



Perris News

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St. James Students Get a Visit from the Mayor



The Mayor with Margaret Green and her daughters, Venetia, 4; Isabella, 6 and Elsa, 11

Mayor Daryl Busch knows what it's like to be far from home and loved ones at Christmas.

As a teen-age sailor, the Mayor found himself aboard the destroyer USS Picking patrolling in ocean waters thousands of miles from his home.

Busch paid a visit last week to St. James Catholic School to show his support for a couple of students whose dad also won't make it home this year.

Elsa and Isabella Green's father, Navy Lt. Johnnie Green, is stationed aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz somewhere in the Persian Gulf supporting the Global War on Terror.

Students from St. James sent him and his shipmates Christmas cards and candy—no chocolate but plenty of Skittles and Starbursts—to remind them of home for the holidays.

Busch's appearance prompted St. James principal Sr. Sylvia Parkes to hold a school-wide assembly. So the Mayor found himself before 161 students eager to quiz him about his military service, the City and his family, which includes Busch's son, Barry, a graduate of St. James.

"What you've done for those sailors is a good thing," Busch told the assembly. "When you're far away from home you really miss your family. When I was at sea we got a Christmas tree but our ship was small so it wasn't much of a tree. They gave you what they said was Christmas dinner but it wasn't like what you got at home. I know the sailors on the Nimitz will appreciate what you have done."

Busch told the students he served as a radar operator aboard the Picking, a World War II era destroyer that saw action in the Solomon Islands, Philippines, Okinawa and Aleutian Islands. During his service, the ship sailed in support of U.S. interests around the globe, including stops at Midway, Guam, Okinawa, Hong Kong and Pearl Harbor.

"I enjoyed my time in the service," he said. "It was a good experience for me."

He said that while in service, he "wrote a lot of letters home."

"We didn't have email," he said.

Busch said he particularly enjoyed receiving packages from home. His favorites: the ones with Frito Lay potato chips.

The Mayor urged the students to study hard and pay attention to City issues. He invited them to the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony at City Hall, informed them about the latest developments in the restoration of the historic Bank Building and explained that the Metrolink station under construction near St. James could be operational by 2011.

Busch met with the Green sisters, their mother, Margaret Green, and another sibling, Venetia, 4. Margaret Green said she enjoyed meeting the Mayor. During a brief chat, Busch learned that she too is a Navy veteran, having served as a corpsman aboard the destroyer USS Olendorf.

"I think it's wonderful," Margaret Green said. "The kids got a lot out of it. I'm very proud of my husband's service. It's tough with him being gone but it helps having a school that is as supportive as this one."

Margaret Green said she purchased an iPod nano for her husband. The three girls got him a watch. Sr. Parkes said Busch's visit was the first time a mayor has visited St. James since she arrived there in 1987.

"I think he made a lot of new friends," she said.



The Mayor address the student assembly.



Eager students raise their hands to ask Mayor Busch a question.