When her teammate collapsed, Taylor, 13, wasn’t sure she could help. But she stepped in—and her friend survived. By Sally M. Hernandez

It was a chilly spring day in High Point, North Carolina. At practice, the girls on the Wesleyan Christian Academy softball team stamped their feet to keep warm. Taylor Bisbee, then 13, shivered as she watched Paris White, also 13, round the bases and jog back into line.

Taylor had just moved to the area and didn’t know Paris well. But that was about to change.

Suddenly, Taylor heard a commotion. Paris was on the ground, shaking, and her eyes had rolled back into her head. “I knew it was an emergency,” Taylor says.

And it was. Paris had suffered sudden cardiac arrest, a condition in which the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating. Without immediate medical care, Paris would die.

“Does anyone know CPR?” the coach called out.

Two more ran to get the school nurse, who brought an automated external defibrillator, or AED, a device that shocks the heart back into rhythm. (CPR can perform the heart’s work, but it can’t restart the heart.) The nurse used the AED to get Paris’s heart beating again.

Within minutes, an ambulance arrived. As paramedics rushed Paris to the hospital, Taylor stayed on the field with her teammates. Many were crying, hugging, and praying, but Taylor felt numb with shock.

A couple of weeks later, Taylor got some wonderful news: Because Taylor had started CPR so quickly, Paris had not suffered brain damage. (Brain damage can occur if the brain is deprived of oxygen for too long.)

Taylor cried when she found out. She and her teammates visited Paris in the hospital; the girls squeezed Paris’s hand and cried together. At that point, Paris was still unable to talk or walk, but she was going to make a full recovery.

What Would You Do?

Imagine yourself in a situation similar to Taylor’s. Say you see someone drop to the ground. The person is not breathing and does not wake up. Do you shake the person? Yell for a doctor? Wait to be told what to do?

Studies show that most of us hesitate, as Taylor initially did.

“To up to 70 percent of bystanders won’t step in,” says Dr. Dianne Atkins, an Iowa-based pediatric cardiologist and spokesperson for the American Heart Association. “Either they don’t know or think they don’t know CPR, or they’re afraid they’ll ‘do it wrong’ and hurt the person,” she says.

Yet receiving CPR as soon as possible is often a victim’s best chance for survival. This is why there is a nationwide movement to make CPR training part of school curriculum, as it is at Wesleyan.

“CPR is a life skill, like brushing your teeth,” says Mary Newman from the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation. “Everyone should know how to do it.”

Each year, more than 350,000 sudden cardiac arrests occur in the United States. If a victim receives CPR and is defibrillated within the first few minutes, the chance of survival can double or even triple.

For every minute that passes without CPR, the chance of survival drops about 10 percent.

Given that the average time for an ambulance to arrive is 10 minutes, bystanders are often the only hope a victim has. (If you don’t know CPR, you can still help by calling 911. Emergency responders will likely stay on the line and talk you through the steps.)

A New Hero

The day after Paris’s collapse was strange for Taylor. Overnight, she had gone from being the shy new girl to being called a hero. “Everyone stared at me,” she says. “A lot of people thanked me for helping their friend.”

Taylor’s actions on the softball field that day have had a profound impact on her own life too. “I feel more confident in my actions now,” says Taylor, who wants to be a nurse one day. “I know I can act under pressure in a scary situation.”

Should all kids be required to learn CPR?

1. Write your answer to the above question:

2. One piece of text evidence that supports your answer is:

3. This evidence supports your answer because: