

Texas EMS

Serving Texas Emergency Care Professionals

**"I can't
thank them
enough."
page 26**



**Stroke Awareness
Month
page 31**

**CE: Children with
diabetes mellitus
page 34**

“I can’t thank them enough.”

How many professionals can say they make a positive difference every day? Emergency health care providers can, every time they lace up their shoes and go to work. The stories below are just a few of the thousands of EMS calls and emergency room visits that happen every day across the state. In honor of Texas EMS Week, Trauma Awareness Month and Stroke Awareness Month, we salute those who make a difference.

Christopher Santana

Date: November 23, 2007

First responders: Utopia Volunteer EMS and San Antonio AirLife

When Carolyn Jenkins first looked at her injured son, Chris, she prepared herself for the worst. Keep it together, she told herself, you’re about to watch him die.

The day riding horses had started out

well. The Jenkins extended family made an annual trip to Utopia each year the week of Thanksgiving, and as usual, they had taken a trail ride. Though Christopher, then 17, had been born with cerebral palsy and had been diagnosed with mild retardation and autism, he had experience riding horses. But when another horse took off for the stable, Chris’s horse followed. Even though Carolyn was riding behind Chris, she is still unsure whether Chris simply lost his balance or was knocked off by a branch. Jenkins watched her son fall and get dragged along the rocky Hill Country trail, his foot caught in a stirrup as the horse continued running toward the stable. When she reached him, she saw that indentions covered his skull, some as deep as an inch. She yelled for someone to call 9-1-1.

“He was trying to push himself up and blood was going everywhere. He was obviously in a state where he was going to degrade very quickly,” Jenkins says. “The huge indentation on his forehead was starting to swell.”

Utopia Volunteer EMS arrived and quickly did an assessment, made



by Kelly Harrell

more difficult because of Chris' normal communication issues. Although he can hear, Chris had used sign language until he was seven years old.

"I know it's their job, but they were so good about listening to me when I told them they couldn't do an assessment based on a normal 17-year-old," Jenkins says. "The crew was so wonderful."

With Jenkins's help, the crew was able to figure out what was going on. Utopia medics called for San Antonio AirLife and made a phone call to medical director Ann Burgardt, MD, to make sure they were doing everything they could in the field. Crews quickly packaged Chris and took him to meet the helicopter. Chris was flown to San Antonio, where doctors told the Jenkins that given the severity of Chris's injuries, he might not live. But Chris had faced seemingly insurmountable challenges since he was a baby and he proved the doctors wrong once again. A week later, the family drove Chris home to Houston. He still faced physical and occupation therapy, and he later fought an infection in some transplanted bone, but today he's back to his old self. Last year, the Jenkinses met with Utopia VEMS medics to say thanks, introduce them to Christopher and to make a \$1000 donation.

"We absolutely know that without them, Christopher would not have lived. Then I found out they're all volunteers," Jenkins says. "I cannot as a parent thank them enough for what they give up so someone like me doesn't have to give up her son."