

Lifeguards turned away help from CPR expert

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The young lifeguards who unsuccessfully tried to revive a drowning boy at Magic Mountain water park last summer were nothing more than children trying to be heroes, a retired surgical nurse told a coroner's inquest.

Judith Day testified Wednesday at an inquest into the death of 12-year-old Kyle Debow, who drowned last August 7 in the water park's wave pool.

Day was a registered nurse for 32 years, and taught CPR and first aid skills for 12 years. She was at the pool with her family when she noticed swimmers pulling the boy from the deep end.

Lifeguards rushed to provide assistance, and Day offered to help. The lifeguards refused to let her work, and performed CPR on the boy, who was later pronounced dead in hospital.

Day testified that they used the wrong techniques and ignored her expertise. "I knew the techniques and I knew what had to be done and I've done them all," she said. "But in this case it seems like they knew everything — and they knew nothing."

Day testified that the lifeguards did not extend the boy's head back far enough, and did one-handed compressions on his chest instead of two.

But Magic Mountain's general manager Mark Jelley says he saw nothing wrong with the way his staff did their job, and defends the policy of refusing help from unknown bystanders. He says the lifeguards have ultimate responsibility for safety at the pool, and cannot hand that off to anyone who shows up.

Jelley also said firefighters who took over from his staff had no complaints about their work.

The inquest continues on Thursday.