

Orphaned Afghan boys receive donated school supplies from Corps of Engineers

Local woman helps with 'Operation Backpack Drop'

KABUL — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers paid a visit to some displaced Afghan boys and provided them with much needed school supplies, toys and treats during "operation backpack drop," May 8.

The children, ages five to 18, are all considered orphans due to the fact that their parents are either deceased or disabled thus leaving them in the care of relatives.

Each of the 160 students that attend the all-boys Ostad Khalil Ullah Khalili Orphans Education Center located in Kabul received a new backpack filled with pens, paper, pencils, notebooks, crayons, erasers, rulers, sharpeners, toys a puzzle and candy delivered by members of the Afghanistan Engineer District-North

The humanitarian effort was made possible with state side cash donations from a church in Kentucky, and employees from the AED-N Qalaa House totaling \$1,600 and donations of toys, books, puzzles and school supplies.

Many of the donations came from AED-N member's home districts, like Sharon Schwab from Waynesville, Ohio who is a senior electrical engineer technician over special projects here with the Quality Assurance Branch and deployed from the Huntington, W. Va District Corps of Engineers.

"I sent out emails and posted on Facebook that we were looking for puzzle donations," said Schwab.

The result was a puzzle drive from her home district that yielded more than 80 puzzles.

Additionally, Schwab's family and friends also donated puzzles bringing the total number of puzzles to more than 160, enough for each student to receive their own.

"Puzzles help the kids learn the design and construction aspect of engineering," Schwab says. "Just like a drawing or diagram for building plans, puzzles also have a picture on the box and pieces that they have to put together which gives the students the beginning basis of building something from a picture."

In fact, there were so many supplies and toys donated that it took nearly 20 AED-N Qalaa House members to sort through all the donations, blow up basketballs and soccer balls and pack 160 backpacks.



Maj. Erica Iverson huddles around students from the Ostad Khalil Ullah Khalili Orphans Education Center after dropping off donated school supplies and toys to the orphaned Afghan boys.

(Photo by LaDonna Davis)

The Ostad Khalil Ullah Khalili Orphans Education Center was built in 2009 and is funded by the Afghan government. The students take classes in science, computers, reading and arithmetic. But, according to the orphan education center Director, Naqib Jami, finding qualified teachers in Afghanistan is very difficult. "Our teachers only make about [the equivalent] \$80 American in salary," said Jami. "So, it is very hard to find people that have the skills to teach science courses for so little money."

Though the school receives a certain amount of supplies at the beginning of the year, the supplies that AED-N provided will help the school's dollars go even further, possibly making it easier to pay for good teachers.

"School supplies are very expensive in the markets," he says. "Anytime something is done for the kids it is welcome. We are very happy the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is here to help; we are very appreciative."

Once the volunteers from AED-N arrived at the school, the excitement from the boys and faculty could hardly be contained. Many students offered the only English they knew, "thank you," while others gladly posed for pictures and shook hands with the volunteers

who placed a bag on their back.

"I love the blank notebook for drawing and the color crayons, said Safha Hayty, 13 through a translator. "I am very happy with everything we got, it is very useful and we are glad to receive them."

For the AED-N members who participated in the backpack drop, the real reward was the sense of pride and satisfaction that giving much needed supplies to the students and staff provided. Even more special was the operation took place right around Mothers Day, making it a fitting tribute to the volunteers who spent the American Holiday with Afghan children who no longer have parents.

"What a rewarding experience to spend Mothers Day with these orphaned Afghan children and present them with a future," said U.S. Army Maj. Erica Iverson from Vermillion, S.D. who is the chief of the Synchronization and Initiatives Group/Capacity Building Team here deployed from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters in Washington, D.C. "these donated school supplies and toys gave these boys smiles that will ensure a quality of life that every child deserves."

