

Kids' well-wishes reach troops

Grateful soldiers take photo to let students know cards arrived

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Steven Rando can't remember exactly what he wrote in the card he sent to troops serving in Iraq.

But he knows his encouraging message — whatever it was — got through.

He and some classmates at Eastgate Elementary School in Kennewick received a photo of the soldiers holding the handmade cards as a thank you.

"I thought it was pretty cool," Steven, 11, a fifth-grader, said Thursday.

The students made the cards through the school's K-Kids service club, which is sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of the Horse Heaven Hills. Participants do everything from pick up litter around the school to help with food drives.

They got the idea to send the cards because Doug Brown, a Kiwanian who helps advise the club, has a nephew in Iraq. The kids quickly got to work and even recruited classmates who aren't in the club to help create the homemade messages.

Some of the cards had hearts on them because they were made before Valentine's Day. Some of them had American flags.

That's how Fernando Ramos decorated the one he made.

"I (wrote), 'Thanks for your help. Hang in there,'" said the 11-year-old fifth-grader.

The bundle of well-wishes reached Army Capt. Matt Noyes, Brown's nephew, a few weeks ago. He snapped a picture of his troops with the cards and sent it to the Eastgate kids. They got a look at it this week.



Photo courtesy Douglas Brown

Students in the K-Kids service club at Eastgate Elementary School in Kennewick hold the Valentine's Day cards they made for soldiers in Capt. Matt Noyes' infantry unit in Iraq. Noyes is from Richland. His uncle is one of the club's advisers.



Photo courtesy Matt Noyes

Soldiers in Capt. Matt Noyes' Army combat unit in Iraq hold up Valentine's Day cards made for them by students at Eastgate Elementary School in Kennewick. Noyes is a graduate of Hanford High School.

Noyes is a 2002 graduate of Hanford High School in Richland. He's stationed at Grafenwoehr, Germany, and is on his second tour in Iraq.

The K-Kids club meets once a week during recess. Two teachers at Eastgate — Sally Funderburg and Michele Larrabee — help lead the group.

"The whole point of having

this club is so the students can develop the habit of spending their time and energy doing good things for other people," Brown said. "Even at that age, they appreciated that the soldiers are doing brave work for us. They were pretty excited about (the cards)."

Fernando spotted his in the photo Noyes took. It's one of the ones in the front decorated

in red, white and blue.

He said it felt good to know his message made a soldier smile thousands of miles away.

"The Army people, they're really helping us," Fernando said. "They deserve some support."

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