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U.S. Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-34) joins proud parent Armando Urena to honor son Victor, named "Sailor of the Year" at ceremonies held in Washington, D.C.

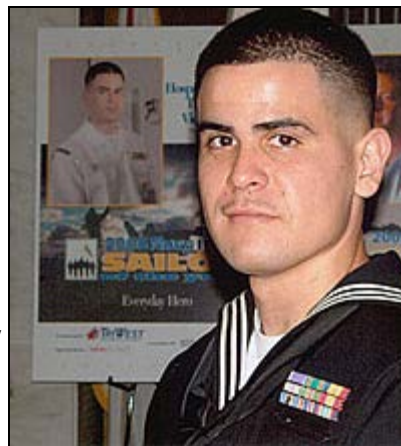


### Metro Mechanic Armando Urena Salutes Son Named "Sailor of the Year"

By Perry Williams

(August 10, 2005) Raising his kids while working at Metro, Mechanic Armando Urena of Gateway Division 10 would never in his wildest dreams, have imagined that his son, Victor Urena, would one day be named "2005 Navy Times Sailor of the Year."

Hospital Corpsman Third Class Victor Urena was one of only five enlisted service members-one from each military service-to be honored by Navy Times and three other independent newspapers published weekly for members of the military. The 2005 selectees were featured in a special four-color insert in all four newspapers.



Victor Urena, the Navy's "Everyday Hero."

Petty Officer Victor Urena was honored by Navy Times for a heroic act of saving lives when his Marine combat patrol was ambushed.

"I still remember it like it was yesterday. April 6<sup>th</sup> 2004 was the first time I saw the trauma of Iraq firsthand," recalls Victor. One of the armored vehicles in the patrol unit was hit leaving some of the Marines trapped. "I didn't have time to get scared or freeze. I immediately jumped into the tank and began pulling them out and checking for a pulse."

Victor was deeply shocked when his best friend and fellow corpsman,

Fernando Mendez, didn't survive the attack. Mendez helped Victor with many things from proper weight -lifting techniques to advice on how to approach women who intimidated him.

"Mendez was like a big brother and, after he passed, I consoled myself by sleeping in his bunk every night and running my finger across the tape labeling his bunk," says Victor.

### **'Staying Grounded'**

Victor says he is constantly asked about his feelings after receiving the Navy Times award. "I'm not saying this award was given because I was superman, I was just doing my job."

"Growing up in Downey, joining the military was the furthest thing from my mind," he says. "I would have never thought a young 20 year old like me would be chosen to receive this honor."

### **'Breaking the news'**

When Victor told his parents that he was going to join the military, they didn't have a positive reaction.

"When watching the news all you hear about and see is the war and Iraq and the time Victor decided to enter, we were in the heat of the moment," says Armando Urena. "Regardless of me not liking it, Victor is my son and I had no choice but to support his decision."

Once on Navy active duty, Victor had begun adjusting to his military lifestyle when he received the news that he would be going to Iraq. "I actually shed a tear, because all I could think was that this is the last place I wanted to be assigned."

He began preparing himself mentally to tell his parents he was shipping out for Iraq as a hospital corpsman assigned to a Marine Corps unit.

"When he came home, opened the trunk with his supplies, I knew at the moment my son going to Iraq was a reality," says Urena.



From left, U.S. Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, left, and Navy Times publisher G.E. Howard present "Sailor of the Year" award to Victor Urena, center.

### **'Arriving Home'**

When he returned from Iraq and was selected as "Sailor Of The Year,"

Victor was invited to Washington, D.C., where he was honored alongside the others chosen as their military branch member of the year but he refuses to take all the credit and reminds people of his parents' support.

"My dad is and has always been a hardworking guy," he says. " He tells us that we can't just sit. I've learned from him to always be professional and act like you're enjoying work, because that's how things get accomplished."

### **'Back to Business'**

Corpsman Urena chuckles every time he says even though he is "Sailor of the Year," he is still a kid at heart.

Some of the things he is planning to do in the near future are earning a degree in business and working in the Navy Recruiting Center in his hometown.

"Iraq was definitely a life and learning experience that I will never forget," says Corpsman Urena. "I plan on using what I learned there to give back to the community in any way possible."

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