



SOUTHWEST FLORIDA COLLEGE GRADUATES GET A SPECIAL MESSAGE

Fort Myers, Fla., (June 30, 2009) – It’s hard to fight a war, but cookies always seem to help. Last fall, students, faculty and staff at Southwest Florida College adopted Red Platoon, 177th Field Artillery, serving in Iraq, and inundated the squad with dozens of care packages that included music, movies and homemade chocolate chip cookies.

And then on June 20, during the college’s 2009 commencement ceremony, Dr. Stephen Calabro, SWFC Executive Vice President, gave a special recognition thanking members of the Allied Health Club, the Criminal Justice Club and the Early Childhood Education Club who pooled resources, held fundraising events and collected donations to purchase materials and supplies to send to the soldiers in Red Platoon.

“Students and staff supported this effort with everything from CD’s and DVD’s, books and magazines, personal care items, cards, letters, emails and of course . . . a steady supply of homemade cookies,” said Dr. Calabro.

Dr. Calabro told the commencement audience that he speaks daily with Platoon Leader, Lt. Brooks Allen via email. Lt. Allen, he said, described how words could not adequately describe the tremendous impact that the Southwest Florida College community has had on the morale of his platoon.

Lt. Allen wrote of Iraq as being a lonely and dangerous place and he said that his men look with great anticipation for the next SWFC care package to arrive.

“Knowing they are not forgotten makes all the difference in the world,” said Dr. Calabro, who finished his statement by presenting the graduates with a special message from the soldiers of Red Platoon – a video that played on three screens hanging from the ceiling at the Harborside Event center.

The video showed photos of the men of Red Platoon. Some showed the men dressed in SWFC T-shirts; others showed them in full uniform. The song “Proud to be an American” played in the background and then faded to allow Lt. Allen to speak to the graduates. Lt. Allen said, in his recorded voice message, that

he was personally thankful for all the care packages and the “beloved Nintendo Wii” that the club members had sent to them.

The video then ended to display a photo with the men of Red Platoon holding a sheet. On the sheet was written the words: “Congrats Class of 2009 S.W.F.C.”

Southwest Florida College is an accredited, private, nonprofit institution of higher learning centrally located in Fort Myers, Tampa, Port Charlotte, and includes the Institute of Interior Design located within the International Design Center in Estero. The College has been providing post secondary education to Floridians since 1974 and offers programs in Allied Health, Business, Design, Education, Information Technology and Legal Studies. Its mission is to provide educational opportunities for individuals to acquire knowledge and skills that will help prepare them for rewarding careers in fields with high growth potential. For more information, call toll free 888-526-7973 or visit www.swfc.edu.