AWARDS From Page 2

Bergman, Daniel Hargadine, Zachary McDonald, Thomas Sullivan, Gage Thomas, Emily Van Den Hul, Sadie Winckler, Tatum Zimiga; USD Barnes & Noble Valedictorian Scholarship — Samuel Jensen; USD Coyote Commitment Veritas Scholarship — Samuel Jensen and Douglas Kronaizl; USD Coyote Commitment Distinction Scholarship — Elly Melby and Lindsay Robinet; School of Mines — Mathew Martin; KCAU Best of the Class — Sam Jensen; KSFY Brightest & Best — Alex Larson and Sarah Szymonski; Argus Leader Academic All Star Team — Alex Larson; Prudential Spirit of Community — Sarah Szymonski; Steve Merrigan Memorial Award — Carla Sorensen and Cody Olson; Daughters of the American Revolution Award — McKenzie Huska; Denim for Dollars — Alex Larson, Carla Sorensen, Sarah Szymonski, McKenzie Huska, Lindsay Robinet; Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan A+ Student Award of Merit — Collin Bertram, Jayce Huska, Katie Wasley, Lexi Regnerus and Cassie Waage; Ford/AAA Awards — Lance Burkhart, Tom Hagenbuch, Blaine Hubert, Jasper Johnson, Ben Kozak, Alex Manning, Dexter Mehlhaf, Joey Mueller, Shaunna Noteboom, Allen Schmitz, Greg Styles, Tyler Osborn; Ford/AAA Trouble Shooting Contest — Ben Kozak and Joseph Mueller; CTE Awards — Blaine Hubert, Dexter Mehlhaf, Ben Kozak; OSHA Awards — Fred Balleweg, Mike Brunick, Tom Hagenbuch, Ben Kozak, Dexter Mehlhaf, Joey Mueller, Shaunna Noteboom, Brock Allen, Victoria Bergman, Heidi Harkness, James May,

Joe Moreau, Sarah Szymonski; VEA Education Scholarship — Sarah Szymonski; Sophomore Good Citizenship Award — Meghan Cameron and William Card; Governor's Leadership Luncheon — Meghan Cameron and Tanner Anderson; Associated School Boards of S.D. — Alex Larson; Peer Tutor Awards — Bethany Hansen, Valerie Robinson, Megan Schliesman, Shelby Covill and Owen Korcuska; VHS Honors Program — Virginia Bergman, Ellen Brown, Ashley Brunick, Kevin Callahan, Alexander Card, Lucas Dodge, Daniel Hargadine, Tony Henderson, McKenzie Huska, Levi James, Sam Jensen, Jennifer Jurgensen, Owen Korcuska, Ben Kozak, Doug Kronaizl, Alex Larson, Mathew Martin, Zach McDonald, Dexter Mehlhaf, Elly Melby, Cody Olson, Janani Ragothaman, Lindsay Robinet, Carla Sorensen, Eric Storm, Carson Sullivan, Sarah Szymonski, Gage Thomas, Emily Van Den Hul, Amber Walker, Sadie Winckler and Tatum Zimiga; Regents' Diploma Scholars — Virginia Bergman, Ellen Brown, Ashley Brunick, Kevin Callahan, Alexander Card, Lucas Dodge, Courtney Eidem, Morgan Erickson, Daniel Hargadine, Tracy Howe, Blaine Hubert, McKenzie Huska, Levi James, Samuel Jensen, Jennifer Jurgensen, Owen Korcuska, Benjamin Kozak, Douglas Kronaizl, Alexander Larson, Katelyn Fergen-Lubbers, Mathew Martin, Zachary McDonald, Dexter Mehlhaf, Elly Melby, Cody Olson, Janani Ragothaman, Lindsay Robinet, Carla Sorensen, Thomas Sullivan, Eric Storm, Sarah Szymonski, Emily Van Den Hul, Amber Walker, Sadie Winckler and Tatum Zimiga; National Honors Program — Virginia Bergman, Ellen Brown, Kevin Callahan, Alexander Card, Lucas Dodge,

Morgan Erickson, McKenzie Huska, Levi James, Samuel Jensen, Jennifer Jurgensen, Owen Korcuska, Douglas Kronaizl, Alexander Larson, Mathew Martin, Dexter Mehlhaf, Elly Melby, Cody Olson, Janani Ragothaman, Lindsay Robinet, Carla Sorensen, Sarah Szymonski, Emily Van Den Hul, Amber Walker and Tatum Zimiga; Special Presentation — Brandon Watters; Drama Booster Scholarship — Joseph Geis and Mathia Shumaker; Retiring Personnel — Lea Gustad, Ilene Lerseth and Shari Kolbeck; Recycling Award — Austin Ahmed, Cody Knudsen and Sharrie Stammer; 2012 National Merit Scholarship Invitation — Jinny Sun and Kristina Zalud; 2011 National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists — Lucas Dodge and Alex Larson; 2011 National Merit Scholarship Finalist — Alex Larson; 2011 National Merit Scholarship Commended — Kayla Thompson and Samuel Jensen; Clay County Youth Trust Fund Centennial Scholarship — McKenzie Huska; Wendy's Heisman Winner — Amber Walker; Horatio Alger — Camden Raizola

VCT holding auditions May 21-22

Vermillion Community Theatre is holding auditions for two summer shows on May 21 and 22 at 3 p.m. at the Vermillion High School Performing Arts Center. Actors may audition for one or both shows. The main stage show is the Broadway musical "My Fair Lady" with performances July 8-11. "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" promises to please our younger audiences with performances Aug. 5-7. Actors do not need prepared material but may be asked to sing and should wear comfortable clothes and shoes that allow movement on stage. There will be parts for actors of all ages. Additional information and audition forms can be found online at www.vermillioncommunitytheatre.org.

