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# THE LIFE PRESERVER

KRISTEN WATSON

AGE: 18

HOMETOWN:

BURLINGTON, CONN.

**On Alert:** Nearly three years ago, Kristen Watson was driving home from an amusement park when she came upon an accident scene. A little girl had been hit by a truck while she was delivering newspapers, and Kristen, a medical response technician in training, kept the bleeding child calm and stable until paramedics arrived. (The girl ended up being airlifted to a distant hospital and treated for head and neck injuries.) "If I see someone in trouble, I cannot stand by and watch it happen," says Kristen, now an apprentice firefighter and certified EMT for Burlington's Volunteer Fire Department. But her helping hand doesn't stop there: Her volunteer efforts—from the Special Olympics to the Boy Scouts—earned her Connecticut's Youth Spirit Award for 2000. **A Friend in Need:** More than once, Kristen's victims have been friends of hers. "I'll look into this badly damaged car to see one of my friends in excruciating pain, only to have them look up at me and be like, 'Kristen, help me,'" she says, adding, "It gets rough sometimes." **Life Support:** At first, as one of "the youngest females on the squad," says Kristen, "I saw it as a challenge. Now, I feel like I've become a part of the department. They respect me; they can trust my skills. It's been very rewarding." She credits her mother with providing vital support: "She's always behind me, telling me, 'You can do this, just stay with it.'" **How She'll Change the World:** "I hope that what I'm doing now will raise an awareness for other kids to get involved—no matter what it is," says Kristen, who's a freshman at Philadelphia University. "If everyone spent a little time giving back, the world would be a much better place."

—Reported by Ambar Espinoza

"You're thankful [when] you can help out others," says Kristen, who'll be a full-fledged firefighter by summer.