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Gift from troops cements lesson in patriotism

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By **Keith Reid**
Record Staff Writer
May 30, 2008 6:00 AM

STOCKTON - Ansel Adams Elementary School teacher Susan Skrocki stands in front of her second-grade class and, with one four-syllable word, gets their undivided attention.

"Memorial," Skrocki says while standing near a bulletin board with pictures of soldiers and a framed American flag.

"Memorial: When we remember other people," the 20 second-graders reply in unison.

Skrocki has had lessons through the majority of this school year on patriotism, teaching her students how each of them can provide support to the troops in Iraq by writing letters.

"I would write for them to stay safe," said Cidelia Marron, 7.

Skrocki had some corres-pondence over the Internet with two military officers, but an item the class would eventually get in the mail came as a shock to Skrocki. The Air Force troops mailed her an American flag, the one that is now displayed on her class bulletin board. The flag was flown on an Air Force C-130 airplane that took troops into Mosul and Baghdad on March 18.

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"I never expected it. I never expected anything," Skrocki said. "My goal was to instill a love of country and respect for soldiers in my students. And they have it. That's all I wanted."

Skrocki said the whole lesson plan began when she wrote a letter to a soldier via the Web site anysoldier.com. Every Monday, she and her class discuss what they did over the weekend. "I told them I wrote a letter to a soldier, and they said they wanted to write one, too," Skrocki said. "I thought, 'This is perfect,' because it actually fits into our second-grade curriculum standards for letter-writing."

In December, her class began writing letters to an Air Force unit at the Ali Al Salem air base in Kuwait. From her home, Skrocki sent other care items along with the letters.

Other teachers at Ansel Adams began having their students write to the soldiers as well. "I knew it was something that we could do to help our troops from home," Skrocki said. "They sent the flag, they've sent us pictures. I know it's helping."

Contact reporter Keith Reid at (209) 367-7428 or kreid @recordnet.com.

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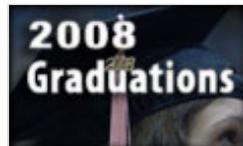


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