

Sgt. Laura Steckly 2002 Friend grad and proud veteran  
by Tonya Ellis

Sergeant Laura Steckly, a 2002 graduate of Friend High, came back as a special guest speaker for the annual Veterans' Day Program on Friday, November 9th. After 9/11, Laura said she felt a strong sense of self-duty to serve our country. "Instead of just sitting back and watching it happen, I wanted to jump in and know that I was making a difference."

Although specializing in food service, Laura quickly discovered her days would not all be spent in the kitchen. In January 2004, she was deployed to Iraq where she did guard duty, convoys, and logistics work.

She was in one of the first troops to be sent overseas, which indicated harsh times for her and her fellow soldiers. After long travels, her troop reached Baghdad only to be informed there was no room for them, and were forced to go on another convoy to Taji, Iraq. There was nothing in Taji when they first arrived, and times were not easy. They basically built the camp from the ground up.

After about a year, she was sent home for an 18-month period, part of which was actually spent in Thailand for special training with the Thai Army. In July 2006, Laura was sent to Iraq for the second time. She was stationed in Kurkuk, Iraq, which by this time was of much better quality, and she was allowed to work in her own field as first cook.

In just a little over five years, Laura has obtained honors and awards some may take a lifetime to achieve. She has been awarded two Army Accommodation medals, six Army Achievement medals, a Good Conduct medal, two Certificates of Achievement, a Global War on Terror Expedition medal and ribbon, an Iraqi Campaign medal, and an overseas ribbon. Laura has received her Bachelor's degree in Business from the University of Hawaii and intends to go on to get her Master's from Berkley University when she leaves the Armed Forces in December of 2008.

After being asked if she had ever thought she would be where she is today five years ago, Laura said at first she was not even sure if she would stay in the Army. After all the hard and trying times, one word can describe why she has stuck it through: Pride. After all Laura has accomplished, there is no end to reasons she has to be proud of herself.

If you have any questions or would like to see pictures of her time in Iraq, feel free to contact her.