

Welcome Home 180th

On Friday, March 12, 2010, 42 members of Muskegon's own 180th Transportation Company, U.S. Army Reserves, arrived home from their most recent tour in Iraq to a community-wide celebration.

In cooperation with many veterans groups, community groups, local businesses and members of the community, the American Red Cross coordinated an effort to honor those who served and their loved ones left behind.

The event was a huge success. New Red Cross volunteer, Deb Krieg was asked to coordinate the event and write a thank you to the community. Deb wrote the following message of thanks from her heart:

Letter to the Editor,

I volunteer for the American Red Cross in Muskegon and was involved in the planning and implementation of the Welcome Home Celebration held to honor returning soldiers of the 180th Transportation Company (U.S. Army Reserves Muskegon).

Because I'm relatively new to the area, I really didn't know what to expect in the way of the public's response to participate in this event. But, what I saw happening March 12th in our small town touched me to the core.

It was my job to field calls from community members who wanted to help welcome home these soldiers. Some callers wanted to simply ensure that these soldiers and their families knew that their community values all of the challenges and sacrifices they have faced on our country's behalf.

Veterans called to offer their kinship and support because they understand what challenges lie before these service members as they try to readjust to civilian life and reconnect with their families.

Parents called asking whether they could bring their children because they wanted them to see, experience and appreciate what it means to serve our country.

Boy Scout groups and the Sea Cadets felt a special connection to these returning soldiers who stand as role models for the dedicated service members they strive to become.

And, lastly, there were the callers who, like me, wanted to give our soldiers a welcome so unlike the ones our fathers experienced when they returned from the

Vietnam War. They were determined to not only right that wrong, but to make sure it will never happen again, especially on their watch!

So, thank you, dear callers, for sharing your heartfelt stories and desires to make sure OUR soldiers and their families know they are supported, loved and appreciated.

Thank you, all you veterans, who understand better than most of us what it means to sacrifice for your country. Thank you community businesses, officials and groups who donated goods and services to make this homecoming uniquely special for these soldiers and their families.

And, most of all, thank you residents of Muskegon for coming out in force—cheering and waving flags and signs along the parade route, packing the gymnasium, and demonstrating to each other and this newcomer, what a close, caring, supportive community you have created in this place called Muskegon.

I, for one, am proud to be a part of you!