



# NCO receives Soldier's Medal for saving young boy in Afghanistan

By Staff Sgt. Adora Medina  
3rd BCT, 1st Infantry Division

Staff Sgt. Kevin P. Sanders believes that he was born to be an infantryman.

Having completed five deployments, he understands the sacrifice and bravery that accompanies combat. So when he witnessed an Afghan boy near death, his instincts immediately came into play and he didn't hesitate to free the child from the electricity entering the boy's body.

"I didn't think about it. I didn't think anything," said Sanders, from St. Ann, Mo. "What I saw was my son when I looked at this little kid, and when his body went limp I thought, 'Oh God, please do something,' and I didn't say it out loud. I was talking to myself, and that's when I lunged forward, and I grabbed the kid, and I pulled him off."

The young boy, who according to Sanders was no older than 6, had touched exposed wires from an electrical box that had been tampered with on the side of the road near where Sanders and his team of infantrymen were pulling security in October 2009.

Sanders said he heard buzzing and didn't realize that it was the sound of electricity searing the boy's skin until he thought it was too late. He remembers the boy helplessly looking at him and then going limp as if he had given up.

"I thought he was dead," Sanders said. "It all happened in the span of five seconds."

He knew he had to do something, so he acted fast with no regard for his personal safety. He pulled the boy toward him risking the chance of being electrocuted.

"I jumped toward him, and I snatched him up by the back of his neck, and I pulled him straight up to me and he was still shaking profusely," Sanders recalled. "I turned around, and I kicked my medic's door three times, and I said, 'I need a medic!' as loud as I could scream it."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Adora Medina

First Sgt. Michael Klein of Headquarters Company, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, congratulates Staff Sgt. Kevin P. Sanders, recipient of the Soldier's Medal for his heroism. The award ceremony was held April 14, 2009, at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan.

Still shaken up by the incident, he held the child in his arms as he quickly explained the situation to the medic on patrol, who acted immediately to bandage the child's burns while Sanders' team retrieved an interpreter to explain to the child's father that he needed to be taken to a nearby hospital.

Nearly six months after the incident, while on patrol, Sanders was relieved to see the young boy playing with his little sister around the same area.

For risking his life, Sanders was awarded the Soldier's Medal on April 14, 2009, at Forward Operating Base Fenty, Afghanistan, with his fellow infantrymen and the Combined Task Force-101 commander, Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Schloesser, in attendance.

"Putting me in for an award as high as this is ...," Sanders paused to think. "I'm humbled; it's almost overwhelming. I'm not used to being credited for

anything that I do."

Sanders, who is a team leader for the personal security detachment of Col. John Spitzer, the 3rd Brigade Combat Team commander, plans to continue on in his military career, explaining that it's the structure he's always needed in his life.

"They're going to have to throw me out of the military," he said jokingly. "I've been doing this job for eight years, and I wouldn't give it up for anything."

Sanders emphasized the importance of his job as a Soldier and why he chose the infantryman's path.

"I do what I do not because of the man to the right and to the left of me," Sanders said. "I do what I do not because of college, not because of the things that people see you for. I don't do it for glory, honor or integrity, and I don't do it for my country. I do it for my countrymen and women, but not so much in the sense that you would think. I do it so they won't have to."