



Photo/Rachel Stamp

Jordan Hamilton, a student at Blackrock Elementary School in Coventry reads his essay to a group of Korean War veterans.

Remembering the forgotten war

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Special to the Times

COVENTRY — Students at Blackrock Elementary School raised over \$1,200 to support Korean War veterans.

Valerie Bishop, a teacher at Blackrock led a month-long program she called "Nickels for our Nations Heroes." Students from the entire school brought in spare change the whole month.

"The kids got into it so much," said Jennifer Graham, third grade

teacher. "They would come in every day with coins. They would get them from their jacket pockets, save them and come in with baggies full of coins. One student even came in with the change he found in the couch cushions."

Graham said that the school was a caring community of teachers and students that just wanted to show their support to the veterans.

Bishop said they decided to "adopt" the West Bay Korean War Veterans Association Chapter 2. She said the veterans have come to

the school numerous times, telling their stories to students and educating them about the Korean War.

"We just want them to know how special you are to the Blackrock School," Bishop said after presenting the Veterans with the money they raised.

This presentation was a school wide event on Tuesday, as kindergartners through fourth graders followed the veterans as they paraded around the school and performed songs in honor of the veterans.

The fifth graders had written essays in honor of the veterans and read them at the assembly, thanking veterans for their sacrifice and what they have learned from the veterans.

"Veterans help this county and make a better, safer place for many reasons," read Jordan Hamilton.

"They help us keep our country free and protect us from our enemies," added Katherine Sutton.

Bishop said she was so proud of the students.

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"These kids are just going into their own little piggy banks," she said. "They learned about the sacrifices the veterans have made and they are giving and sacrificing for the veterans. It's unbelievable. They just knew who it was for and wanted to give."

She said the original fundraising goal was \$500, but when donations kept on coming in, she decided to see if they could double it. Bishop added that one student, Shelia O'Connell, even held a yard sale and raised \$50 on her own.

The Korean War veterans said this wasn't something they were expecting.

"It was a great surprise for us," said Joseph Meunier, of the 7th division. "We adopted the school and they adopted us."

They said they were grateful to have the chance to educate the students on the Korean War, their stories and explaining the pros and cons that came from it.

Over the public address system system, Bob Hartley, 8th army division thanked the students for their generosity and kindness.

"I wanna thank the whole school," he said. "All I can say is, wow, this is unbelievable. Thank you for remembering us."



Pictured from left are Korean War veterans Bob Hartley, Joe Meunier, Bill Kennedy, Bob Cushing, Ralph Nonnenmacher, Chief Belbin and Tom Daily