

**The Republican Journal**  
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*'I just wanted to give back'*

## Reentry resident helps rescue boy from bay

By Tanya Mitchell | May 11, 2011



(Photo by: Tanya Mitchell)

Alan Perkins

**BELFAST** — Sunday, May 8 began as an ordinary day for Alan Perkins, but took an unexpected turn around 3 p.m. when he saw a boy in the water near the footbridge.

Perkins, 40, has been a resident at the Maine Coastal Fisheries Center for two months. A few times a week, he walks from the center to Bay Area Fitness to work out, a route of nearly six miles. Part of his route usually includes the footbridge.

Perkins said the walk has provided him a couple of chances to do something nice for someone else. Saturday, May 7, Perkins and fellow MCRRC residents spotted a submerged ski outboard motor.

"I just said, 'Let's do a good deed for the day,'" Perkins recalled.

With help from the other men, Perkins pulled up the ski outboard motor and secured the watercraft so the owner could retrieve it.

Sunday, when Perkins was approaching the footbridge and its owner, and he approached the owner to explain what happened the day before. "I saw him standing on the deck of the boat to tell him about how the skiff got there," said Perkins.

Perkins' decision to remain at the footbridge to speak with the boat owner proved to be a good one, as he was presented with another chance to help someone. This time, the person in need was a 13-year-old boy who was fishing on the bridge and had fallen into the cold water.

Perkins was alerted to a problem when he saw a crowd of people gathered on the bridge and heard police and ambulances approaching.

"I heard someone say, 'He can't swim,' and I saw everyone looking in the water," said Perkins.

When Perkins drew closer, he saw a boy clinging to the pylons below. "I could see he was in a panic, and it looked like he had gone under a couple of times," he said.

Perkins, a certified diver for 17 years, said he was concerned about the youth because he was struggling with a water-logged hooded sweatshirt. Perkins thought it would not take long for hypothermia to set in, as the boy had been in the water for about 10 minutes and was shivering, and his skin was turning blue.

So Perkins climbed over the railing, removed his shoes and slid down the wall. "I grabbed the kid by the sweatshirt," Perkins said. "I just held onto him. I knew it was just a matter of time [before help arrived]."

While awaiting the rescue boat, Perkins considered getting into the water and swimming ashore with the boy of obtaining rope from a bystander to pull the youth to safety, but he didn't see anything nearby that could be

Within minutes of Perkins reaching the boy, emergency crews arrived in a rescue boat. Perkins assisted the b and the youth was whisked away for medical treatment.

Once he knew the boy was safe, Perkins said he was relieved. "I was just so worried about him," said Perkins son, I'd hope somebody would help him."

Perkins, originally from Bradford, said his work at the MCRRC centers around finding ways to give back to "It's been a good learning experience for me; it gives me a different outlook and a different way of thinking, really glad I came here."

Belfast Police Chief Jeff Trafton praised Perkins for his willingness to step up when someone needed it most show you that these guys can fit back into the community," Trafton said.

Perkins said God was looking out for the boy, because he fell in one of the few places near the bridge where pull him farther out into the bay.

Of his own actions, Perkins said, "I just wanted to give back."

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