



Jessica Boisclair-Daily Times

Second-graders at Blackrock Elementary in Coventry read to veterans at Thursday night's Veterans Dinner, held in honor of a late Korean War veteran.

Blackrock honors vet

Coventry elementary holds annual dinner in memory of Korea vet Cmdr. Robert Hartley

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COVENTRY — On Thursday night, Valerie Bishop's second-grade class at Blackrock Elementary School held its fifth annual Veterans Dinner. This year it was held in memory of Commander Robert Hartley.

Two students greeted each veteran at the door, some of them family members, and walked them to their seats in the cafeteria.

Each of the second-graders wore T-shirts they had made during school; the T-shirts read "We Unite, Salute, Veterans Appreciation," on the front and "We will always remember Commander Hartley," on the back.

The Veterans Dinner originated when two parents of Bishop's students were deployed overseas in Iraq. The dinner was a way to help the children through a time when their parents were not around.

Veterans from various branches of the armed forces joined the students to enjoy their dinner and performances by the students.

The students in Bishop's class were responsible for passing out dinner to the veterans at their tables. The students served those who served the country a meal consisting of salad, bread and pasta.

The 17 second-graders also gathered at the front of the room to sing several songs and read poems to the veterans in the audience.

Several students held up the individual letters "B-R-A-V-E," with explanations for each letter ranging from "A" for their "amazing patriotism" or "E" for the "energy they have shown;" letting the veterans know what they meant to the students.

Other students explained what the government, constitution and bill of rights were.

Another student said the veterans were "truly

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Blackrock honors Hartley

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amazing Americans,” and thanked them for all the sacrifices they have made.

The entire class sang to the audience various songs such as “Nifty Fifty United States,” “God Bless the USA,” and “I’m Proud to be an American,” by Lee Greenwood.

While they belted out, “and I’m proud to be an American where at least I know I’m free and I won’t forget the men who died, who gave that right to me,” the veterans watched with smiles on their faces.

Bishop said that this year’s Veterans Dinner was in memory of Commander Hartley, a member of the West Bay Korean War Veterans, Chapter 2, who recently passed away.

“We’re so happy that Mrs. Hartley could be here with her son Tom because every time that Commander Hartley was here, he so enjoyed this evening,” Bishop said to the audience. “He would come to talk to the kids, he’d talk to my class and he’d talk to the school. We’ve learned so much from him and we’ll always remember him.”



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Second-graders in Valerie Bishop’s class present a plant to Robert Hartley’s widow Thursday night.

The second-grade students presented Mrs. Hartley with a gift to “show how much Commander Hartley was loved.”

She was given a potted plant, decorated with an American flag, which had been signed by

each of the students in Mrs. Bishop’s class.

“Also, we have a special thing going into our veteran’s garden,” said Bishop. “The children made a special stone, so we’ll have a special place

for Commander Hartley in our garden, so that every time we visit the garden we’ll always think of him.” The stone was engraved with the words, “In memory of Commander Hartley.”