

Service Comes Full Circle

Middle school students at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus involved in “My Last Tour-School Supplies for Afghan Children” hear how their contributions have made a difference a world away.



SMSgt. Rex Temple, founder of “My Last Tour-School Supplies for Afghan Children,” met with middle school students from Independent Day School-Corbett Campus who had contributed school supplies and volunteered their time to pack donations for shipping. Temple shared his experiences in Afghanistan with IDS students, along with photos of the children they had touched through their service.

April 13, 2011 (TAMPA, Fla.) – Twice a year, middle school students at Independent Day-School dedicate a day to community service. In multi-grade advisory teams, they spread out to numerous sites across the Tampa area – Meals on Wheels, Metropolitan Ministries, Ronald McDonald House, Alpha House of Tampa, Head Start programs, and senior centers, to name just a few.

In return for their small acts of volunteerism, sometimes they receive tangible signs of appreciation – a hug from a child who enjoyed hearing a story, or a twinkle in the eye of a senior citizen grateful for a game of chess.

When the individuals you are helping are a world away in a country such as Afghanistan, however, you might wonder if you really did make a difference.

So, imagine how gratifying it would be if you found out that you did.

Last year, middle school English teacher Kat Quin heard about the “My Last Tour: School Supplies for Afghan Children” project when its founder, SMSgt. Rex Temple from MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, spoke about it during a radio interview. She immediately shared the story with teaching partner Jeanne Rivera.

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Temple had talked about the need for school supplies in Afghanistan where children attend classes under trees in the shadows of Taliban-bombed schools. He said he believed the long-term solution to fighting terrorism is giving Afghan children the supplies they need to become educated.

So, during his fourth and final tour in the Middle East, Temple and his wife, Liisa, organized a drive to collect basic school supplies for students and teachers in Afghanistan, and Temple distributed them while overseas.

Quin and Rivera said that when they told their students about this need, they jumped right on board and collected hundreds of items.

IDS became the first school to help sort and package supplies and get them ready for shipment. The students volunteered for the duty again during the spring community service day, and on that occasion had the opportunity to speak with Temple live via Skype.

Students appreciated his thanks from thousands of miles away. Never did they expect to receive a personal visit.

Last month, Temple visited IDS. He shared his experiences in Afghanistan with students, along with photos of the children they had touched through their service.

“Just as you understand that you need to go to high school and college to get a good job and be successful in life, the children in Afghanistan understand that education is the path out of poverty,” he told IDS students.

Sixth grader Maggie Kratzer was impressed by Temple’s personal visit. “It was a unique opportunity to meet SMSgt. Temple,” she said. “It was great to actually see pictures of the school supplies IDS students packed being passed out directly to children in Afghanistan.”

Eighth grader Danielle Wilson recalled the group's first community service day, packing supplies at the main storage and collection facility at the SS American Victory museum ship.

“While I was packing boxes, I was thinking how privileged I was to go to a school like IDS, while many children in Afghanistan can't because their schools have been bombed. You definitely cannot take what you are given for granted,” said Wilson.

“It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get to meet SMSgt. Temple,” said eighth grader Zoe Dolcimascolo. “His presentation really opened our eyes to how hard our soldiers work in the Middle East. This last community service day for me really opened my eyes to other ways of life – not only an hour away, but across the world.”

According to Quin, by taking the time to visit the students, Temple was able to show them the fruits of their labor, bringing their community service full circle.

“His visit was a powerful experience for students and their proud teachers.”

Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, nonsectarian private school located on Orange Grove Drive in northwest Hillsborough County with over 500 students from PreK3 through 8th grade. At IDS, all children experience the International Baccalaureate Programme in a highly academic and nurturing environment focused on excellence and excitement in learning. IDS-CC has become recognized as an exemplary school with over 6,500 visitors observing and learning from IDS-CC teachers. For more information, visit www.idsyees.com or contact the Admissions Office at 813-961-3087 for a personal tour.

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