

Comal Independent School District

NEWS RELEASE

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Great Scott! **SVHS celebrates teacher's return from Iraq**

For those of you old enough to remember the 1970s musical group Tony Orlando and Dawn, Smithson Valley High played its own version of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" recently.

But instead of tying yellow ribbons around the many oak trees that adorn the SVHS campus, teachers and students created posters – lots of them – to show just how much they wanted teacher Scott Stoare back.

Stoare, the department chair of the school's Career and Technical Education Department, has been away since last January, including the nine months he served in Iraq.

Stoare, who's been a member of the U.S. Army Reserves for 23 years, was called into duty for the second time during Operation Iraqi Freedom. He first served for 11 months during 2003-04.

This time, Stoare, who's taught at SVHS since 1990, trained at Kansas' Ft. Riley for three months before being deployed with his logistics advising team to Taji, Iraq, which is about 20 miles north of Baghdad.

Stoare, an Army Reserve Chief Warrant Officer, and his team were responsible for advising and supervising the distribution of more than two million supplies, which included body armor, uniforms and tools, to 14 divisions of the Iraqi Army during the nine month tour.

Perhaps even more rewarding for Stoare was the fact his team taught members of the Iraqi Army how to utilize the widely used cooperation inventory software MySAP.

"For more than 100 years, the Iraqi people kept their inventory in handwritten ledgers," Stoare said. "It was very gratifying that by the time my team left they were able to inventory more than 50 warehouses full of supplies

using this industrial management software that's used by many big companies worldwide."

During his stay in Iraq, Stoare had a pretty good idea he was missed at SVHS.

He received numerous care packages, which included items like Tex-Mex hot sauce, beef jerky and homemade cookies.

"It was so touching because it was a big group effort," Stoare said. "Different departments at SVHS would put care packages together and then Chris Trotter (SVHS principal) would mail them over."

Stoare also enjoyed keeping in touch with family, teachers and administrators via email.

"I'd love to get any kind of news," he said. "People would just chit-chat, give me updates on the construction going on at the school, or just let me know what was happening in the classrooms at Smithson Valley High. Hearing things like that really makes a big difference when you're over there."

While Stoare's team was in no immediate danger located in Taji, the violence that still exists in Iraq hit home for several members of his base.

"We had Iraqi soldiers that worked on our base that were great guys," Stoare said. "They were some of the best soldiers I've ever worked with in my career. Many of them had to drive straight into Baghdad to go home every night. That's where the real violence was. Some of the bombings we'd read about or see on Armed Forces Network were happening right down the block from where they lived."

Stoare befriended one particular Iraqi interpreter on his team named Mike.

"Mike was a good kid," Stoare said. "He was 19 years old, and I gave him a Smithson Valley High hat that he liked to wear. So we have an honorary SVHS Ranger in Iraq."

Stoare finally began to realize his second tour in Iraq was coming to an end a little less than a week before he departed.

"I remember shouting, 'We're going home Monday!,'" Stoare said. "It was like I had a big smile all over my body."

That grin spread even wider on Feb. 7 when Stoare landed back on U.S. as his plane touched down in Atlanta.

"When those tires hit the ground, all the soldiers started cheering," Stoare said. "It was a beautiful day, the sun was out, and we got to taxi to a military

hanger and walk down one of those old fashioned aircraft ramps like the presidents did in the 60s and 70s. That was a good day.”

When his next flight arrived in Dallas, however, the story wasn’t as sunny, but that didn’t stop Stoare from getting home as quickly as he could.

“All of the flights out of Dallas were canceled because of a snowstorm,” he said. “I saw a guy in line and we got to talking and he worked in San Antonio. He asked me if I wanted to split a car, and I didn’t have to think twice. We rented a vehicle and were home that evening.”

Stoare spent a couple of weeks spending time with his family, wife GeorgeAnn, a teacher at Specht Elementary, and son Will, an eighth grader at Spring Branch Middle.

He had a chance to take a break from his teaching job at SVHS until March 15, but that’s not Stoare’s style.

“I’ve been teaching here since 1990,” he said. “It’s so much a part of my life. I missed the kids I teach and my colleagues.”

Stoare returned on Feb. 25 to door after door and hallway after hallway at the massive SVHS campus covered with posters and photos.

“Welcome Back Patriot,” “Thanks so much for your service,” and “We missed you so much,” were just a few of the hundreds of messages students and faculty wrote on posters welcoming Stoare back to the school.

“I was pretty overwhelmed,” Stoare said. “It was a wonderful feeling.”

Trotter said it’s a privilege to have someone like Stoare leading the CTE department.

“Scott is a great person, a great community member and a great teacher,” Trotter said. “He’s a Smithson Valley Ranger and a patriot through and through. We’re so glad to have him back.”

SVHS teacher Brenda Goad’s classroom is next to Stoare’s.

“It’s awesome that he’s back,” Goad said. “He was gone so long. He’s such a big part of this school.”

Fellow SVHS teacher Lori Niles echoed Goad’s sentiments.

“We all missed Scott so much,” Niles said. “We’re very grateful for his service and so overjoyed he was returned home safely to us.”

Ty Etheridge, one of Stoare’s students, said it’s hard to measure what he means to SVHS.

“Mr. Stoare has such a big impact on the school. People who don’t even have him as a teacher anymore are coming by and welcoming him back and are

making and signing posters," Etheridge said. "It's a big celebration, and everyone's taking part."

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IN PHOTOS: Smithson Valley High teacher Scott Stoare, the department chair of the school's Career and Technical Education Department, is surrounded by students (top row, l-r) Will Zopff, Ty Etheridge, and Cody Gregory, and (bottom row) Samantha Phillips and Savannah Stagg in front of one of the dozens of posters lining the SVHS campus welcoming Stoare, an Army Reservist, back from his second tour in Iraq.