

# Hopkins Hill students make cards to cheer the troops



Angelena Chapman/Daily Times

Top row (l-r): Fourth-grader Joey DeLellis and his sister first-grader Gianna work on their cards to send to encourage troops on deployment; Kindergartener Julian Palmisano, center, works on his card with his mother, Shanna; Robert, Sue and Jessica Larango, a fifth grader at Hopkins Hill Elementary School, worked on her card to send to deployed service members.

Bottom: The fifth grade band at Hopkins Hill Elementary School perform during the arts night on Monday. They were directed by Maria Dinitto-Wild,



## Night of the Arts also showcases students' artwork and musical performances

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COVENTRY—A night of celebrating the arts and cheering the troops took place this Monday night at one elementary school.

Hopkins Hill Elementary School held their annual Night of the Arts this week showcasing the artwork that students had completed throughout the year and musical performances.

The art exhibit opened the night, covering the walls of the hallways at Hopkins Hill School.

Then at 6:30 p.m. the fifth grade band performed selections they had been working on this year. They played under the direction of Maria Dinitto-Wild, the music teacher at Hopkins Hill.

At 7 p.m. the third and fourth graders were set to perform with their recorders and at 7:30 p.m. the chorus performed.

All the while, from 6 to 7 p.m., while the concerts were going on, all Hopkins Hill students, from kindergarten to fifth grade—and their families—were able to take part in a special project called Operation Write Home.

In Operation Write Home, students are encouraged to support the country's armed forces by sending them cards thanking and encouraging them.

Also a part of the program, students can design blank cards to send to the troops that they can then in turn use to write

home, thus the name Operation Write Home.

Hopkins Hill was focusing on the sending encouraging cards portion of the program.

Sarah Hemendinger, the art teacher at Hopkins Hill, said she has never done this particular program with the students before.

This year, she selected it for the Night of the Arts project for the whole school.

She said it is great because it is a program that the students' whole families can do together and families did sit together in the cafeteria at Hopkins Hill designing, drawing on and writing notes inside cards to send.

Hemendinger was encouraging the kids to put their first names and ages and to write something "to cheer" the troops up.

Examples about what to write included telling the

troops about their school, hobbies, favorite sports or even pets.

Operation Write Home began in 2007 and recently sent their millionth handmade card to deployed service members to allow them to write home.

Students were allowed to take their art home with them at the end of the night.

The fifth grade band, the third and fourth grades with their recorders and the chorus all performed in the gymnasium.

Before the fifth grade band began playing, Dinitto-Wild told the audience about the band's recent trip to McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket, where they played "The Star-Spangled Banner" before a Pawtucket Red Sox game with other fifth graders from around the state.

"Sit back, relax and enjoy the music," she told the audience.