

Fallen soldier's mom pays a visit to St. Dominic's

By Dominik Kurek
OAKVILLE BEAVER STAFF

There were tears, hugs and smiles in the room when the mother of fallen Canadian soldier Marc Diab visited St. Dominic Catholic Elementary School to have an intimate chat with students.

Jihan Falah-Diab spoke to two Grade 8 classes in the school's library on Friday, March 30 after she had received a letter and poster from one of the students commemorating her son.

The poster and letter were made by Téa Juricic, a Grade 8 student who drew the name of Marc Diab for the school project.

The project has each student create a poster to be sent to the family members of fallen Canadian soldiers.

"I'm insanely inspired," said a tearful Juricic after the presentation had ended.

"I thought I was just doing this one little thing and it turned into this big thing where somebody wanted to come and meet me. I feel she's really touched me with her story."

Falah-Diab thanked the students for their support of families of fallen soldiers.

"I love you so much. I really appreciate everything you have done and thank you Téa for making this happen today," she said.

The senior students of the elementary school have been making posters each year since approximately 2005 in the history class of teacher John MacPhail, who won the



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MESSAGE SENT HOME: Jihan Falah-Diab, left, mother of the late Trooper Marc Diab, who was killed in Afghanistan, recently visited St. Dominic School to thank the students after she received a letter and poster from Grade 8 student Téa Juricic, right, commemorating her son. It was part of a school project that saw students create posters for the family members of fallen Canadian soldiers.

Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History in 2007.

Falah-Diab also spoke about her son, a Mississauga soldier who was killed in 2009 in Afghanistan.

"Marc was eight years old when he dreamt to be a soldier and to give freedom to other people," she said.

The family immigrated to Canada from Lebanon in 2000 and Marc joined the army at age 18.

"Marc loved Canada, loved the freedom, loved that he could do what he wanted and he could serve and to love and be loved," Falah-Diab said.

She said her son loved

soccer and was a coach for the military students in Petawawa, ON. Upon his return from service in Afghanistan, he had hoped to open a restaurant and to propose to his girlfriend.

"He had so many dreams for things to do. Unfortunately he didn't come back," she said.

Prior to going to Afghanistan, his mother tried to persuade Marc not to go. However, he decided to go despite her pleas.

"He said, 'Mom, I want to go to Afghanistan.' I told him, 'You're my only son. You'll go and die there. It's a war there.'

He said, 'I can die on the 403 in a car accident commuting back and forth. I can die in my sleep. I can die anyway. If this is the will of God, it will happen,'" she said.

"It did. It happened in Afghanistan, but I know deep down inside, he's in a much better place. He's with Jesus and he will inspire lots of people, which he already did. As I can see today all of you here, you're inspired by all our soldiers who serve our country to keep our country free."

Falah-Diab gave some words of advice to the children as well.

"Be good people," Falah-Diab said. "Do good things. Serve this country with all

your heart. Start with your own home, with your brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. Love each other because love has no end."

She was also thankful for the letter that came to her family from the St. Dominic's class.

"I received this letter through the DND. I read it over and over and over. I received this poster. It meant a lot to all of us in the family," she said.

The library event also included words of welcome from Oakville MPP Kevin Flynn, Ward 1 Councillor Ralph Robinson and Halton Catholic District School Board Chair Alice Anne LeMay.

Vice-principal Josey Guerin closed the afternoon event with a few words.

As his school was preparing for its *Passion* play over the previous weeks, in time for Easter, Guerin said he could not help, but compare Marc Diab to Christ.

"The story of Jesus is a story of love, it's a story of sacrifice, it's a sad story, it's a beautiful story. It's a story of the power of one," he said.

"I could not help but think all those things about your son, too, and the comparisons. How all we want from our children, and from all of us, is to be like Jesus. I have to tell you, I know in my heart, your son was like Jesus and that has everything to do with you as a mom, and you as a family."

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