

Surprise send-off

By Melissa Regennitter of the Muscatine Journal

MUSCATINE, Iowa — Sgt. Jennifer Peters, 20, of the 186th Military Police expected to eventually be deployed for military duty since she enlisted in the Army National Guard about two years ago.

That time has come and a farewell ceremony that brought tears to the eyes of many was held at her workplace, Muscatine's Allsteel Panel Plant, Tuesday afternoon.



Peters reported for her last day of work at 3 p.m. and was invited to meet with supervisors for cake. While supervisors had her distracted, Allsteel shut down the entire panel plant and about 150 employees made their way outside to surprise her with a ceremony.

While outdoors, Mike Allbee, member and community relations manager for Allsteel, explained the situation to her peers from atop a hydraulic lift where he, Peters and her former manager and friend, Eric Smith, stood side-by-side.

"We are very proud of her making a sacrifice for her country in time of war," Allbee said tearfully. "We are proud of you, we will miss you and we wish you the best of luck."

Allbee told the Muscatine Journal that Peters is a diligent worker, dependable and shows good leadership skills — all things he'd expect of an American soldier.

The men reassured Peters that she would have a job upon her return. She's expected to be deployed for at least one year but has not heard where she will be stationed.

"Work is the last thing you need to worry about," Smith said. "Your job will be here when you return."

The second-shift employees that had filled the outside break area lined up and one-by-one they shook Peters hand, hugged her and wished her well.

"I do have friends here. Friends are what I'll miss the most," Peters said.

She's also going to miss her family and her boyfriend, Chad Toyne, she said as she held back tears. "It's sad."

She's been training for the past two years for her duties as a military police officer and Peters said though she's frightened because she's not sure where she'll end up, she's prepared to fight for her country and do what's right.

Peters leaves for Des Moines on Saturday and will start training in Fort Dix, NJ this November.

Allbee said that someone may have to fill her job, but as soon as she returns, she can have the position back.

"Maybe by then I'll be able to get a management position," she said with a smile.

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