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Office of the Associate to the Superintendent

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Local Elementary “Classmate” Returns from Iraq

Tucson, AZ -- Last week, the 3rd graders in Ms. Eldridge’s class at Painted Sky Elementary got a very special surprise when a “classmate” returned from Iraq. The story begins in 1964, when Jeff Brown wrote a book, called Flat Stanley, about a young man and his adventures after being flattened by a bulletin board. In 1995, a Canadian teacher founded the Flat Stanley Project. Her students sent Flat Stanley’s to other students who would write about their adventures with him and then send letters back to Stanley’s home school. For the Painted Sky students, this project involved: composing letters, asking family and friends to participate; crafting their own Flat Stanley – representative of the person it was to be sent to; and sharing the adventures of their Flat Stanley with their classmates upon his return.

Currently, Flat Stanley has become a teaching tool in thousands of classrooms around the country, especially here in Tucson. In March, Ms. Eldridge’s class sent Flat Stanley’s to their friends and families around the country. One particular parent who received a Flat Stanley was SGT Michael Joseph of the U.S. Army, currently serving in Iraq.

On Wednesday, the classroom received a package from SGT Joseph including a letter (about Flat Stanley’s Iraqi adventures), souvenirs, pictures of Flat Stanley in Iraq, and of course Flat Stanley himself-signed by 12 soldiers. SGT Joseph explained that Flat Stanley had served as a morale booster for himself and many of his fellow comrades while on deployment, so much so that they were having Flat Stanley patches made at a local embroidery merchant to attach to their uniforms.

“Flat Stanley not only encourages writing, but he fosters an environment of collaboration and unity. Honestly, I think simply being part of something like this is just as inspirational to our students as it is to our soldiers,” said Angela Wichers, Principal, Painted Sky Elementary. We are very proud to be a part of this experience and can’t wait for the future adventures of Flat Stanley.”

Painted Sky Elementary is 1 of 22 sites in the Amphitheater Public School District, which provides education to over 16,000 students, covering 109 square miles of Northwest Tucson and Oro Valley.

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