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Hingham boy who saved mother's life honored at State House

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HINGHAM — In the year since he saved his mother's life, a Hingham boy has been recognized by South Shore Hospital, honored during a Celtics game in February and celebrated during a ceremony Tuesday at the State House.

Last August, Gabe Synnott, now 12, used the Heimlich maneuver to save his mother, Amee, who was choking on a carrot.

Amee Synnott's 8-year-old daughter, Nora, was sitting nearby and noticed her mother was in distress. Nora called out to Gabe, who was 11 years old at the time. Gabe ran downstairs and went right to Amee.

"I was thinking I don't know what he's going to be able to do because I had no idea he knew how to do the Heimlich," Amee Synnott said. "He came up behind me and put his hands in the position, and I put my hands over his. He gave me a couple of compressions, and probably on the third one, the carrot came back up.

"He turned around and walked away, and I had to go get him. I had to say, 'Do you realize what just happened? Where did you learn that?' I found out it was two years before at a Cub Scout safety training."

Gabe had learned the Heimlich maneuver from Cambridge firefighter Bryan O'Neil, who was a training coordinator at South Shore Hospital at the time, and was teaching Gabe's Cub Scout troop so they could earn a badge. O'Neil added the Heimlich maneuver to his lesson, thinking it was something important for people to know.

"My son must have been 9 when he learned this," Synnott said. "The fact that he was there that day and he was paying attention; the fact that Bryan was there

that day and he taught the class well. ... So many things went right, it's just crazy."

The Cub Scout training had been arranged through South Shore Hospital, and upon hearing about the story, a member of its public relations team reached out to the Celtics' "Heroes Among Us" program.

Gabe was honored during a Celtics home game on Feb. 4, and on Tuesday, the Celtics invited all honorees from the 2017-18 season to an awards ceremony at the State House.

At the ceremony, Gabe felt humbled by being around people who had done amazing things, Synnott said.

"Gabe said afterwards, 'I felt like what I did was no big deal,' but I was like, 'You all did the same thing. What you did was 10 seconds and there was some luck involved for sure, but the thing everyone there did was see there's something happening and respond in a positive way by acting,'" Synnott said.

Synnott said Gabe feels proud of what he did, but he downplays its magnitude.

"He has a sense of, 'I'm not a hero; anyone would have done what I did,'" she said. "He's like, 'It's not really that big of a deal.'"

To Synnott, however, what her son did is a very big deal.

"I tell him, 'You were 11. You saved someone's life,'" she said. "But we have our moments where we joke about it and he'll joke, 'I want a dog; I saved your life and you should get me a dog.' He does realize things could have ended a totally different way that day."