



[Above] Greg Gibson prepares to throw his horse-shoe during a tournament hosted by Ramapo Valley Council 5846 in Oakland, N.J. More than 120 players participated in the competition, which raised \$12,700 for the Wounded Warrior Project. [Left] 1st Sgt. Randy Powers (left) and Capt. Buford Rachford of the National Guard 771st Maintenance Company exit the food line at a turkey and ham dinner served by St. Joseph Council 13167 in Centerville, Tenn. Knights served dinner for nearly 100 Guardsmen after they arrived home from a 10-month tour of duty in Taji, Iraq.

For a Brother

St. Catherine of Siena Council 9923 in Kennewick, Wash., held a spaghetti dinner to benefit a council member who was recalled from active duty in Afghanistan because his home was damaged in a flood. The council raised more than \$2,000 to help the Knight and his family.

Thunder Corps

St. Francis of Assisi Council 10698 in Belchertown, Mass., sponsored the Celtic Thunder Pipe and Drum Corps to visit the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke, a health care facility for Massachusetts veterans. Knights sponsor an activity for residents at the home each month.

Council Retreat

Father Joseph Timothy O'Callahan Council 14157 at the Marine Corps Air Station in

Yuma, Ariz., conducted a council retreat in the mountains of Mount Laguna, Calif. The event provided a weekend of reflection and relaxation for all Knights in attendance.

Sweats for Vets

Mid-Columbia Council 7292 in Hood River, Ore., shipped 169 pairs of sweatpants to injured soldiers in Germany and Afghanistan. Knights coordinated with a local Wal-Mart outlet to purchase the pants at a discount.

Council Climb

Our Lady of the Skies Council 8200 at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colo., participated in a council mountain climb, attending Mass in the morning before summiting a peak in the Sawatch Mountain Range.

Making Christmas Merry for Those in Uniform



Volunteers prepare to distribute wreaths at Quantico National Cemetery at an event co-sponsored by Potomac Council 9259 in Triangle, Va., and the Sgt. Mac Foundation. Knights — with support from Holy Trinity Assembly in Stafford — donated \$1,757 to purchase 250 of the wreaths that were placed on approximately 2,500 veterans' gravesites.

- **Nashville (Tenn.) Council 544** raised more than \$14,000 to purchase bus tickets for Tennessee National Guardsmen to come home for Christmas. The soldiers were given seven days leave, but many could not pay for transportation. The Guardsmen also attended a breakfast that was prepared and served by **F. Randolph Howell Assembly** in Columbia at the National Guard Armory Dec. 3.

- **St. Florian Council 12911** in Chicago, along with **Cardinal Samuel Stritch Assembly** and the Chicago Fire Department, teamed up to send more than 900 Christmas care packages to U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Members of **Bishop Charles B. McLaughlin Assembly** in Brandon, Fla., visited the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital to spread Christmas cheer among recovering veterans. Knights treated the patients to an afternoon of food, entertainment and presents.



Showing They Care

Volunteers, local businesses pitch in to send holiday packages to troops overseas

by Theresa DeFranzo

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When Mike and Trishia Muller of Georgetown, Mass., first thought about organizing a community-wide care package drive to send to troops overseas, they had a number in mind. That number was 30.

They said if they could get enough donations to send 30 packages to soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries, the effort would have been a success.

But their estimate was off. Way off. At the end of the day Nov. 15, they were able to ship 161 care packages.

"This greatly exceeded our goal," said Mike Muller at Georgetown VFW Post 7608, where more than 150 residents turned out to donate items and assist with the assembly of the packages. "We were hoping for 25 to 30 packages. We had no idea what to expect."

Instead of a few supporters, the VFW transformed into a tightly organized assembly line. On one side of the hall were food items; on the opposite side were socks, books, toothpaste, shampoo and other personal hygiene items. Finally, there was a table where kids could make cards for soldiers. Some simply said "Thank you" or "Be safe." Others were decorated with pictures and stickers.

That so many people came out to support this effort didn't surprise Jeanne Tremblay. Her 28-year-old son, Erik, is in Iraq. He left for his second tour in September, and she's not sure when he's coming home.

"It's overwhelming," Tremblay said of the day's turnout. "This town is just awesome."

As for the packages, she said her son



Larry Blum of Frank M. Meader Council 6064 in Georgetown, Mass., and his 11-year-old son, Edward, seal a care package Nov. 15 at Georgetown VFW Post 7608. Volunteers assembled 161 care packages for troops serving overseas that were delivered before the holidays.

and all the others love to receive them because "it's a part of home." Just recently, she sent her son an artificial Christmas tree.

Someone else who was equally grateful for the outpouring of donations and volunteers was Julianne Burr. Her husband, Col. Malcolm "Tim" Burr, is also serving in Iraq. He's been in the U.S. Army Reserve for 27 years "so we have a bit of experience with this," Julianne said.

That day, the Burrs' two children were at the VFW with some of their friends making cards. Their son, Miles, made a card especially for his dad.

Mike Muller took time out at the event to read a letter of thanks from Col. Burr, which was greeted with applause from the volunteers.

Julianne said of Sunday's event, "We are so honored and proud of our town. They step up every year."

And you can expect the Mullers to step up again next year.

"Due to the overwhelming response, we expect to make this an annual town event," Mike Muller said. "It is apparent that the people of Georgetown greatly appreciate the sacrifice and commitment of our enlisted men and women, and they are not forgotten. With the holiday season approaching, this sends a strong message to our troops that they are in our thoughts, and we hope for their safe return in the near future."

Muller said that each package shipped to a soldier costs \$12, and enough monetary donations came in to ship all 161 packages.

"Crosby's Market and CVS were major sponsors," Muller said. "At CVS, volunteers solicited donations for postage and collected care package items. CVS also donated several hundred boxes of toothpaste and tissues to the effort."

Muller added that committee member Stuart Egenberg worked with Crosby's to create a checkout donation program, which raised more than \$2,000 in just three weeks. Dunkin' Donuts donated several cases of coffee, a commonly requested item from the troops. At the packaging event, Village Pizza provided lunch to the volunteers.

Frank Harper and the Georgetown VFW Post 7608 played host to Sunday's event. The VFW also donated funds, and provided food and drinks for volunteers. Other local organizations such as the Kiwanis Club and the Knights of Columbus also made donations. ♦

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