



# **Two East Alton 12-Year-Olds Save Man From Overdose**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
June 29 2023 2:35 PM



EAST ALTON - When Woodrow Peterson received a phone call from his 12-year-old stepson Bentley Mayer last Friday night, he had no idea that Mayer and his friend were about to save a life.

Mayer and Kamden Balicki, also 12, were walking home from the East Alton Ice Arena when they found a man on the sidewalk, dying from an overdose. The two boys sprang into action. Mayer called Peterson, who called 911. Their actions are likely the only reason the man is still alive.

“My son sat there with him until the paramedics arrived. Once I got to the scene, I talked to the police... said that the guy barely made it,” Peterson said. “I’m just really proud of both of them. They’ve both seen stuff that they, as youth, should not see. But it’s a growing problem here in Madison County.”

Mayer immediately recognized the [signs of an overdose](#) because he often helps Peterson pass out harm reduction kits. Peterson runs a Facebook group called [“The Backpack Bandits of East Alton, Wood River and Alton.”](#) The group connects people with rehab centers and distributes hygiene products, fentanyl test strips and Narcan to unhoused people across the region. Narcan, also known as naloxone, is a medication that can reverse opioid overdose in emergency situations.

Mayer admitted that the events on June 23 were “scary,” but he knows firsthand that distributing Narcan and helping people when they need it can go a long way.

“It’s just good to know that they won’t die,” he said. He added that anyone who sees someone in distress should “stop, make sure that they’re okay, and know .”

Balicki said that he has been thinking about the man and his loved ones. He knows that if it was someone he loved who needed help, he would want people to stop, so that’s what he and Mayer did.

“I feel like I had an impact on that man, and if I wasn’t there, it could have been a lot different for him,” Balicki said. “And I’m sure that his family or people that he loves and that love him are very, very grateful.”

Mayer said at least ten cars drove past the scene while he and Balicki waited for an ambulance.

“It truly is sad that multiple cars drove by this guy laying there dying, and no one stopped except for two 12-year-old kids,” Peterson said. “They stuck with him. They made sure that he was okay. He knew immediately to call me. That’s something that we’ve taught him over the past few years.”

The boys’ actions had a wider effect than they could have expected. Not only did the man survive, but he called emergency services for another individual who overdosed the next day. The quick thinking of Mayer and Balicki likely saved two lives in the span of 15 hours.

The boys have been acknowledged for what they did. Balicki and Mayer both hope that other people will take this as a lesson to stop and help those who are in distress. Peterson added that he is proud of the boys, who will enter eighth grade in August.

“It is honestly a bittersweet deal. I mean, I wish he wouldn’t have had to see that, but at the end of the day, I’m extremely proud of him. I’m glad that I know if my kid is somewhere and he sees someone in any type of distress like that, he’s going to make the right decision,” Peterson said. “It just makes me very proud that my son has learned from me and his mother how to handle situations like this. This is one of my proud daddy moments.”

A final piece of advice from the boys?

“Help people as much as you can. A lot of people need help,” Balicki said. “It means the world to some people. Just the smallest things can go a very long way.”

If you or a loved one is struggling with substance use, visit the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website](#) to learn about resources. For information on how to acquire and administer naloxone, click [here](#).