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Front Page

Class assignments sends soldiers letters from home

By **AMY A. COLLINS** Reporter

Places around Hardin County are doing their part to ensure soldiers serving their country away from home are able to receive a token of our appreciation and remembrance this holiday season.



Kountze Middle School seventh grade students participate in a special letter-writing project for members of the military. Pictured are (l-r): Teagan Dilts, Julie Theal, Chelsea Browning, and Billy Warrington as they prepare to mail their letters to local service men and women.

Mary Johnston is a technology teacher at Kountze Middle School. As a class assignment, her students were to type a letter to someone currently serving in a branch of the U.S. Military. She also gave them the option to personalize the letter with patriotic ClipArt graphics.

The assignment taught students the proper way to write a letter, but soon Johnston learned her assignment could go beyond the classroom.

Also a Navy mom, Johnston is part of a support group who receives letters from her son's squadron. Through that she learned the commander of USMC Regimental Combat Team was worried about the negative barrage of publicity his troops were receiving. When he asked for 6,000 positive emails to reassure his troops they were being supported back home, Johnston saw wonderful potential for her letter-writing assignment.



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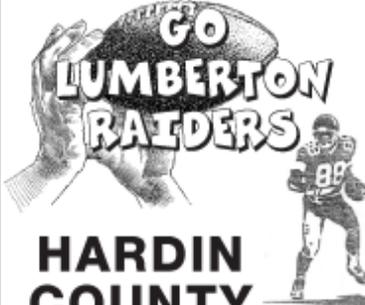
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"I got the whole seventh grade to write letters," Johnston said. "I just thought it would be a great opportunity to show our appreciation and support."

Johnston said the students were reluctant to write another letter at first, but once they learned how easy it was to properly edit their letters, they got excited with the project.

"It was really fun to do," said Lauren Kidder, age 12. "It's hard for the soldiers to get negative emails and not get a lot of positive feedback from us. We want to change that."

"It gave me a sense of pride because our school is doing something for them," said twelve-year-old student Allison Ruiz.

While most students wrote a second letter and made ClipArt designs, one student went the extra mile and sent additional letters.

After receiving her second assignment, Chelsea Browning, 13, decided to look for other places to send letters to soldiers.

"I found the Website anysoldier.com and requested addresses of several different sergeants. I'm going to send letters and Christmas cards to each base."

Johnston encourages all Hardin County citizens to participate in the project as well. Encouraging holiday emails can be forwarded to RCT-6lettersfromh@gcemnfwireaq.usmc.mil

Additional copies of the wonderful letters will be mailed C/O Operation Kids for Troops, PO Box 851980 Yukon, OK 73085 and shared at the Hardin County Courthouse to distribute to local service men and women.

The Courthouse is also hosting a soldier project in the Red Room for Hardin County Cares, who is preparing to send packages to soldiers. The Hardin County Cares staff asks for help in making sure they have as many correct names and addresses as possible.

Packages will go out on Dec. 3. To update a soldier's address, call 246-5180.

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