



2018 Russell Medal – Sarah Downs

In May 2018, a children’s swimming session was taking place at Middlemoore Pool in Exeter, UK, where Sarah Downs was on duty as a lifeguard.

Half the children were doing a swim test and the other half were getting into the shallow end of the pool. Sarah was watching the children getting in, when one young boy asked Sarah to get him arm bands as he couldn’t swim without them.

The other lifeguard on duty was watching the pool as Sarah went to find arm bands. As she was walking back around past the shallow end, a girl said, “excuse me, this boy has been under the water for a long time”. Sarah asked the girl to pull him up to the surface for her.

When Sarah picked him up, he was unconscious and a greyish-blue colour. Sarah blew her whistle and pulled the boy out of the pool.

Sarah started CPR on the boy and a teacher from the Splash Swim School came to assist her resuscitate him while the other Splash School teacher looked after the other children.

After around three rounds of compressions and rescue breaths, the boy started vomiting and crying. His pulse came back to a normal rate and he was breathing.

Sarah and the Splash School teacher stayed with him, comforting him until the ambulance came. Sarah went in the ambulance and stayed with the boy in the hospital until his mother arrived there.

Sarah Downs has been awarded the 2018 Russell Medal by RLSS Russell Medal Committee and endorsed by RLSS Board of Trustees.