

NEWS Rensselaer County Legislature

Office of the Minority 270-2892

Minority Leader Ginny O'Brien 434-3347 ♦ Deputy Minority Leader Keith Hammond 283-3329
Flora Fasoldt 466-1703 ♦ Peter Grimm 273-1500 ♦ Kevin Harrington 330-9114 ♦ Brian Zweig 326-3980

June 4, 2008

Poestenkill 2nd Graders Honored for their Service in Operation: Send a Smile

TROY—Sixty-three second grade students at Poestenkill Elementary School were honored Monday, June 2, for their role in Operation: Send a Smile. The students have been sending letters accompanied by handicrafts and care packages to soldiers of “C” 1-69, 29BCT New York National Guard deployed in Afghanistan.

Donald Miller, an Air Force veteran and resident of Troy, spearheaded the project Operation: Send a Smile in cooperation with teachers and administrators at the school. Mr. Miller was also assisted by Shelly Aiken from the Youth Bureau of the New York National Guard at Camp Smith, who located a unit of soldiers serving in Afghanistan to correspond with the children.

The idea for Operation: Send a Smile was conceived when Jacob Miller, a second grade student in Poestenkill, was watching a news story about the war in Iraq with his father, Donald Miller and expressed his wish to write to the soldiers serving overseas. Mr. Miller, remembering how important letters from home were during his service in Operation Desert Shield, picked up on his son's idea and took the lead in putting the project together.

Monday, June 2, 2008 was proclaimed “Operation: Send a Smile” Day in Rensselaer County by a resolution of the County Legislature. County Legislators Ginny O'Brien, Brian Zweig, and Kevin Harrington attended the assembly on Monday to present copies of the resolution. Superintendent Dr. Jo Moccia and Principal Peter DeWitt commended the students and their teachers Patricia Breen, Lianne Thompson, and Christine Cronin. Special guest speakers were on hand to honor the students and present awards. Michael Russo, representing Congresswoman Kirsten Gillibrand, presented the students with a flag that had been flown over the U.S. Capitol to send to the soldiers in Afghanistan. National Guard Brigadeer General Michael Swezey awarded each class a special coin to honor their service, and Shelly Aiken gave each student and their teachers a medal.

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(Photo follows)

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Poestenskill Elementary School 2nd grade classes with their teachers and Brigadier General Michael Swezey at Operation: Send a Smile assembly.