



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 4, 2017

Italian Down Syndrome Teen Hailed as Hero for Saving Drowning Girl

Following the troubling revelation that Iceland has eliminated Down syndrome individuals from its population via abortion, comes the inspiring news of Italy's latest national hero — a 17-year-old Down syndrome youth who recently rescued a 10-year-old girl from drowning.

Valerio Catoia, who has been an avid swimmer for more than a dozen years, was enjoying a day at the Sabaudia Beach in the Italian region of Lazio, along with his father and younger sister, when they heard two girls, ages ten and fourteen, crying for help. Father and son quickly dove into the water to rescue the girls, who were being dragged away from the shore to sea. While his father helped the older girl, Valerio turned his attention to the younger, and using what he learned in a first aid course, was able to keep the girl's head above water and bring her to shore.



The rescue made the news headlines throughout Italy and Valerio quickly became a national hero, with fellow Italians celebrating the teen's heroic actions in the face of his disability. Italian Minister of Sporting Luca Lotti met with Valerio (shown) and awarded him a medal as "Solidarity Champion of Italy" for his bravery. Valerio was also honored by Luca Pancalli, the president of the Italian Paralympic Committee, along with Olympic swimmer Stefano Battistelli. And former Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi publicly recognized the teen's bravery, saying that Italy should feel proud to have a citizen like him.

The international Catholic news site Aleteia.org reported that Valerio first took up swimming at age three "because his family wanted him to develop muscle strength and learn how to fend for himself in the water. Now a 17-year-old teenager, Valerio has a swimming career that has led him to the Special Olympics, much to the pride of his parents and friends. His life has been full of surprising promise, but no one ever expected that his high-level swimming abilities would one day enable him to save a girl's life and become an overnight hero in Italy."

The U.S. pro-life website LiveAction.org noted that Italian law allows abortion for any reason up to 90 days into a pregnancy and after that for the purpose of protecting a mother's health or if a pre-born child is diagnosed with a serious health condition such as Down syndrome. But a law approved by popular referendum in 1981 allows Italian doctors to refuse to perform abortions on moral grounds. "As a result, seven out of ten doctors in Italy are unwilling to abort children," reported LiveAction.



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“Since most doctors won’t commit abortions after 90 days, it means people with Down syndrome like Valerio get to do what is unthinkable in countries like Iceland. In Italy, they are allowed to be born, to live, and even to save people from drowning.”

Valerio Catoia with Italian Minister of Sporting Luca Lotti: screen-grab from [Palazzo Chigi video](#)



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