

Bilingual 4th grader hailed as hero in Arizona bus crash March 6, 2010

This is a heart-warming story of a brave and selfless boy.

Thanks for choosing us tonight. I'm Rebecca Thomas.

From a deadly bus crash along Interstate 10 comes the story of what you might consider an unlikely hero. This was the scene yesterday on the I-10 near Sacaton, when a tour bus, operating illegally, crashed into a pickup truck and flipped over. Six people were killed and dozens more were hurt.

New Tonight ABC 15's Angie Holdsworth explains why paramedics who responded are now thanking an 11-year old boy.

"Incident like that, time is really crucial, [said paramedic Kenneth Leslie]."

A horrific chaotic scene in the desperate attempt to save lives, a small voice emerges from the wreckage.

"He was one of the first faces that we saw. He was up walking around, and of the people walking around he was the only one that was actually coherent", [said Leslie].

Paramedic Kenneth Leslie was one of the first to respond. He soon met 11-year old Oscar Rodriguez, a passenger who was thrown from the bus.

Rodriguez said "I just remember my legs were flying all over the place."

Oscar soon took his place alongside rescue workers, translating to help the injured.

"He stepped up, he helped to translate Spanish to English and getting patient histories, telling us what was hurting on people, um, and at the same time, not telling us about his own injuries and gurning through the pain, [said Leslie].

Oscar suffered serious injuries, as was his father who was travelling with him.

"I thank God for him making it and for him being helpful to the firemen...", [said his sister Claudia Rodriguez].

Paramedics gave him their thanks by making him an honorary Gila River firefighter.

"You did a great job buddy. You did an awesome job. Give me at the top!", said Leslie.

"With no training whatsoever, this kid remained calm, composed, and brave, and we're really inspired by that."

In a scene where so many lives were already lost, this one young boy, they say, is without question the godsend they needed at a time when hope seemed so far away.

"It's the heart of a hero", [said Leslie].

Angie Holdsworth, ABC 15 News.

An investigation is underway into the bus company that was under operation illegally.