

Right time, right place, right training

By **BENJAMIN C. SHARP** -

Last Thursday, Tina Salazar learned CPR. On Friday, she used it to save a boy's life.

The off-duty **Wharton** police officer – still in her probationary **training** period – was only one block away when the drowning call came in.

“Everything happens for a reason,” she says.

The 7-year-old boy was not breathing when Salazar arrived at the Riverbend Apartments swimming pool last Friday evening. Apartment residents Alice Heard and Michean Thompson had pulled the unconscious youth from the water.

Salazar began chest compressions as Heard, a nurse, started the rescue breathing. **Wharton** assistant fire chief Bobby Barnett arrived just seconds later to assist with the boy's airway. Salazar had completed cardio-pulmonary resuscitation **training** at **Wharton EMS** just one day earlier.

“I was not even thinking about it,” she said of performing CPR for the first time.

“I was doing what I was trained to do.”

It's a good thing she was able to. When the ambulance arrived, the boy had a pulse.

“That helped save this kid,” said **EMS** Lt. Frank Giesie, referring to the CPR.

“It's the difference between life and death.”

The boy was reportedly in stable condition at Texas Children's Hospital on Monday. By Tuesday, he had improved even more.

“He is looking to make a full recovery,” said police Detective Joey Galloway.

The boy was one of several swimming at the 2500 Junior College Blvd. apartments on Friday evening. Police said he does not live there, but was under the supervision of a 23-year-old apartment resident.

A 13-year-old swimmer, though, was the one who noticed the youth submerged at the deep end of the pool, police said.

It's unclear how long he was underwater – and what caused him to go under in the first place.

“It does not appear to be any type of foul play, and, as far as we know, no major horseplay was going on,” Galloway said.

“It appears to be an accident.”

The apartment complex's pool is surrounded by a metal fence and has several signs posted warning swimmers that there is no lifeguard on duty.

“The apartment appears to have taken all the appropriate steps to prevent as much injury as possible,” Galloway said.

“It shows how important it is to keep a close watch on small children around water.”

Pool-side residents and off-duty officer Salazar are credited with quick, life-saving action.

A mother herself, Salazar said she acted instinctively. She downplays the praise she's received as a result.

“We were just all there at the right time,” she said.

“The main thing is that he's okay. I just wanted him to breathe.”

Paramedics, firefighters and police wheel a boy to a waiting ambulance after he nearly drowned at an apartment swimming pool.