

Captain Daniel J. Burkhart

West Springfield, Massachusetts
Bronze Star

More than a quarter century of war and discontent has left Afghanistan's once well-established villages and cities derelict, dilapidated and in need of brave humanitarians. Army Captain Daniel Burkhart, on his second tour supporting the war on terror, went above and beyond his role in the Combined Security Transition Command and gave his free time to the Voluntary Community Relations Project (VCR) with an open heart and helping hand.

Burkhart always believed it was a privilege to serve as a conduit through which the goodwill and generosity of the American people was able to flow to Afghanistan, improving the lives of these war-ravaged citizens. Started by an Army Chaplain, the VCR project distributes clothes and other goods to displaced refugees in and around Kabul – all donated by the American people.

Burkhart considered the time away from his loving wife and infant to be daunting. Seeing the face of his young daughter in that of every needy Afghani youngster, he knew he could not ignore them. As a part of VCR, he has helped facilitate the delivery and distribution of thousands of items to this war-torn country. These tokens of support by the American public are one of the many ways Burkhart and his fellow soldiers help the Afghan people resist the pressures of the poppy industry, or worse, acquiesce to the Taliban's insurgency.

When asked about his experience in Afghanistan, he does not tell tales of the fanatical Taliban fighters or the despicable acts of al Qaeda terrorists, but instead the hospitality and work ethic of the local populous. He reflects on the many cups of chai he has shared with refugees and villagers alike, and the many games of soccer he has played with energetic children.

While Burkhart will always remember the brown sand and desolate landscapes of Afghanistan, it is the appreciative children and the hundreds, perhaps thousands of lives he has touched with the VCR project that will always have the most prominent place in his memory.

For his year-long service in Afghanistan, Burkhart received the Bronze Star, the NATO Medal, the Afghan Campaign Medal and the Outstanding Service Medal.

