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Kids show soldiers their appreciation

Students create Valentine's Day cards for troops

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LANSING TWP. - About 300 Lansing-area soldiers stationed overseas will get a little love from home this Valentine's Day.

Kids from Windemere Park Charter Academy in Lansing Township made about 300 Valentine's Day cards expressing their gratitude for the soldiers' service. Lansing's Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 701 mailed most of them to local soldiers serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.

"I like to help people and encourage them. I want to keep them up and going," said fourth-grader Shyla Harris, 10.

Students drew objects such as hearts, butterflies and teddy bears, and wrote endearing phrases, including, "Be safe, soldier," and "Thank you so much for protecting our country."

"They feel that when they open it up, it'll be like getting a love letter from their own children," kindergarten teacher Tina Back said. "We just have a very high respect for all the people in our school, and moms and dads who have served in Iraq."

Art teacher Tamara Houtkooper also sent some of the cards to her brother - a Marine serving in Iraq - so he can pass them out to his fellow soldiers.

She'd planned to throw in some Valentine's Day candy, too.

"He likes any kind of package, just because they don't have access to those kind of things. It's encouraging," Houtkooper said. "It's just nice that I get to share with the students what it's like to be over in Iraq and have to defend our country. That makes students think about what it's like to have freedom over here."
