

Laura Friend

From: "Susan Fiorelli" <s.fiorelli@verizon.net>
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My son loved his Freshman year of basketball at Coppell High School last year. The coach had already told him he was the most improved player during his Freshman tryouts. He did well during the season but when Fall rolled around again, it was the beginning of his sophomore year and time to try out for the JV team.....he was so looking forward to it. Imagine the guts it took for him, a 16 year old, to tell the doctor during his basketball physical that he occasionally got dizzy on the basketball court. Certainly he knew that he would be benched, at least until it was resolved...thwarting his chances to make the JV team. But he did not care, he chose to speak up for his health. He knew something was wrong and he was not afraid to tell the doctor. Could it have been because he had heard so many recent stories of young athletes who have died suddenly on the basketball court and he didn't want to be one of those statistics? Whatever his logic, I am so proud that he spoke up. It is because he did, because the doctor listened to him and because a nurse practitioner followed through with the appropriate tests that my son has survived. Within 24 hours, he was diagnosed with a very rare congenital heart defect that restricted blood flow through his heart. Six weeks later, after successful open heart surgery, he returned to basketball. The JV team was already in place, so with the season just beginning he was grateful to be a part of the Sophomore basketball team.

Again, imagine the guts it took for him to come to me, his mom, and tell me that he still got dizzy on the basketball court....that the symptoms did not go away with the open heart surgery. There were more doctor appointments....appointment after appointment after appointment. But not one doctor stopped him, he was always cleared to play as they all believed the heart defect was corrected and his symptoms should be gone. Ignorantly, I let him play. By this time, I had joined Parent Heart Watch and was becoming more and more familiar with some of the issues associated with sudden cardiac arrest.

The PHW members quizzed me and suggested that I pursue the issue with different doctors, asking different questions. I began to get more and more nervous about him playing basketball. I was scared to death when I watched him fall on the court as he tried to take a charge, catching himself with his hand. That fright was replaced with relief when I realized it was a fracture at the growth plate of his wrist, requiring a cast, and with even greater relief as he would finish his basketball season on the bench. Recognizing that the broken wrist must have been a blessing in disguise, I followed the guidance of the PHW group and began to seek further answers with an electrophysiologist. This doctor listened to my son also and within a week he was diagnosed with a heart rhythm

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disorder. A disorder which put him at risk of Sudden Cardiac Arrest and which required further surgery to correct. Just days ago, on February 16, 2007 an abnormal electrical pathway was identified in my son's heart and the ablation procedure to correct it was successful. Once again, my son is alive and once again he will try out for the JV team of Coppell High School!

My son is alive today because of doctors who listened and the persistence of other parents who have lost their own children—parents who have vowed to take the necessary steps to assure that others do not suffer the same disastrous effects of Sudden Cardiac Arrest as they have experienced in their own life. My son's story is truly one single success story for Parent Heart Watch. Please listen to them, as I did, as they persist yet again for passage of the Texas AED Law Modernization and Heart Safe Schools Act, an act that will no doubt save more lives in the future. They persisted so I would not have to walk in their shoes and I join them now in their efforts to push for passage of this Act to make sure that AEDs are in place for Texas school kids who may not be as outspoken or as lucky as my son and who may need that AED to survive.

Please vote to pass the Texas AED Law Modernization and Heart Safe School Act.

Thanks,
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Thanks,
Susan