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Galva Guard soldiers

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It doesn't make the evening news. Few major media outlets report it. Sadder news usually dominates.

But many U.S. soldiers in Iraq would like the nation - and world - to know this: they're making a difference. They're improving the lives of many Iraqis.

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The Galva National Guard unit included.

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The Galva unit, which has been stationed in Iraq since the spring, has done many good things for Iraqis. They've helped maintain good water supplies, given school supplies to children, protected local people and provided stabilizing influences - to name a few things.

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But one of their recent efforts is noteworthy in itself. It's the rebuilding of a school.

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"(It) was the worst in our area of operations," said Maj. Mike Kessel of the dilapidated structure, found during patrol one day.

"The school had no doors or windows and much of the roof was thatched," said Kessel, commander of the Galva unit.

"Because it had not been built up off the ground, it routinely flooded during rain season. The desks were barely holding together.

"We came to discover that the school was actually only about 5 years old, but because Saddam refused funding, the villagers had scraped their meager resources together to put the school together." Its condition moved the soldiers.

"(They had) a burning desire to build one," said Kessel.

That set the wheels in motion. Greg Remick owner of Remick Construction in Victoria and a member of the Galva Guard, began drawing up a new school design.

Project funding "appeared and disappeared many times" before final approval, Kessel said. Once granted in July, though, demolition of the old school began.

"With the school's funding now secure, many soldiers started letting families and friends back home know about the project. Families, civic organizations, soldiers' employers, churches and schools began sending us new school supplies," Kessel said.

Boxes of school supplies piled up quickly. Meanwhile, construction was moving along. By fall, it was completed. On Oct. 14, soldiers delivered school supplies to children in the new school. The kindnesses overwhelmed the school's headmaster.

"(He said) he would never forget what (we) had done - not just because we built a new school for the community, but because we cared enough to improve the educational environment in which their children will learn in the future," Kessel said.

Kessel said the soldiers' kindnesses weren't isolated incidents. Good's being done by U.S. military personnel throughout Iraq.

"When some would have you believe that there is nothing good going on over here, rest assured there are minor miracles every day," he said. "Soldiers all over Iraq have similar stories, and communities from across our great land are supporting those efforts just as everyone there did."

Doug Boock is the editor of the Galva News.