then a 5th grade AAA Safety Patrol at Strawberry Knoll Elementary School, was performing her duties in the parents drop off loop at the school when she observed an unattended toddler running from the exit for vehicles leaving the loop. Cortlynn left her position on the sidewalk in time to catch the toddler, just as she stepped from the curb and into the road.

Cortlynn Graham's quick action prevented the toddler from being stuck by a Dodge pickup truck. "The driver of the pickup truck, unaware of the near catastrophic situation, drove away from the scene, and has yet to be identified," explains Officer John C. Johnson with the Montgomery County Police Department. Officer

Johnson serves as the Coordinator for Districts 5 and 6 with the Montgomery County Police Department, and with the School Safety Unit. He was instrumental in nominating Cortlynn Graham for AAA's Highest AAA School Safety Patrol Award. "Cortlynn's actions exemplify the responsibility and quick thinking expected of a AAA Safety Patrol. Her actions reflect greatly on herself and are in the highest traditions of a Safety Patrol."

"Cortlynn's unselfish reactions and poise and courage under fire stopped a tragic crash from happening during the school year," said Patrick Corey, 5th grade teacher, and the AAA Safety Patrol Advisor at Strawberry Knoll Elementary School. "I credit her Patrol training for saving a life, her actions were exemplary."

Cortlynn is currently a 6th grade student enrolled at the Gaithersburg Middle School in Montgomery County, Maryland. She is the daughter of Royal Cole and Barry Graham of Gaithersburg, Maryland. In addition, to the beautifully framed Lifesaving medallion and plaque, AAA will also award Cortlynn a Visa gift card. AAA salutes the new school year by honoring students who saved the life of another. The 2019-2020 academic year was a school year like no other. A handful of area students were also designated Outstanding AAA School Safety Patroller in each of their schools for the 2019-2020 academic year. They were honored in socially distanced ceremonies by their families, and in some cases, they were hailed for their heroism in remote ceremonies. The honorees include:

2019-2020 Outstanding AAA School Safety Patroller

Aoife Cahill	Campbell Elementary School	Arlington, Virginia
Igham Hosendorf	William B Wade Elementary School	Waldorf, Maryland
Peehu Gangwani	McNair Elementary School	Herndon, Virginia
Catherine Kochenash	St. Timothy Catholic School	Chantilly, Virginia
Savonne Clark	Washington Mill Elementary School	Alexandria, Virginia
Valeria Lian Alvarado	Canterbury Woods Elementary School	Annandale, Virginia
Saron Abraham	East Silver Spring Elementary School	Silver Spring, Maryland
Ben Hinckley	St. Pius X Regional School	Bowie, Maryland
Kiera John Lewis	GE Peters Adventist School	Adelphi, Maryland

AAA also awarded each recipient of the 2019-2020 Outstanding AAA School Safety Patrol Award a Visa gift card, and a commemorative award of merit plaque via a special delivery. Some local Safety Patrols, such as Igham Hosendorf, received their awards during special family celebrations and other socially distanced ceremonies. This June, Mr. and Mrs. Gregory J. Hosendorf, and the other children, surprised Igham with the Outstanding AAA School Safety Patrol Award by using the family "minivan" as the stage, as it was parked in front of their home in Charles County. The family of Peehu Gangwani also surprised her by presenting her the AAA School Safety Patrol Award in a special family ceremony. In addition, Peehu was also saluted for her accomplishments in June, as the faculty and staff at the McNair Elementary School hosted a socially distanced end-of-year (EOY) celebration and awards ceremony for the student body.

Janine Howard, a Special Education Resource teacher at Strawberry Knoll Elementary, was an eyewitness to the heroic incident on that cool, cloudy morning of January 29. "On this morning, a mother was walking her child to school, along with two toddler-aged children. After she dropped the school aged child at the front door of the school, one of the toddlers ran ahead of her and was running toward the parking lot."

"The little girl had already ran before me before I realized what was happening. She had one foot off the curb and was about to run in front of a car that had just dropped off their child," recalled Howard who was on morning car rider drop-off duty when the incident occurred. "The car was beginning to move as Cortlynn pulled the little girl back. After Cortlynn pulled the girl back from the parking lot, the mom caught up. She thanked Cortlynn as she picked up the girl and walked away."

“If it were not for Cortlynn being on task, and alert, this could have ended much differently,” explained Ms. Howard. “I am impressed with Cortlynn’s quick thinking and quick actions that likely prevented a terrible accident. I am also impressed with her sense of responsibility and diligence at such a young age.” Before the coronavirus pandemic, on average more than 30 million kids rode to and from school with a parent every day. In some places, there were growing concerns about school drop-offs and pick-up lanes around schools. To counter this, “AAA School Safety Patrols enhance [enforcement of drop-off and pick-up procedures](#) at school by increasing safety for students and traffic flow efficiency for parents.”

“It is a signal honor to present Cortlynn Graham the 2020 AAA Lifesaving Medal Award during the 100th Anniversary of the AAA School Safety Patrol Program,” said John B. Townsend II AAA Mid-Atlantic’s Manager of Public and Government Affairs. “We are very proud of her action and her service. Cortlynn epitomizes a hometown hero and she truly exemplifies and embodies the quality of leadership and service that the AAA School Safety Patrol™ program seeks to instill in participating students.”



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