

Woman who saved girl in pool honored

By Erin McIntyre

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Guadalupe Gomez was cleaning the lobby of the Clarion Inn that Sunday morning when she heard a little noise.

It was 5:30 a.m. and she wondered if she was just hearing things and scaring herself. It was only her second weekend working at her second job, so she was still getting used to an unfamiliar place.

She heard a faint sound, a tiny “Ah!” and as she walked past the swimming pool, she looked over and saw a small girl flailing in the water.

On Tuesday, she received recognition for saving that girl’s life and was presented with the Citizen Service Award from the Grand Junction Police Department. Gomez wiped tears away as Police Chief John Camper thanked her for saving the girl and gave her a plaque and letter detailing her heroic actions at the Law Enforcement Latin Alliance meeting.

Gomez, 45, who has lived in Grand Junction for 15 years and moved to the area for her husband’s job, had just picked up the housekeeping job at the hotel to earn extra income on the weekends. She’s trying to save money to pursue citizenship, and works during the week at Eagle Ridge nursing home.

The morning of May 7, Gomez climbed over a 3-foot wall to access the pool, jumped into the water and pulled out the 3-year-old girl. She thought of her own children, a 20-year-old son and a 17-year-old daughter, as she pulled the toddler from the pool. It’s a scene that replays in her mind often, especially when she walks past the pool at work now, and she retold it through translator Nicole Bernal Ruiz of the Hispanic Affairs Project after receiving the honor.

“Come on, baby, come on, please,” she said, checking the child’s pulse and seeing if she was breathing. She grabbed the girl’s wrist and she opened her eyes. “OK, baby, it’s OK, baby,” she said as she tried to soothe the child, whose nose was bleeding. She went to the lobby and asked the front-desk worker to call 911.

Emergency responders told Gomez that the child wouldn’t have made it if she’d been in the pool even as little as a minute longer.

No one knew which room the girl came from, until her parents called the front desk more than an hour after the incident happened. The girl had escaped their room on the second floor and made it to the pool. Camper said the toddler has been diagnosed with

autism, has a history of wandering away and showed interest in the pool the previous evening before she escaped her parents' hotel room that morning.

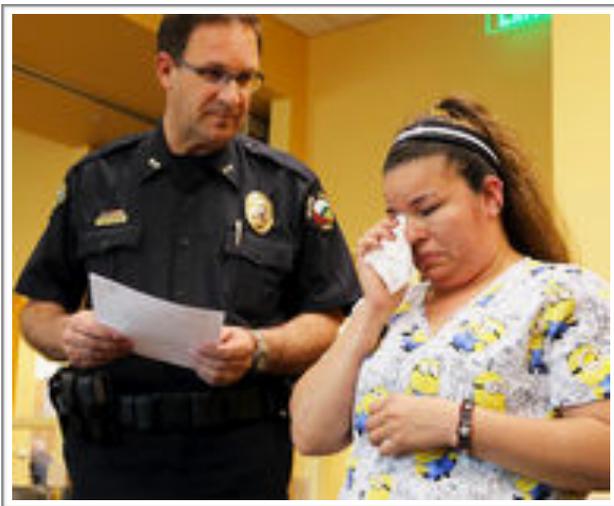
Gomez never met the girl's parents, as she went home to change her sopping wet clothes to come back and finish her shift of work. By then, they had all gone to the hospital.

Camper said Gomez's observation and quick thinking saved the child's life.

"She just did an incredible job and we're very proud to have her in our community," Camper said, noting that the accident likely would have ended in tragedy without her involvement.

Gomez said she's glad she was in the right place at the right time.

"That's why I think God gave me the intelligence to be able to jump in and save her," she said.



Grand Junction Police Chief John Camper presents the Citizen Service Award to a tearful Guadalupe Gomez, the Clarion Inn employee who saved a child who nearly drowned in the inn's pool last month. The ceremony took place Tuesday at the Mesa County Central Library.

This is a close-up of the Citizen Service Award Grand Junction Police Chief John Camper presented to Guadalupe Gomez for saving a drowning girl at the hotel where she works.

