When nine-year-old Riley Plowman was asked to write a report on someone who had made an impact in her life, her mother, Ann, thought it would be about her or her husband. But Riley had another idea.

“I’m going to write about Dr. Bogason, because he saved your life!” Riley told her mom.

While Riley was writing her report, her mom was recuperating in the ICU at Mercy after undergoing a successful surgery to repair a brain aneurysm. If Ann and her husband hadn’t trusted their instincts and gone to the emergency room, the aneurysm would likely have burst and taken her life.

Ann started feeling sick during a workout. She had a headache, stiff neck and was unable to keep anything down. She felt better after receiving fluids, but after she described her headache to the ER physician as the worst she’d ever had, he ordered a CT scan, which showed bleeding in her brain, caused by an aneurysm. She was immediately transferred by ambulance to Mercy.

“It was a terrifying experience,” she says. “I was 37 years old and had two young children. I just kept saying, ‘I don’t want to die.’”

Fortunately for Ann, the surgery she needed was available at Mercy. Einar Bogason, M.D., central Iowa’s only fellowship-trained vascular neurosurgeon, had recently started performing the specialized procedure at Mercy, and is one of only a few in the state trained in coiling, or clipping, an aneurysm.

“I met Dr. Bogason the night I arrived at Mercy, and it was so reassuring,” she says. “He did an excellent job of explaining things. I could not have asked for a more pleasant doctor, and I felt very confident having him perform my surgery.”

In a procedure the next day, Dr. Bogason performed a coiling procedure by navigating a catheter through a vessel in Ann’s leg and up to the spot in her brain where the aneurysm was located. He then inserted coils into the aneurysm to prevent further bleeding. The recovery included two weeks in the ICU, to monitor her and ensure healing was progressing.

“Dr. Bogason stopped by several times each day, including the first thing in the morning and on his way home at night,” said Ann. “I would definitely recommend him and the whole Mercy ICU staff. They took excellent care of me and it was a very good experience.”

Ann’s recovery progressed on schedule and she was able to come home three days before Christmas!

Riley shared a copy of her report with Dr. Bogason, and even took a picture with him at one of Ann’s follow-up appointments. Dr. Bogason sent Riley a thank-you note and called to thank her for sending him her report.

“He is from Iceland. He kinda has an accent. He’s really nice and he saves people’s lives,” Riley wrote. “He saved my mom’s life.”