

✓ Watsonville ^{war Gulf WAR Demonstration} students rally for troops

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WATSONVILLE — With "God Bless the USA" playing over a loudspeaker and chants of "support our soldiers," some 300 students at Watsonville High School held a rally Friday in support of U.S. troops fighting in the Persian Gulf.

Near the town clock in Santa Cruz Friday, separate demonstrations were held in support of U.S. troops in the gulf and against the war.

The Watsonville event, which was followed after school by a march through downtown, was or-

ganized by three senior students with the approval of the administration. Stephanie Gomas, Bridget Feuerborn and Debbie Cornelius made it clear they were neither for or against the war, but simply wanted to make their support of the troops clear.

The rally and march at the school, which has about 2,000 students, stands in contrast to anti-war protests that have shut down portions of highways 17 and 1 in Santa Cruz, and an earlier anti-war demonstration by students at Santa Cruz high schools.

"We're tired of just hearing

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peace, peace, peace, and then violence breaks out," said Gomas.

Feuerborn agreed. "Everybody wants peace, but if you're demonstrating for it, it's hypocritical to be violent."

According to Cornelius, they've heard a few discouraging words from fellow students. "A few students say if we're supporting our soldiers, we're supporting the war."

"It's not necessarily like that. Our troops are over there fighting for our country, and we should support them."

The mid-morning rally was held in the school's quad during a 15-minute break between classes. Students, many wearing yellow ribbons, listened to music, heard short speeches by fellow students and joined in chanting, "Support our troops." Gomas, Feuerborn and Cornelius sported bright pink T-shirts, with "SOS" on them.

Erik Lew, a student watching the rally from a distance, said he supports the troops. But at the same

time, he said he feels the war is "stupid."

"I have a brother in the Army who's stationed in Texas now," Lew said. "I don't think we should be putting our noses in other people's business, but, as long as we're there, we should support our troops."

Teacher John Burdick watched the rally.

"At the beginning (of the war), the feeling among students was more that we shouldn't be there. Now, they're realizing this is really war, and they wanted to show their support of the troops," he said.

Watsonville High Principal Roger Mock said the demonstration was held with the permission of the administration.

"We felt if we're going to hold to freedom of expression, they should be allowed to hold it as long as they followed guidelines outlined by district policies," Mock said, adding that the student organizers followed those guidelines.