

# Delaware News

## Career center students connect with director in Iraq

*\* Mary Paulins, overseas since springtime with the National Guard, answered questions from students on Veterans Day.*

By **BRET LIEBENDORFER**

Thursday, November 13, 2008

Students at the Delaware Area Career Center North Campus spoke with a special guest live from Iraq during a Veterans Day ceremony.

North Campus Director Mary Paulins spoke to students at 1 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 11 from Baghdad, where it was 9 p.m., through a telephone camera that was projected onto a large auditorium screen.

"Our living conditions aren't tents any more. We have electricity, Internet and cable," Paulins said, adding that the stations broadcast on the Armed Forces Network are limited and often several years old.

The event featured the National Guard major answering questions from students that ranged from the serious to the light-hearted. Paulins said what she misses most are her family, and every time soldiers travel, they are scared of roadside attacks. As far as riding camels, Paulins advised against that because of their fleas.

Senior Craig Collins, who is in the fire-service training program, said it was nice to finally see his principal, albeit on a Webcam.

"You could tell she really misses us and wishes that she could be here, but she has a duty to do over there," he said.

A more permanent reminder of Paulins' service will be memorialized outside the auditorium, where dozens of stars already are taped to the walls with the names of troops students know. Thanks to the work of Adda Jolliff, a senior in career graphics, Paulins' will be featured above the group in a larger star with her picture.

During this week's ceremony, staff members who worked with Paulins were quick to send their best wishes, bring up inside jokes, and tease her about her new short, military-style haircut.

"Don't worry, it will grow back," she said.

Paulins, who has served in the military for more than 20 years, is a logistics officer and her duties



SNP photo by Bret Liebendorfer

On Tuesday, Nov. 11, students and staff at the Delaware Area Career Center's North Campus spoke with former campus Director Mary Paulins through a Webcam, projected onto a large screen in the auditorium. Paulins, who is stationed in Iraq with the National Guard, spoke with her former students on Veterans Day about life in the Middle East and other subjects.

involve working directly with Iraqis on vehicle maintenance -- everything from ordering new parts to having them installed. She left for service last spring for her second tour of duty and will be back in the United States in April.

One theme of the event was pride in being an American. Paulins was known for leading the school each day during the Pledge of Allegiance and led the group once again this week.

"I said the Pledge of Allegiance every day because I love my country ... and to remind everyone that the United States is the most beautiful place in the world," she said.

Technology Facilitator Wayne Strunk said the equipment that allowed the two-way communication with only the slightest of delay was called a Polycom. He said he was a little nervous that the advanced technology would fail once it came time for the broadcast, but the biggest challenge was getting clearance from the military.

Students submitted questions that were prescreened so there was no chance that sensitive information, such as location and troop number, would be leaked.

"It's easy when you're out of sight, out of mind to forget what she's going through, but seeing her face to face will enhance her message," Strunk said before the successful broadcast.