

Two SWOSU Athletic Training Program Students Credited with Saving Life

10.21.2014

Caitlin Foster

Emily Nicklas

Two students in the athletic training program at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford have been credited with saving the life of a young athlete's life.

Emily Nicklas of White Deer (TX) and Caitlin Foster of Hollis recently encountered an athlete who was experiencing anaphylactic shock, a serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death.

Nicklas and Foster were in the athletic training room at Yukon High School, assisting athletes with rehabilitation and evaluating injuries when they heard a voice behind them say "I think I need my Benadryl."

One of the certified athletic trainers, who were there, jumped up to get the medication. The two SWOSU students turned to look and saw a girl covered in welts. The certified trainer asked for the girl's EpiPen but it was located in a downstairs locker. The girl was not able to go by herself, so Nicklas accompanied her with a trainer following the pair.

Once back in the athletic training room with the EpiPen in hand, the group got the girl comfortable as the Benadryl entered her system. But, she started to get sick and asked to go to the restroom. The certified athletic trainers both said she could not go alone and asked Nicklas and Foster to accompany her since they were both females.

In route to the bathroom, the athlete briefly fainted and said that she could not see, so the SWOSU pair assisted her into the restroom. As soon as they entered the bathroom, the girl began feeling faint and began desperately sucking for air.

Foster, trying to make sure protocol was followed, opened the door to the bathroom and asked the certified athletic trainers, who were directly supervising the situation, if she could administer the EpiPen. They gave her direct orders to administer the medication. Foster proceeded with the injection into the athlete's thigh.

Immediately her breathing became easier and after a couple minutes her welts began to decrease. Nicklas began asking how she felt as Foster relayed the news to the certified athletic trainers outside the bathroom door.

In the meantime, Emergency Management Services was contacted and the first responders were soon on the scene.

They assessed vitals, and the girl's blood pressure had plummeted to a dangerously low reading. EMS had arrived about this time, and once Foster had manually confirmed the BP reading, one of the responders came into the bathroom to start an IV of fluids and medication.

Throughout the ordeal, the two students continued to communicate with the athlete to gauge her level of consciousness. After establishing the IV, the paramedics stepped out

of the room and allowed the students to help the girl before she was transported to the hospital.

Both certified athletic trainers from Yukon High School called Jessica Young, athletic training program director, and Kris Mahlock, clinical coordinator, to report what a fantastic job the SWOSU students did in handling the emergency and saving the girl's life.

"We are extremely proud of our students and the way they represented the SWOSU athletic training program," said Young.

Young said with the nationally-accredited athletic training program at SWOSU, the students have several clinical education rotations where they have the opportunity to practice hands-on skills that they learn in the classroom and lab activities. When students reach their senior year, they do a full semester of off-campus rotations with various sites that are approved through the accrediting agency. One of these rotations is with Yukon High School under the direct supervision of certified athletic trainers Leander Walker and Dain Foster, both alumni of SWOSU.

Both Nicklas and Foster said they are appreciative of Walker and Foster for their confidence in them handling the life-threatening situation and also to the education that they have received within the athletic training program at SWOSU.