



## NCO Saves Teens from Burning Vehicle

*By NCO Journal*

**T**he quick thinking of Staff Sgt. Michael Peters coupled with his Army training saved the lives of three teenagers trapped in a burning vehicle.

Peters, a trainer/mentor assigned to 2nd Battalion, 289 Field Artillery, 157th Infantry Brigade, First Army Division East, and his wife, Debra Peters, were driving home from work July 19 at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, or CAJMTTC, Ind., when they came upon a single-vehicle accident moments after it occurred.

The driver of the vehicle struck a tree head-on. A 15-year old passenger had exited the vehicle, but three other teens, ages 14, 16 and 18, were still inside.

When Peters and his wife stopped, two of the teens were pinned in the front of the vehicle, which was on fire. A third teen was unconscious in the back seat.

“We didn’t think about it; we just pulled over,” Michael Peters recalled. “Our thought was to clear the teens out before the vehicle was entirely engulfed (in flames).”

Peters immediately took charge of the situation, calling 911 and helping his wife get two of the teens out. A local police officer arrived in time to help pull the third injured teenager from the burning car. Worried about the flames, Peters moved all the teens to safety. Moments later, the vehicle was completely engulfed in flames.

Michael Peters, a recent graduate of the U.S. Army Combat Lifesavers Course, used his training to quickly assess the situation.

“I just did my A-B-C’s — airway, breathing, and circulation,” he said. “I could tell the driver had a broken femur. I kept him quiet by talking to him and let him know that help was on the way. I let him know that his buddies were being cared for by other people.”

“Staff Sergeant Peters just completed an iteration of medical training and happened to be in the right place at the right time to lend a hand,” said Maj. Arthur Rutnarak, executive officer with the 2-289th Field Artillery Battalion, 157th Infantry Brigade, First Army Division East. “The 2-289th Field Artillery Battalion is honored to have Soldiers like Staff Sergeant Peters in their ranks, and we are proud he could support our local community in a time of need.”

Humble and modest about the situation, Micheal Peters insists any other Soldier in the same situation would have reacted in the same way.

“My Army training just kicked in,” said Michael Peters. “It wasn’t more than three minutes (after the teenagers were moved away) when the entire vehicle went up in flames. I just kept thinking, ‘what if we were (driving by) minutes too early, or too late.’ I’m glad my wife and I were there to help out.”

A 15-year Army veteran, Michael Peters has worked as an emergency medical technician in the past.

Debra Peters also remembered her basic life-saving training. She served nine years in the Army before getting out, and is now an administrative assistant for the

Department of Public Works at CAJMTC.

“Once (Army training) is in you, it’s in you,” said Debra Peters. “I remembered to stay focused on the victims, stay calm and tried to get information from the teens to pass on to the first emergency responders.”

Johnson County Sherriff Doug Cox credited the Peters duo with saving three lives. He said anyone stuck in the vehicles would have perished.

Due to a head injury, one teen was air lifted to a nearby hospital where he is still hospitalized, but is in good condition. The other three were also transported to local hospitals, two with fractures and broken bones. Two of the three have been released and are recovering at home.

“I appreciate the Peters’ so much,” said Angela Egner, mother of injured teen, Austin, 15. “My son wouldn’t probably be here today if it weren’t for them. They are two angels sent by God to save those boys. I don’t think they can ever know how much I appreciate them.”

“When my parents told me what happened, I was so happy they were able to help,” said Michaela Peters, 15,

Michael and Debra’s daughter. “I am proud to call them my parents.”


Michael Peters’ military leaders are also proud of their actions.

“With a combined total of 25 years of U.S. Army service between Staff Sergeant Peters and Mrs. Peters, their actions validate the epitome of the U.S. Army Soldier,” said Col. Brandt Deck, commander of the 157th Infantry Brigade, First Army Division East. “Relying upon their training, the Peters’ reacted positively, without fear or hesitation for their own safety and saved three young teenagers. The 157th Infantry Brigade could not be more proud of Staff Sergeant Peters and Mrs. Peters.”

Trainer/mentors of the First Army Division East prepare mobilizing reserve-component forces for deployment and contingency operations by providing realistic and relevant, complex operational environment-based training reflecting the most current conditions Soldiers will face in theater.

*The Army News Service contributed to this report.*

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