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12 Cleveland High students honored for heroic rescue

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By REBEKAH DENN

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Cleveland High School freshman Jamall Weems was the first to shout out the news: A car had crashed and flipped over on the busy street outside the south Seattle school.

"Everybody started running," the freshman said.

They weren't running away. They headed right for the wreck.

"I mean, if you saw a car flip over, wouldn't you want to help?" junior Sopha Chan asked.

Yesterday, Weems, Chan, and 10 other Cleveland students were honored by the Seattle Police Department for their bravery and heroism in saving a mother and her baby from the upside-down Subaru wagon. The woman told students she had turned around to put a pacifier in her crying child's mouth Wednesday afternoon when she lost control and hit a parked car.

The students saw the mother, trapped upside-down, knocking for help on the window.

"A guy named Michael Iese, he jumped on top of the car, opened the door, and went inside of the car. He was trying to unhook the baby," sophomore Charles McIntosh said. Iese passed the baby to McIntosh and the group helped the mother to safety.

The students saw and smelled that the car was smoking and leaking gasoline, but didn't worry about what that might mean for their safety.

"I mean, there was a baby in the back seat. I wasn't about to leave no kid in the back seat of a car when it was smoking and stuff," freshman Mark Kaseumsouk said.

Junior Liu, an 11th-grader, said the students knew there was a danger of explosion, but felt they had to help. "We would have helped anyways if there wasn't a baby. You know, that's (still) someone in there," he said.

No one in the passing cars stopped to help, the students said. They just drove by, honking at the disruption on the street, until students stepped in to direct traffic.

Before police arrived, the teens had flipped the car right-side-up and steered it to the side of the street. Mother and baby were shaken but not hurt.

And Principal Ted Howard, who ran outside after the students, was impressed by what the police department called "heroic deeds and superior judgment in a time of crisis."

"We were just amazed," said Howard. The students were fast. They worked together. They were polite. And they took a big risk to help a stranger.

"These kids care," Howard said.

The students honored were: Chan, Iese, McIntosh, Kaseumsouk, Weems, Junior and Brian Liu, Pierre King, Nate Thomas, Daniel McElhose, Damon Richardson, and Vera Artison.

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