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VFW CA

Dear Honored Veterans,

Thank you so much for selecting me as your California Teacher of the Year K-5. I am truly honored to receive this award by such a distinguished group of Americans as the veterans of foreign wars. You who have given so much to Americans, and you who continue to give your support to education.

A good teacher not only imparts knowledge to her students but learns from them as well. I learned what all vets already know and our military men and women already know, it is through serving others that one's life becomes meaningful. So my 1st grade classroom focus is on learning and building character.

9-11 catapulted me into service. Trying to explain to my class what had happened that dreadful day, I knew, that just like the terrorist had changed lives, I also possessed the power to change lives and promote patriotism. Together we made the decision to step out in service of others.

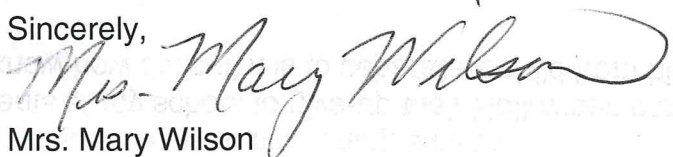
Scissors snapping, needles poking, we created a quilt to comfort those who had lost a family member in the twin towers.

Another character trait my students put into practice is generosity. We have packed over 25,000 baggies for our troops through Operation Interdependence, each containing a handwritten letter and some goodies. I have even convinced the students at my school to give-up their Halloween candy for wounded veterans. (those of you with children know how difficult it is to separate a child from his candy).

One thing I try to teach by example is that that ONE person can make a tremendous difference in many lives. It's the POWER OF THE PEOPLE that our Founding Fathers believed in so strongly. I've gathered with a small group of the people gathered in our neighborhood park each evening from May through July to light candles, sing songs, share memories of loved ones, and play TAPS. We assemble in Gratitude and Honor of our fellow Americans who gave their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan. The POWER OF THE PEOPLE prevailed as we now have the permanent Northwood Memorial. It was created OF THE PEOPLE of Irvine, BY THE PEOPLE of this community, FOR THE PEOPLE who willingly gave their lives for each and every one of us.

I thank you for recognizing me for the values that I learned from you: the Gold Star families, those currently in the military, and the vets who visit my classroom or gather with us at the memorial. You've shown me friendly smile, a gentle touch, or a kind word CAN change a life. I have made a personal commitment to be the ONE to touch at least ONE life each day. You have already touched my life with this recognition as your California Teacher of the Year. I invite you to join me in continuing to reach out to ONE person each day.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Mary Wilson