

North St. Paul boy wins national award for rescuing friend from a river

By Andy Greder agreder@pioneerpress.com

Posted: 02/19/2012 12:01:00 AM CST

Updated: 02/19/2012 01:18:27 PM CST

A 10-year-old North St. Paul boy won a national Boy Scouts award after he rescued a friend from a Wisconsin river in 2010.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar presented Antonio Vandal with the National Certificate of Merit on Saturday. The award is given to scouts and adult leaders who performed a significant act of service. Less than 60 awards were given in 2011.

Vandal was on his first canoe trip with his father, Rocky, and some other father-son pairs when a friend's canoe capsized. Vandal used his Boy Scouts training to successfully pull the boy from the water without capsizing their own canoe.

"We are very proud of him," Rocky Vandal said. "He had the strength, confidence, courage and focus to take care of business."



North St. Paul Boy Scout Honored for River Rescue

Updated: Monday, 20 Feb 2012, 10:38 AM CST

Published : Monday, 20 Feb 2012, 10:34 AM CST

NORTH ST. PAUL, Minn. - 10-year-old Antonio Vandal of North St. Paul was honored with a national Boy Scouts award on Saturday for putting his skills to life-saving action on a Wisconsin river.

The National Certificate of Merit was presented by U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar. The award is given to scouts who perform a significant act of service.

Vandal was on a canoe trip with his dad along the Namekagon River in 2010 when a friend's canoe capsized. Vandal used his Boy Scouts training to pull the boy from the water without losing his own canoe.



A 10-year-old North Saint Paul boy got the honor of a lifetime Saturday for helping save another young life.

Antonio Vandal got the Boy Scouts National Certificate of Merit. It's the Boy Scouts' highest award.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar presented the award to the Cowern Elementary School fifth-grader Saturday afternoon for helping rescue a friend from a capsized canoe in August 2010.

But he says he's not a real hero. Vandal says he managed the rescue using techniques he learned from a scouting book.





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10-Year-Old Scout To Receive Merit Award For Heroism

January 27, 2012 10:52 PM



Reporting [Bill Hudson](#)



NORTH ST. PAUL (WCCO) – In just five years of scouting, Antonio Vandal has amassed an impressive bunch of badges. On the wall in his family’s living room, hangs a sheet of felt plastered with badges of all kind.

Still, despite all the accolades and achievements the 10-year-old has earned, the collection is nothing compared to the honor he’s about to receive.

In a soft, but determined voice, Antonio described the scene on the Namekagon River in Wisconsin while on a canoe trip in the summer of 2010.

“We came around a blind curve and we saw our friends, they’d capsized and we started paddling over to them. He said don’t worry about me, go get my son,” Antonio recalled.

The young scout and his father were canoeing with a group of five other fathers and their kids. Suddenly, a canoe in front of them was overturned in the rushing water and one of the young boys was being washed downstream. To make matters worse, he wasn’t wearing a life preserver and was obviously panicked and in distress.

Antonio and his father, Rocky, rushed to the boy’s aid who by they had drifted about 75 yards down river. Antonio remembered how to maintain a canoe’s balance as his dad leaned overboard and pulled the boy in.

Describing his actions, Antonio said, “this is what I did, but I used the paddle to keep the canoe steady and I was on my knees.”

Rocky became emotional when he recalled his brave little scout who maintained their balance during the rescue and kept them from capsizing as well.

“He was there when he was needed, he prepared, did his best and took care of business,” said Rocky.

What makes Antonio’s story even more special is that he had no previous experience in a canoe. So, just a week prior to their trip he bought a Boy Scout canoeing merit badge book to learn the basics. But little did he know that he would soon use those skills.

“It’s a special award,” said the Northern Star Council’s Kent York.

To recognize Antonio’s actions, York will be on hand as the council presents Antonio with the National Certificate of Merit. The award is presented to scouts who demonstrate a significant act of service, but it is a rarity among Webelos scouts. Out of 416,000 Webelos in scouting in 2011, only seven received the high honor.

“He (Antonio) took some training, got the merit badge book, read up on canoeing and practiced with his father. And as the case would happen he needed to put the skills into practice,” said York.

It’s a big honor for such a young scout but one who was up to the Boy Scout motto in a time of need.

“By practicing, studying and overcoming my fears,” said Antonio.





Twin Cities Cub Scout gets rare honor

9:53 PM, Jan 29, 2012 | 0 comments

BROOKLYN CENTER, Minn. - A Minnesota boy is being called a hero after helping save his friend's life during a canoe trip.

The 10-year-old was given a rare national award from the Boy Scouts on Saturday. Being a Cub Scout, he is younger than most who receive it.

Antonio Vandal and his dad Rocky Vandal of Saint Paul embarked on their first ever canoe trip in 2010. The last thing Antonio expected to catch on that trip was national recognition for saving a friend's life.

Richard Neuner, volunteer president of the [Northern Star Council of Boy Scouts](#) presented Antonio with the National Certificate of Merit in front of scout leadership at Saint Alphonsus Catholic Church in Brooklyn Center.



It's an award usually give to older Boy Scouts. Of the approximately one-point-five million Cub Scouts in the United States, Antonio was just one of seven boys to receive this award for 2011.

Neuner said Antonio was able to save his friend's life by, "fulfilling the motto of being prepared."

In 2010 when Antonio was just nine, he and dad prepared for their first ever canoe trip with friends by using the Boy Scout Canoeing Merit Badge book, practicing with a canoe in a local lake.

Antonio said they went over, "Back strokes, stabilizing and bringing a kid into the boat without swamping... hoping that we wouldn't have to use it." But they did.

Then they went canoeing on the Namekagon River near Hayward with their friends. On the second day of the trip Rocky said, "We came around this blind curve. We saw our friends' canoe had capsized."

A boy, not wearing a lifejacket, had been tossed into the rapids.

Rocky said, "You could see his hands come up and disappear."

Antonio said, "Then I said, 'Let's go Dad!' And then I'm like calling to [the boy] to keep his confidence up and that we were going to be there." Antonio continued, "We went full speed into the rapids."

According to Rocky, "I said, 'Antonio, stabilize the canoe, just like we practiced!'"

Antonio did what his dad asked. He said he, "Dropped down to my knees, stabilized it."

Rocky continued, "Whatever he did, it was successful. Because if our canoe had capsized we wouldn't have been in a position to help out the child."

The boy was bigger than Antonio so Rocky pulled the boy into the boat. Then Antonio helped paddle their canoe out of the swirling rapids.

They say the boy had bumps and bruises but was otherwise O.K.

And now Antonio has quite a trophy to hang on his wall.

Looking at his award he said, "Only seven Webelos scouts as young as I am have received the National Certificate of Merit."