

About Joshua's Death

Blake Collingsworth never wanted to be the person reminding people it can happen to them... That all it takes is one second, and your child can slip out of your sight. "Everybody thinks they know, but they've got to remind themselves over and over," he said. *"It's amazing, with kids, how fast it can happen."*

Collingsworth's two-and-a-half year old son, Joshua, wandered outside one Sunday evening during a family get-together at the Collingsworth home near Wilderness Ridge. His family had barely had time to realize he had slipped away when they found him floating in the backyard pool. Joshua was not breathing, and family members gave him CPR until an ambulance arrived to rush him to Bryan LGH Medical Center West. He was flown by medical helicopter to Children's Hospital in Omaha, where he died Wednesday evening, surrounded by family.

Joshua was "the happiest, prettiest little boy I've ever seen in my life," his father said. He adored his older brother, Connor, who turns seven this month, and Connor was very protective of Joshua. "Josh wanted to do anything his brother did," Collingsworth said. "If Connor jumped off a rock, Joshua would be climbing up that rock."

Recently, Joshua was being given intravenous antibiotics for 30 minutes every morning and every night to treat a sinus infection he'd had since November.

"But the kid never fussed about it," Collingsworth said. "He'd sit there and take his I.V. for 30 minutes and watch Sponge Bob. "He was a real trouper about it. You wouldn't have known he was sick."

Joshua was fortunate to have a large extended family with lots of cousins the same age. One set of grandparents live next door and the other pair live two blocks away. Family had been over at the house swimming on Sunday, Collingsworth said. Everyone had just gotten out of the pool and gone inside to eat when they noticed Joshua wasn't there. Collingsworth, who was upstairs in his home office, heard his wife, Kathy, call to him to ask if he'd seen Joshua, he recalled. Seconds later, "I heard her scream and all hell broke loose," he said.

When the family first decided to put in a pool, Collingsworth didn't spare any expense on safety, he said. He always made sure the pool was covered and the gate was shut when no one was swimming. "I felt like we had taken every precaution we could take," he said. More people had been on their way over to swim, and Collingsworth, who was inside, didn't realize everyone had gotten out of the pool, he said. Joshua always wore a life preserver around the pool, and he was not likely to jump in or be a daredevil, his father said. "He got too close and slipped in, is the only thing I can think of," he said.

There are so many what-ifs, but that's not important, Collingsworth said. "It's not a question of who didn't shut the door... there's so many shoulda-coulda-wouldas," he said. "When they say it only takes a minute, they're not lying."

When Joshua was admitted to the intensive care unit at Children's Hospital, it was already pretty bleak. His brain had been deprived of oxygen for too long and could not keep his lungs working without a ventilator. He was in a sleeping coma, so he wasn't in any pain, but his brain was severely damaged. Collingsworth said he wanted to emphasize the excellence and supportiveness of the staff at Children's Hospital during Joshua's time there. "There were 30 people in the ICU, but they totally understood our situation," he said. "The doctor actually took the time to talk to everybody in that room and tell all 30 of us what was going on." Joshua had lost too much oxygen to be an organ donor, but they were able to use his tissues. "They said he can save up to four little children's lives," his father said.

"Everybody needs to give their kids a hug and never take their eyes off them," Collingsworth said.

The Collingsworths are setting up a fund in Joshua's name, perhaps to the Nebraska Children's Home. Joshua was adopted, and his family has always supported the nonprofit organization.

Here is the link to a beautiful tribute to Joshua Collingsworth. The Collingsworths are taking a terrible tragedy and making it their mission to raise awareness and make a difference in the world as they work with others who want to stop this senseless loss of life.

Visit Joshua's site to be truly inspired. www.joshuamemorial.org