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Joyous Homecoming for Two Local Soldiers

By Cathy Tyson



Former Campolindo High School student and Lafayette resident Patrick Keating 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and First Lieutenant Marco Oriti received a rousing homecoming celebration upon their return from their tours of duty in late December. Keating was stationed in Afghanistan and Oriti was stationed in Iraq. Oriti was greeted at the airport by the Warrior Riders and escorted by Motorcycle Honor Guard straight to the ceremony. Keating had arrived in the early morning hours and had gotten a few hours of shut eye. He was given a police escort with sirens and lights from the family home to the celebration at the Veteran's Memorial Hall.

The outpouring of support and appreciation for these soldiers' service at the celebration was incredible. Friends, neighbors, community members, Blue Star Moms and retired military came to pay tribute. Keating and Oriti even received commendations from the Mayors.

Kathie Keating Lind, Patrick Keating's mother, said her son was overwhelmed. "It's important to put politics aside and honor these heroes and to never forget that these troops are fighting for us. This is bigger than family and community," she said.

Patrick Keating Photo submitted

"We feel very blessed to have Marco home with us this Christmas, because he was not supposed to be back from his deployment till mid January," said Tony and Luisa Oriti. "So to have him come home from Iraq early and in time for Christmas is the best present ever. Then to receive such a welcome from a supportive and grateful community, family, friends and military and veteran's organizations was very heartwarming for us. We are very proud of our son."

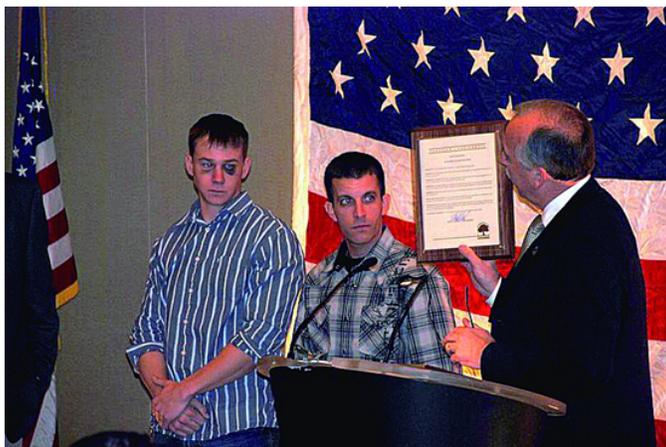
"These kids are very humble, unassuming," said Bryan Welden, of the Lafayette Flag Brigade, who put this event and many others together and acts as master of ceremonies.

Although he has given out over 250 flags at these welcome ceremonies, this was the very first one in Lafayette.

The program started almost four years to the day that six Campo graduates came home from their tours of duty. "It's a wonderful tribute to our service members." Welden says he's proud to do this for the kids in the community, "It's not about politics, we show that the community is there for the young men and women that serve our country. Everyone is treated equally from a private to a one-star general."

An extensive collection of photographs can be found on the Lafayette Flag Brigade's website,

www.nevereverforget911.com and <http://7599356.phanfare.com/4498178>.



Patrick Keating and Marco Oriti Photo submitted

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