

Schools Celebrate Veterans Day

(Not the full article)

By **Eliza Hallabeck**

With Veterans Day falling on a Sunday this year, some of Newtown's schools held events on Friday, November 9, and other schools held events on Monday, November 12, to mark the day.

Veterans and servicemen visited Middle Gate Elementary School on Friday also. Master Sergeant Eric Mroz, from Palisades Park, N.J., now stationed in Danbury with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, was the visiting speaker for Middle Gate's two assemblies on Friday. MSgt Mroz also visited classrooms and spoke to students during his visit. MSgt Mroz is a Veteran of Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Operation Enduring Freedom. He has 22 years of service with 18 on active duty.

MSgt Mroz explained why students hear people talk about freedom when celebrating Veterans Day: Members of the armed forces, he said, take an oath to support and defend the constitution against threats both foreign and domestic.

MSgt Mroz implored the Middle Gate students to enjoy their freedom, because in some countries freedom is not limitless, like in the United States.



Master Sergeant Eric Mroz, stationed in Danbury with the 411th Civil Affairs Battalion, spoke during one of Middle Gate's two assemblies on Friday, November 9.

"Thank you for having me," said MSgt Mroz. "It is truly an honor to serve you, and God bless America."

Fourth grade teacher Linda Baron, who Middle Gate Principal Chris Geissler called the "mastermind" behind setting up the Friday event, also spoke during the assembly.

"What drives brave men and women to do what they do?" asked Ms Baron. "Belief. Belief in a set of ideals, greater than themselves and the willingness to stand up for those ideals, even knowing that they may be put in harm's way."

Year after year, Ms Baron said, veterans and servicemen and women have put themselves in harm's way. "Their results, their efforts, have provided us a better life, the life we live today," said Ms Baron.

A poem written by Ms Baron was also put to a song and performed by her fourth grade student Mellissa Travali. Audio from Mellissa's performance is available [here](#).

Students who invited veterans and servicemen and women to Middle Gate on Friday also recognized their visitors before the assembly.