

Navy Supply Corps Newsletter

Baghdad Good Neighbor Program builds relationships

By Lt. Kara Langford, SC, USN Distribution Officer, USF-I J4 2:38p.m. May 1, 2010

The Baghdad Supply Corps Association recently coordinated with the Good Neighbor Program to pack and distribute bags of goodies to local Iraqi children. The Supply Corps Association teamed up with other service members stationed in Iraq to pack bags with clothes, toys, drawing materials, and candy and distribute to local children of Iraqi Army personnel stationed in the vicinity of Camp Victory.

Lt. Cmdr. Romeo Bautista coordinated with Ms. Charlie Uhrmann from Morris County Cares, a service division of the All Veterans Memorial along with Walmart Community Service Grant Committees from Boonton, Riverdale, and Rio Grande, New Jersey, to facilitate delivery of over five thousand beanie babies and two thousand pounds of candies donated by various civic and religious organizations. Cmdr. Brian Baldus handed out a box of children books that were sent by his church from Mechanicsburg, Pa., and had a chance to read some stories to some playful and very curious Iraqi children. Cmdr. Peter Lawless added three more boxes of toys that he received from his hometown church organization.



It was not only a special event for the children, but also a great way to bond with the local community, other military services, and also fellow Supply Corps members. All of the children were thrilled with their bags of goodies and enjoyed the time that each of the volunteers spent with them playing soccer, reading, playing on the swings, sliding down slides and much more. The most exciting and memorable event however was witnessing the excitement as children opened their gift bags. This was a wonderful experience for Supply Corps Members who are far away from their children and families. Long tours in Iraq can become emotionally draining but taking the time to interact with these adorable children really helped to lift the spirits of all of the participants.

For new parents with small children at home, this was especially important to bond with young children and break up the monotony of their deployment. Lt. Kara Langford, who has 19-month-old boy/girl twins at home, expressed her gratitude by stating "working with these precious children was truly heart-warming. One little girl reminded me of my daughter so it was even more rewarding for me to have an opportunity to connect with her and to watch her enjoy playing with her little friends and our gifts." This opportunity was also an important way to bond with the local community in order to gain their trust and respect.

The Supply Community has always had a reputation for their generosity and service to others and this was yet another example of that wonderful and caring tradition. The Baghdad Supply Corps Association looks forward to more opportunities to serve the community while stationed here in Iraq. Capt. Bill Skinner summed up the experience stating "this is an awesome opportunity for the Supply Corps officers stationed here in Iraq to experience the other aspect of the contingency operations. Interacting with the local Iraqi children and providing the vehicle to connect our big-hearted American NGOs with the less fortunate people of Iraq will be one of the enduring highlights of our IA/GSA tour. This is also an example of the actual good stories in Iraq that most oftentimes will not make it to the press. We need to do more in telling the stories about the good things that we are doing here, on our active role in building a democratic Iraq, and building relationships with the Iraqi people.