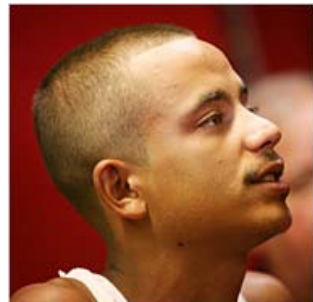


Bridge Hero Gets Offer: Paid Tuition

By ELLEN BARRY
Published: August 7, 2007

Among the dozens of wrenching accounts to come out of the collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis, the actions of 20-year-old Jeremy Hernandez were a bright spot: Trapped in a tipping school bus with 50 children, he kicked open the back door and began helping them one by one to safety.



Keith Bedford for The New York Times
Jeremy Hernandez talked to reporters last week in Minneapolis.

Within a day, news outlets across the country were repeating the story of the school bus, along with a sad footnote — that Mr. Hernandez had recently been forced to drop out of an automotive repair program because he could not afford the \$15,000 tuition.

That has changed. On Saturday, Mr. Hernandez learned that Dunwoody College of Technology had offered him a full scholarship toward a degree in applied science. He has also received offers of help from dozens of strangers across the country, said Molly Schwartz, communications director for Pillsbury United Communities, which employed him as a gym coordinator for one of its summer programs.

“We’re all very emotional about this,” Ms. Schwartz said. When she sat with Mr. Hernandez on Friday and read him

e-mail messages from across the country, she said, “His eyes are just getting bigger and bigger — ‘California. You’re kidding.’ When we told him about the Dunwoody thing his eyes just got really wide.”

Mr. Hernandez was not available to comment on the offer; Ms. Schwartz said he left town for northern [Minnesota](#) late on Friday, overwhelmed by the attention and concerned that his co-workers were being overlooked. He spent the weekend fishing. When President Bush’s staff contacted him to request a photo opportunity, “He was just, like, ‘Nope,’” she said.

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