OPEN HOUSE SET FOR ROSE HIROCKE



After 31 years of service to the residents of Vermillion and Clay County, Rose Hirocke is retiring from the Vermillion office of the Department of Social Services. An open house for Rose will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. May 19 in the Community Room of the Vermillion Public Library. Rose has been the "voice" on the phone and the "face" of greeting to all who enter the office. She has been the go to person for anyone who entered Department of Social Service's doors and to the staff she so graciously worked with these past 31 years. Please join in the recognition of the many years of service Rose has given to this community.

OBITUARIES

James Owens

Funeral services for James D. Owens, age 90, of Moberg were 11 a.m., Friday, May 6, 2011 at Norway Lutheran Church in rural Glenham. Burial was in the church cemetery under the direction of Kesling Funeral Home of Moberg. Visitation began at 2 p.m. Thursday with a prayer service at 8 p.m. at the funeral home. James passed away Friday, April 29, 2011 at the Moberg Regional Hospital.

James David Owens believed in "living life for what you can put into it and not what one may get out of it." He approached life with quiet dignity and grace, and will always be remembered for his active mind, love of country, and avid enthusiasm for sports.

He was born May 8, 1920, to Ellen (Bendixen) and Dinsmore Owens. His parents, whose families immigrated from Scotland and Denmark, met and lived their entire adult lives in Vermillion. James was the oldest of eight children: himself, Glen, Mary Ellen, Bob, Gene, Dick, John (Jack), and Don. He lived most of his boyhood years in the house his grandfather built, playing sports in its large backyard amidst a canopy of ash, linden, elm, box elder, plum, apple, and cherry trees. During high school he got up before dawn to work at his father's bakery, filled his days with academics and music, then enjoyed sports until sundown.

In 1942, James graduated from USD with a B.S. in Business Administration, receiving a commission as 2nd Lieutenant in

the Army & Marine Corps as an honor graduate of the ROTC program. He proudly served his country during WWII as an artillery officer in the Pacific theater, stationed in Bougainville, Guadalcanal, and Okinawa.

After graduating from USD Law School, James started practicing law in Kimball, where he met and married Audrey Tronson on Oct. 28, 1951. They moved to Highmore in 1961, when James was elected Hyde County States Attorney. James and Audrey were active at Our Savior Lutheran Church, where he served on its building committee and loved singing in the choir. James retired in 1989, following 15 years as head legal counsel for the SD Department of Social Services.

James and Audrey raised four children: James Alert, Thomas Arden, Lori Anna, and Jeffrey Alan. They dedicated their lives to their children and grandchildren, and loved attending the many (mostly musical) events in their children's and grandchildren's lives. Upon Audrey's passing in 2006, James spent the last two years of his life in Moberg.

James is survived by his brothers, Glenn, Jack, and Don; children, Thomas (Cris), Lori Boyd, and Jeffrey (Ramona); and grandchildren, Erin and Christina Boyd; Kari, Alan, Julia, Andrew and Alison Owens.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Ellen and Dinsmore Owens; brothers, Gene, Don and Dick; his sister, Mary Ellen; his wife, Audrey; and his son, James.

Lawrence Aakre

Lawrence Orr Aakre, 61, a Marine Corps veteran and former chief of police in Conrad, MT, died of a heart attack Dec. 1, 2010.

A memorial service will be held on May 14, 2011 at Conrad. Larry was an organ donor and cremation has taken place under the direction of Pondera Funeral Home.

Survivors include his wife,

Thelma "Jean" Aakre of Boulder; a daughter, Bobbi Jo (Ron) Hajek of Boulder; a son, David Daniel (Stephanie) Aakre of Culbertson; a sister, Kathy (Allen) Ruddy of Killeen, TX; and brothers Sandy (Shelley) Aakre of Vermillion, Jerry (Vi) Aakre of Great Falls, and Peggy (Peggy) Aakre of Glasgow; and nine grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a son, Nelson W. Aakre, in 1978.

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Most difficult time with the passing of my husband Fred. Good friends and neighbors gave to me so much comfort. They sent beautiful flowers and cards and called with their condolences. I would like to extend a heart felt thank you to each and everyone of them. A very special thank you to Rev. Sandy Aakre.
*Sincerely,
Pat Duve*