

NORTHBOROUGH KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS SEND FOOD, CONVENIENCES TO SOLDIERS IN IRAQ

NORTHBORO- With 24-hour pharmacies and convenience stores just a short drive away, running out of Chap Stick, plastic spoons or cereal bars are usually problems that are easily solved. But U.S. troops in Iraq don't have access to the items that many residents here might take for granted.

So at the request of the Rev. Dennis Rocheford of St. Theresa Church in Blackstone, a Navy commander and chaplain who has been serving in Iraq, local Knights of Columbus councils have been collecting such "comfort" items to send to the troops.

Through a two-day collection at St. Bernadette Church Masses at the end of last month, members of the Northboro Knights of Columbus St. Augustine Council collected 10 boxes of items, according to longtime Knights of Columbus member Merrill J. Dussault.

The boxes, which were packed by volunteers Jan. 30, are headed to Camp Ramadi in Iraq. They contain items such as foot powder, antibacterial hand lotion, hard candies, Chap Stick, Pop Tarts, powdered Gatorade, fruit and cereal bars, canned fruit with flip-tops, Power Bars, throat lozenges, plastic spoons, gum with coating (such as Chiclets), Listerine Pocket Pals and individual packs of tissues.

"Apparently, these are the items that are in short supply over there. And when the troops come off the mission, they'd like to be able to have something they can snack on, clean up with, what have you," said Mr. Dussault, who organized the collection, this week. "So, we'll get it for them. . When you need it and you don't have it, it's tough."

Mr. Dussault said he learned of Rev. Rocheford's request through the Millville Knights of Columbus Council, which serves several parishes, including St. Theresa's, and has also been collecting such items.

"I said, 'Hey, we can do this,' " Mr. Dussault said. His council agreed, and a collection was organized within a week. Collection boxes were put out before the three Masses at St. Bernadette's Church over the last weekend of January. Mr. Dussault said the items filled five large boxes and five smaller

ones and should be on their way to Camp Ramadi this week.

According to Army Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros, a Pentagon spokesman, the camp is predominantly a Marine Corps area of operations, but there are also soldiers, sailors and airmen from the other branches there.

While the Department of Defense does everything in its power to make sure that the troops are properly equipped and have all the items needed to accomplish a mission, it appreciates organizations that choose to send items to Iraq, he said.

"When local organizations take it upon themselves to put together items they think the soldiers would like to have in Iraq, we certainly are encouraged by that," Lt. Col. Ballesteros said yesterday. "We absolutely appreciate it. And we thank them for their efforts."

The St. Augustine Council will hold a second collection Feb. 24 and 25 at St. Rose of Lima Church, also in Northboro, according to Mr. Dussault. Further collections are planned at St. Rose of Lima and St. Bernadette's churches until the Knights of Columbus hears the troops have enough items, he said.

St. Theresa's Church in Blackstone also collects items for the troops, according to the Rev. Paul Bomba at the church.

"Father Dennis (Rocheford) tells us what the troops need," he said. "He provides us with names and addresses."

For more information and a list of needed products, visit the Millville Knights of Columbus Council's Web site at www.kofc11020.org. Northboro residents can contact members of the St. Augustine Council or St. Bernadette's or St. Rose of Lima parishes.



The Packing Process: L-R Merrill Dussault, Peter Kohn and Charles Foster, Jr.



The Finished Product: L-R Merrill Dussault, Peter Kohn, Charles Foster, Jr.
and Joseph McNamara