

Toyota Donates RAV4 Hybrid to Gulf War Veteran, FEMA Hero

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NEW YORK, April 2, 2018—Edwin Sanchez has lived a life of service: first as a 19-year-old artilleryman during Operation Desert Storm, in which he engaged the Iraqi Republican Guard; then as a rookie firefighter called to action on September 11, 2001, filling in for fallen comrades during a 48-hour emergency shift; and later as first responder in disaster-struck places like Puerto Rico and the Hurricane Sandy-battered shores of New York.

But his proudest moment came in Haiti, following the 2010 earthquake that took about 100,000 lives. The death toll might have been higher were it not for Sanchez, stationed in Port-au-Prince as a first responder and search specialist with FEMA's Urban Search and Rescue Task Force from New York. As the sun set one evening, Sanchez approached a collapsed building, under which two siblings, 8 and 10, had been trapped for six days. Sanchez and his team spent five moonlit hours boring through steel and concrete, and scooping out dirt with their hands. When the children were finally hoisted to safety, the moment of jubilation was captured in an iconic [photo](#) that ran on the cover of the New York Post.

On Saturday, March 31, Toyota and the New York International Auto Show joined forces to celebrate Sanchez by presenting him with a 2018 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid. During the opening ceremony at the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center in Manhattan, Theresa L. Egan, executive deputy commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, handed the Army reservist his new keys.

Egan passed along a special message from Governor Andrew Cuomo, who remarked, "Thanks to Toyota America's generosity, we have a chance to say thank you to Sgt. Sanchez for your bravery and your commitment to our nation and to our state by presenting you and your family with a brand-new Toyota RAV4."

"Toyota strongly supports the Armed Forces and is incredibly grateful for our troops, veterans and reservists," said Jeff Buchanan, general manager for Toyota's New York sales region. "For three decades, Eddie Sanchez has devoted himself to serving and protecting others, and Toyota is proud to honor his heroism."

The donation was made with the help of the Toyota Veterans Association, which provides advocacy and support for Toyota veterans and active military servicemen and women by educating Toyota associates on the many important contributions and sacrifices made by veterans.

Sanchez, 48, is now an E7 first class sergeant with the Army Reserve's 404th Civil Affairs (Airborne) out of Fort Dix, New Jersey, and a firefighter for FDNY Rescue 4, covering Queens. His rescue is responsible for uniquely dangerous jobs: firefighters trapped in buildings, collapsed cranes, and people trapped under trains, for example.

Sanchez was joined at the ceremony by his family and colleagues from his firehouse. The lifelong Queens resident says the RAV4 Hybrid will replace his current car, which has 200,000 miles on it. In addition to using the RAV4 Hybrid for his long trips to Fort Dix, Sanchez will rely on it for several lacrosse tournaments across the region to support his 16-year-old son, Christian James (named after two firefighters who died on 9/11), who hopes to land a Division 1 lacrosse scholarship. Sanchez also has an 11-year-old son.

"Eddie embodies the spirit of service and selflessness of America's veterans," said Eric Eversole, a vice president at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and president of Hiring Our Heroes, with whom Toyota partners to help veterans, transition service members and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities. "In recognizing Eddie, Toyota continues to support veterans and military families like the Sanchez family in an effort to bring together military and civilian communities across the United States."

The 2018 RAV4 Hybrid continues to build upon the model's 22-year reputation for comfort, style and

performance while offering a bevy of standard-issue safety technologies. The 2018 model is equipped with standard Toyota Safety Sense P (TSS-P), a new multi-feature advanced safety package that bundles Pre-Collision System with Pedestrian Detection function featuring forward collision warning and Automatic Emergency Braking; Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist function; Automatic High Beams; and Full-Speed Range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control.

The 2018 RAV4 Hybrid achieves an EPA-estimated 34 mpg city/30 mpg highway/32 mpg combined and comes equipped with an Electronic On-Demand All-Wheel-Drive System with intelligence (AWD-i) as standard.