

2013 Holiday Gifts to Our Troops

This holiday season, the Wallace R. Bostwick Memorial Fund again spearheaded an effort to send holiday gifts to the troops serving in the military.

The effort is possible because of the generosity and volunteer efforts of our community. This is the fifth year that donations from corporations and individuals here in Kansas City have enabled us to put holiday gift packages together for our troops. Our goal this year was met to pack and send 650 gift boxes, each box hand-decorated by art students from the Cristo Rey School and the Paseo Academy of Performing Arts. On December 7 in the Sulgrave Regency ballroom, many of you saw the amazing packages ... the art on the boxes and the heartfelt notes from the kids were beyond our imagination. On that day the first 400 of this year's 650 boxes were packed and off to Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.



All of the gift packages we sent arrived before Christmas. They included instant coffee, ATT 550-minute phone cards, two great pairs of boot socks, a one-month supply of multi-vitamins, a large package of the original Gummy Bears, a toothbrush, toothpaste, a fleece blanket and slippers. The individual boxes weigh less than two pounds and were packed in large cartons to minimize shipping costs.

What really makes our program effective is the effort of the Bagram Red Cross workers who distribute the boxes upon arrival at the field hospital for wounded troops and other remote bases where military personnel lack many of the everyday comforts we take for granted.

The challenging economy and the resulting impact on individual and corporate budgets have taken a toll on gifts and donations to the troops in recent years, yet the war continues and support for our program make a huge difference. The visibility of the packing on December 7th, however, brought in two new donors.

What started as a small effort the first year keeps growing. At the conclusion of this year's program, we will have sent 1,900 packages to the troops with contributions of more than \$225,000. These gift packages make a big difference for the servicemen and women who are away from family and loved ones during the holidays.

This is not about the war. This is about giving and making a difference for our troops. If you know a member of the military who is serving anywhere abroad, send me his or her address and we will make certain he or she receives a package.



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For some views of the amazing artists and of the packaging, see page 4

