11-year-old boy pulls a drowning man from the bottom of a pool and saves his life

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(CNN) When Advaik Nandikotkur's mother urged him to jump into the deep end of a swimming pool to save a man who was drowning, he had some hesitation.

Advaik is 11 years old and weighs all of 80 pounds.
"He's probably too heavy for me," Advaik told his mom.

The 34-year-old man had sunk to the bottom of an indoor pool at their apartment complex in suburban St. Paul, Minnesota. He was in the deep end, about eight feet down, floating with his hands stretched out and his mouth and eyes wide open. Advaik's mother, Lalitha Mareddy, said there were at least nine men around the pool. But when she yelled for help, no one responded. They didn't know how to swim.

Advaik's father, Raghu Nandikotkur, tried to save the man by jumping in with a floating tube, but "It was pushing me up and I was unable to grab him," he said.
Then Advaik jumped in.

A flashback to a swim-class drill
In the split second before Mareddy asked her son to help, she remembered a drill from his swim class.

"I saw him go to the bottom of the pool and collect rings and come up. That just flashed in my mind," she said. "If he can go get three things while controlling his breath ..."
The fifth-grader swam down, grabbed the man's wrist and pulled him to the surface.

"Advaik understood the situation," his mother said. "There was an emergency."
On the surface of the pool, Advaik's father helped grab the man and steer him to the edge of the pool. Neighbors helped pull him from the pool, where Advaik's uncle, Suseel Kumar Nandikotkur, jumped into action.

Although he'd never taken a CPR class, Nandikotkur started pushing down on the unconscious man's chest and breathing into his mouth.
"It's based on my experience watching it in movies and in my school days," the uncle said.

After about three minutes, the man began move his eyes, then his hands. By that time, paramedics had arrived to give him oxygen and take him to a hospital. Police told CNN he's made a full recovery.

"I've never heard of a boy jumping in and saving an adult from a pool," said Eagan, Minnesota, Police Officer Aaron Machtemes. "Officers on the scene commented the man was very lucky to be alive." Advaik said he felt relieved that despite his youth he was able to help. "I just had that hope in me," he said.

A reluctant young hero
The next day, the grateful man from the pool visited the Nandikotkur family to thank them. Local television crews were there to record the meeting.
"He said thank you, and then I went to another room because I'm not really interested in that grown-up talk," said Advaik.
The man gave him a $50 Macy's gift card, but Advaik said that didn't matter so much to him. What matters, he said, is that the man is alive.

"If someone didn't save him, he could've died or gotten badly injured," said the 11-year-old. "It would be hard for his family to get through."
Advaik is back at school this week and getting a lot of attention since he's all over the local news -- something the shy boy doesn't like so much. Eagan Police also have nominated Advaik for the department's "Life Saving Award."
His mom and dad say they are very proud of their son -- and glad they gave him swimming lessons.

"That was always in our mind, that we should give him some swimming lessons, some survival skills for his own sake," said Raghu Nandikotkur, who arrived in the US from southern India with his family three years ago. The father said he, too, plans now on taking swimming lessons -- although his son is skeptical.

Advaik's mom wishes she could've learned to swim as a child.

"I love water. My father didn't allow that," Mareddy said. "In our culture, it's not a usual thing to do -- to go for swimming lessons, especially for girls."

Advaik's uncle, who performed the CPR, seemed the most impressed with his nephew's act of heroism.

"It's simply superb," he told CNN. "If he had not been there, I don't know. I'm sure it would not be a happy ending."