

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Guard members present Youth Heroes Medal to Sturgis student

By Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald
SDNG Soldier and Family Support Services

STURGIS, S.D. - Members of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard traveled to Sturgis Elementary, Dec. 8, to present a Young Heroes Award to a little girl with an amazing story.

Nine-year-old Kiana Long, was hit by a train in September as she was walking home from school along the train tracks in Sturgis. The city Police Department, Meade County Sheriff's Office and Sturgis Fire and Ambulance responded to the accident.

Among the responders was Staff Sgt. David Fischer, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 216th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team) and member of the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department.

"As a father, the accident hit close to home," said Fischer. "It really makes you think about where your kids are and if they're safe."

Long was in the hospital ICU for three days and made a remarkable recovery. Her mother, Dewanda Simmons, nominated her daughter for the Young Hero Award to celebrate her courageous perseverance throughout her accident.

"A lot of times you see the bad side of what goes on at accidents," said Fischer. "It felt good to react to an accident, do a job and to see a great outcome."

The South Dakota National Guard Enlisted Association sponsors the Young Heroes program, founded in the early 1990's. The program honors children ages 3 – 18 that have displayed courage and bravery while battling a life threatening disease, illness or injury.

"It's our way of showing our appreciation and admiration for the battles that our young heroes and their families have fought and continue to fight each and every day," said Chief Master Sgt. Diane Valland, South Dakota Air National Guard and Master of Ceremonies of the award ceremony.

Soldiers and Airmen attended the short ceremony along with members of the Sturgis Police Department and Sturgis Ambulance.

Long received an official certificate and medal as a "salute" for her courage and bravery throughout the incident.

PHOTOS: High-resolution photos for this release are available upon request or at: www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard



111208-A-WA247-004: Members of the South Dakota National Guard, Sturgis Police Department and Sturgis Ambulance gather to present Kiana Long a Young Heroes Medal at Sturgis Elementary School on Dec. 8. In September, Long was hit by a train while walking home from school and spent three days in the hospital ICU before she recovered. From left to right: Chief Master Sgt. Diane Valland, Staff Sgt. Stephanie Hill, Col. Russell Limke, South Dakota Air National Guard Director of Staff, CW2 Sandi Trohkimoinen, Staff Sgt. David Fischer, Paramedic Responder Shawn Peterson and Sturgis Police Officers Nate Borg and Ben Mumm. (SDNG photo by Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald)



111208-A-WA247-002: Col. Russell Limke, South Dakota Air National Guard Director of Staff, presents a Young Heroes Medal to Kiana Long during a short ceremony at Sturgis Elementary School on Dec. 8. The award is sponsored by the South Dakota National Guard Enlisted Association to recognize children who have displayed courage and bravery while battling a life threatening disease, illness or injury. In September, Long was hit by a train while walking home from school and spent three days in the hospital ICU before she recovered. (SDNG photo by Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald)

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