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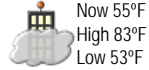
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## Touch of a student, thanks of a soldier

City  
Article Last Updated: 10/06/2007 02:58:05 AM EDT

Saturday, October 06  
City school welcomes Iraq veteran to county

By Jenn Smith

Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Yesterday was the day third-grader Lily Garrity brought tears to a master sergeant's eyes.

Earlier this week, the recently promoted Master Sgt. Cindy Williams, of Fresno, Calif., was one of more than 200 members of the 399th Combat Support Hospital to return to the United States after a 15-month deployment to Iraq. The hospital is an Army Reserve unit based in Taunton.

Since touching down, Williams has been visiting various people and groups in the state who reached out to her and her unit when they were overseas.

Yesterday, she included a stop to visit Garrity, the girl's 200 classmates, and teachers at Capeless Elementary School.

Asked how she felt to have Williams back in the States, Garrity smiled and said, "It's awesome."

Lily Garrity learned about Williams and her unit through her grandmother Laura Garrity. The grandmother had found Williams through AnySoldier.com, a Web site that allows good-willed civilians to make arrangements to send care packages and messages of support to various

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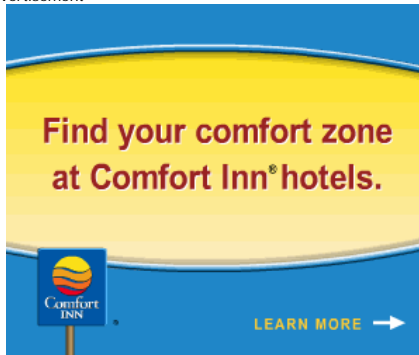
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military units.

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you get?" said the master sergeant.

She described to the youngsters how their gifts of freezable ice pops helped cool the soldiers in the 117-degree weather, how the toiletries helped them clean up, and how their cards and pictures decorated the walls and "offices" of the hospital trailers.

"You all did a beautiful job," John Peron told the students. Peron served as the school's interim principal last semester when the school was working on the project.

Williams presented Garrity's former teacher, Jean Poopor, with an American flag recently flown in the school's honor this past Sept. 11.

Garrity herself was also presented with a flag flown in her honor, as well as a certificate signed by various officials.

The third-grader said she hopes her classmates remember what they did and how they affected other people's lives.

"We learned that we can do anything we can believe in," she said.

To reach Jenn Smith: [jsmith@berkshireeagle.com](mailto:jsmith@berkshireeagle.com), (413) 496-6239.

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her family, Lily Garrity helped organize a schoolwide effort last spring. Ultimately, the school and the Garritys sent more than 10 large boxes of supplies, snacks, letters and drawings to more than 500 soldiers and patients.

A brief welcoming ceremony was held for Williams in the Capeless gymnasium, beginning with the entire school singing "God Bless America."

Afterward, Williams, who appeared moved by the welcome, talked to the young students.

"The support and generosity that you have shown the hospital — it's like Christmas every day. You know? Like that warm, fuzzy feeling that

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