



A BOY'S

# PASSION TO SAVE LIVES



# He wants you to know CPR – call, push, and respond.

By Danielle Douglass

Photo by Earl Yoshii

**T**welve-year old Brycen Go has a simple vision of his future. He explains he'd be content living in a one-bedroom apartment with enough food to eat and a job with emergency medical services (EMS).

He notes that although EMS workers get paid a lot, he would honestly do it for free. To him, wealth comes from the ability to save lives.

"Saving a life far outweighs money," says the Jarrett Middle School seventh grader, Boy Scout, and certified American Heart Association (AHA) CPR/AED instructor.

In 2012, Brycen earned his AHA certification and became one of the youngest instructors in the state. Since then, he's taught more than 10,000 people how to do hands-only CPR and use automated external defibrillators (AEDs). He volunteers with the Hawaii Heart Foundation (HHF), a nonprofit organization, which is solely volunteer-run. The mission of HHF is to improve cardiac arrest survival rates in Hawai'i.

Toward this goal, HHF teaches free CPR/AED training classes to businesses, students, and community organizations throughout the state. The classes include an educational briefing and hands-on practice on adult- and infant-sized dummies.

## The beginnings of HHF

On the day *Island Scene* caught up with Brycen, he was training about 35 teachers at Island Pacific Academy with HHF Program Director Pamela Foster. Sharon Maekawa was also there; she's the mother of Kristin Maekawa Claudy, who was the inspiration for HHF.

Claudy died in 2009 – unexpectedly and tragically – at work where she taught preschool. An autopsy revealed the cause of her death was sudden cardiac arrest. She was 28 years old.

"No one should have to die in a school," Maekawa says. She explains that HHF wants all schools to be "heart-safe" and teach CPR as part of the curriculum and make AEDs required school equipment.

## Hooked at age 10

Brycen met "Ms. Pam" about two years ago while attending a class she was teaching at Wilson Elementary School. He found it so interesting that he convinced his mom to ask Foster to teach a class for his Cub Scout den. When she arrived for the class, the fifth grader eagerly asked if he could teach with her. "Of course I said yes," says Foster.

"After that day, I was hooked!" recounts Brycen. "I believe my calling in life is to become an emergency medical technician and eventually a mobile intensive care technician. I want to be that person who comes to your rescue when you're having the worst day of your life."

Brycen is one of several youth who volunteer with the HHF. The first two child volunteers were Claudy's nephew and niece, Bailey and Kolu Chan. They were 10 and 8 years old, respectively, when they began teaching adults and children to give CPR and use AEDs.

## CPR: Call, Push, Respond

The most important thing that Brycen teaches people (ranging from young children to seniors) is



Brycen and his late grandfather, Paul Kojima, taking a glider ride.



With his parents, Tracey Kojima-Go and Russ Go, at Cars Land, California Adventure Park.



With his family and Pamela Foster at the Parent Heart Watch awards banquet.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE GO FAMILY

to call, push, and respond if someone collapses. To remember, just think C-P-R:

- **CALL** 911 for an ambulance.
- **PUSH** hard and fast on the person's chest. Tell someone to get an AED and attach it to the person who collapsed.
- By **RESPONDING**, you've increased the victim's chance of survival. Follow the AED's instructions and continue chest compressions until help arrives.

Foster says there's less than a 10 percent survival rate for those experiencing sudden cardiac arrest. But if a team of people comes together to help, it can double, triple, or even quadruple the survival rate. Chest compressions ensure that blood continues to get to the brain and an AED checks the heart's rhythm and can potentially restore it to normal.

"Doing CPR is simple and you can't hurt anyone. It's far better to do something than nothing. Call, push, respond, just do it," says Foster. "The power to save a life is in the hands of a bystander, family member, or friend."

## Sudden cardiac arrest

A sudden cardiac arrest happens when the heart stops beating normally. In the U.S., about 350,000 people die annually from it. Perhaps the scariest fact about this condition is that it can happen to anyone at any time, at any age. The American Heart Association reports that there are as many as 14,200 pediatric cardiac arrests each year.

During the class at Island Pacific Academy, Brycen told the crowd, "It takes EMS at least five minutes to arrive following a call, sometimes 10 minutes." He explains that if CPR is being done on an individual during that critical time, they'll have a much better chance of surviving.

## National and local hero

Brycen recently received the Heroes for Young Hearts Advocacy Champion award from Parent Heart Watch ([parentheartwatch.org](http://parentheartwatch.org)). This national recognition was awarded to him for commitment to raise awareness of sudden cardiac arrest in youth. His parents and Foster travelled with him in January to Scottsdale, Ariz., to accept the award.



Brycen with Sharon Maekawa (left) and Pamela Foster at the Island Pacific Academy training.



## AEDs Donated to School Athletic Departments

In 2006, HMSA donated 95 automated external defibrillators (AEDs), along with the training to use them, to the Hawaii High School Athletic Association (HHSAA). The donation, which was part of the HMSA Kaimana Awards & Scholarship Program, supplied AEDs to athletics departments of Hawai'i's public and independent schools. AEDs cost an average of \$2,000 each.

"When I found out about Brycen receiving this award, I became very emotional," says his mom, Tracey Kojima-Go. "My husband and I were so proud of him when he was nominated and selected to receive the CYD Heroes award here in the state of Hawai'i but Brycen receiving a national award in Arizona honestly left me speechless. It took a while to absorb everything as I kept thinking – he's only 12 years old!"

The award Kojima-Go is referring to was presented to Brycen last October. He received the 2014 Children and Youth Day (CYD) hero for his work in the community. At a special luncheon for CYD heroes, he was presented with the Wyland Medallion and received a proclamation from the governor and lieutenant governor.

In addition to the CYD honor, Brycen has submitted written and verbal testimony to the Hawai'i State Senate to place AEDs in all schools and sporting events. In May 2013, he crossed over to become a Boy Scout while being named an outstanding Cub Scout. He excels in school as well, where he's earned quarterly awards including "most improved" and "excellent student."

Brycen's parents often attend his classes to watch him teach. They believe that his volunteer experiences with HHF have given him the priceless gift of believing in himself and knowing that no matter how young you are, you can make a difference.

"We are so proud of Brycen – not only for his achievements, but for his empathy towards others and his desire to do whatever he can to help save lives," said Kojima-Go.

### Importance of CPR training

Maekawa says it's her hope that Hawai'i residents continue to become trained in CPR. "Learn CPR, because you can never tell who it will happen to and at what age," she urges. She has found strength in the difficulties of her life and looks forward to a well-informed public that will make deaths from sudden cardiac arrest a thing of the past.

Brycen definitely plays a big role in Maekawa's wish, contributing to every life that he and HHF touch through training sessions. Brycen is confident in his abilities and teaching and says, "I know what to do and I know I'm not going to hesitate." 