

# A heroic seven minutes by EMTS changes life of newborn, his surviving family forever

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**HIGHLAND** – In the world of a paramedic, mere seconds and split-second decisions can be the difference in life or death.

For **Todd Zobrist and Ty Barr**, Highland rescue personnel, their split-second decisions and rescue knowledge saved the life of a 3-month-old boy stuck in a car seat in Silver Lake in Highland early Thursday morning.

**Madison County Sheriff John Lakin** described Zobrist, a paramedic who dove into the water and rescued the infant, unequivocally as “a hero.”

Highland EMS was first to arrive, finding the vehicle partially submerged in the lake, approximately fifty feet from the shore in 45-degree water temperatures. Zobrist, a paramedic with Highland EMS, rushed into the lake to search the vehicle for occupants. When the call came through, Zobrist and his partner, Barr, knew this wasn’t an ordinary call.

Zobrist located an unresponsive infant male child in the passenger compartment of the vehicle. The paramedic pulled the lifeless child from the vehicle and immediately began administering cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), on the roof of the partially submerged vehicle.

The infant was revived at the scene by the paramedic and is now being cared for in a St. Louis area hospital. He is stable and expected to make a complete recovery, Lakin said late Thursday.

“It was dark out and we were able to make a quick assessment at the scene,” Zobrist said, in a description of the situation early Thursday. “From what we saw from the shore, the doors of the vehicle were in tact, so I felt we needed to swim to make an assessment.

“I took my sweatshirt, boots and socks off and swam about 75 feet to get to the driver’s side window and was able to see inside the window; that window was not intact.”

Zobrist had nothing to break any of the windows in his hands and he went in the one passage way to make an assessment. It was completely dark and cold and quickly, he saw a car seat. He then spotted hands and feet of a baby but thought it was likely a doll. He reached and realizing it was a baby’s foot, he pulled the infant out by its feet and into his arms then began CPR on the hood of the car. He said the baby was not breathing when he started CPR, but shortly after, the young child started to breathe again.

“For a split second while I was swimming out there I thought to myself that I had made a terrible decision and got myself in trouble. But I was already committed to go out

there. I am so glad now I decided to continue on to the vehicle. It was 29 degrees outside and the water temperature was 45 degrees. The water was very uncomfortable. I felt pain all over and my muscles were freezing up.

“On the hood, I realized there wasn’t an option other than me to swim back. I told myself it was a short 75 feet from the dock and there would be a warm ambulance and warm showers waiting and I took off, doing the backstroke for about 10 feet, then I touched and ran back to the shore.”

Barr’s concern in the beginning was his partner, while he tried to assist from the shore. When he saw the baby with him on the hood, his concern then was to assist both in any way he could.

“Todd was struggling on the hood of the vehicle,” Barr said. “I was worried about him making it back. Once he got back we got the baby to the other police officers in the ambulance and stabilized the baby to get it to the hospital. We did everything we were trained to do in that scenario. This is why we train, this is second nature and we had a positive outcome despite an otherwise gloomy day.”

Neither Zobrist or Barr seek the spotlight. In fact, both were gracious, but uncomfortable with all the press presence at the Highland Fire Station on Friday afternoon interviewing them.

Zobrist said he is a distance runner and said his endurance training no doubt had a big influence on why he was able to swim and maneuver to and back from the vehicle filled with water and rescue the baby.

Barr used these two words to describe what it was like to be able to save the baby from such trauma: “Unbelievable and a miracle are the two words that come to mind,” he said. “It took a lot to align for it to be the perfect situation to rescue the baby. We were already on the streets on another call and were able to be there in two or three minutes once the call came in. The stars had to align for the child to survive in that situation.”

After the interviews were winding down, Zobrist and Barr both said they were ready for things to settle down again.

Zobrist said: “I can’t wait just to go back to work and to have a sense of normalcy again.”

When Zobrist returned home Thursday after nearly a 24-hour straight shift, he hugged his wife and two children, realizing how blessed he was to make it home once again after his good deed rescuing the child’s life.

He said he and his partner were only on the scene for seven minutes, but those heroic seven minutes changed the fate and life of the child and his surviving family members forever.

