

## **IDS Middle School Students Volunteer *My Last Tour- School Supplies for Afghan Children***

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Sometimes having a notebook and a pen that writes is a big deal. That is the reality for many Afghan children who are so poor that classes meet under a tarp, teachers guide lessons with spray paint on the concrete, and students without pencils or paper have to rely on memorization.

A group of IDS-CC middle school students heard the need and decided a little sweat equity would be their way to help Afghan children get educated, contribute to the war effort, and participate in a day of community service.

The 20 students spent a morning in the Fall on the SS American Victory museum ship in Tampa. They brought donated school supplies, organized the existing stockpile of pencils and notebooks, packed and taped 30 boxes and readied them for shipment by completing customs forms.

The volunteer effort was part of Middle School Community Service Day, a twice-a-year event where students and their advisory teams spread out to various sites throughout the Tampa Bay area.



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Middle School teacher Kat Quin said she first heard about the My Last Tour: School Supplies for Afghan Children project when its founder, SMSgt. Rex Temple, spoke about it on a radio interview.

Sgt. Temple talked about the need for school supplies in Afghanistan where children attend make-shift schools under awnings in the shadows of Taliban-bombed schools. He is on his fourth and final tour in the Middle East with the U.S. Air Force and believes the long-term solution to fighting terrorism is giving Afghan children the supplies they need to become educated.

When he realized Afghan children wanted pens and paper more than candy from American soldiers, he asked his wife Liisa to send him some school supplies to pass out. After that, the idea for My Last Tour was born.

The project's mission is to provide basic school supplies like notebooks, pencils, pens for students, and whiteboards, markers, erasers and chalk for teachers in Afghanistan. The drive has teamed with the Holland & Knight Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Mrs. Quin said when she brought the schools supply drive to her advisory team as a possible community service project, her students were ecstatic.

"It was their chance to be part of the war effort," she said. "Our students are so excited to feel like they are truly helping, not only children half a world away, but our own soldiers in their endeavors."

IDS was the first group to donate the volunteer time to sort and package the school supplies and get them ready for shipment. "If you could have seen our IDSers working, your hearts would have swelled," said Mrs. Quin.

Middle School student Tristan Polmear said volunteering on the memorial ship, which serves as the main drop-off and storage site for the project, was worth it.



"We helped SMSgt. Rex Temple's wife sort and organize 30 boxes of school supplies destined for students in Afghanistan schools. We feel we did a good deed for both SMSgt's wife and the Afghani children who will benefit from the supplies," Polmear said.

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