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*Korean War Veteran Francis E. Baker, who is a member of Father Edward W. Johnston Council 9488 in Harrisonburg, Va., loads care packages into a truck for distribution to U.S. soldiers serving overseas. Knights spearheaded a collection of personal items for troops stationed in Afghanistan, Iraq, Korea and Kuwait.*

## Scorpion Memorial

Walter Pollard Council 5480 and Father Michael J. Bader Assembly, both in Newport News, Va., sponsored their annual memorial service for the USS *Scorpion*, which sank in 1968 with 99 crewmen aboard. Capt. Maryetta Nolan, the daughter of one of the deceased sailors, delivered remarks at the ceremony.

## Patriotism Night

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Assembly in Arlington Heights, Ill., held its annual "patriotism night" in support of military members and their families. The evening consisted of a buffet dinner, followed by video horse races and a live auction. The event raised \$2,672 for Salute Inc., which offers financial support to military members and veterans.

## Flag Delivered

Charles B. McLaughlin Assembly in Brandon, Fla., visited patients at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa to deliver care packages and a new POW/MIA flag for display in the hospital cafeteria.

## Blessing for First Responders

Msgr. William Varrily Council 12031 in Bathurst, N.B., held its fifth annual blessing for area first responders, May 31. Msgr. John Wheten Assembly provided an honor guard for the event.

## Hospital Rounds

Members of Our Lady of the Hills Council 5959 in Martinsville, N.J., work a recurring shift every two months at the Lyons VA hospital to bring veterans to and from Mass.

## Military Prayer Book Available

The Catholic Information Service (CIS) booklet *Armed with the Faith* (#364) is a Catholic handbook for military personnel and their families. Edited by Father Daniel R. Sweeney, S.J., chaplain of the U.S. Air Force Reserve, it contains several military-specific prayers as well as an assortment of general Catholic prayers, hymns and devotions. Download a free copy of the booklet in PDF form by visiting [www.kofc.org/veritas](http://www.kofc.org/veritas).



*Members of Father Griffin Council 3586 in Affton, Mo., present Jim Donabue (center), campaign chairman for Fisher House, with a check for \$7,150. Knights hosted a golf tournament to raise funds to build a Fisher House at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, Jefferson Barracks Division. Fisher House provides free housing to the extended family of veterans recovering at the hospital. Also pictured, second from right, is Fisher House Manager Rachael Fernandez.*



*Glen Kraig (center) of Msgr. William Van Garsse Assembly in Victorville, Calif., stands with Sgt. David Nunez (left) and Spc. Jesus Jasso of the California National Guard after the assembly delivered a series of "prayer packages" for troops serving in the Middle East. When Knights discovered that troops being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan were no longer being issued Bibles and rosaries, the assembly donated 3,500 of each to the California National Guard for distribution to new troops.*



# Kicking Around

*Soldier's family collects 1,000 soccer balls for Afghan youths.*

*by Doug Weller, CNS*

When Air Force Capt. Andrew Stewart was deployed to Afghanistan last summer, he realized he could use two things in the war-torn region: a crucifix and soccer balls.

He wanted to display the crucifix during the prayer services he led for fellow Catholic soldiers at their base near the Pakistani border — a place so remote that a priest only visited once every few months.

And the sight of two children holding a flattened soccer ball tugged at his heart, so he wanted something for the area's young people.

Father Norbert Dlabal at Stewart's home parish in Goodland, Kan., took care of the crucifix, but donors across the country have seen to the soccer ball delivery, with 1,000 collected as of February.

The project is called "Operation: Andy's Gift," and his parents, Tom and Carol Stewart of Goodland, and his sister, Emily Goatcher of Raleigh, N.C., said they have been amazed by the results.

"It's really built their spirits," Carol Stewart said of the men and women serving with her son. "These guys need something positive to do. It's real uplifting for them."

Goatcher added that it illustrates how willing Americans are to show their support for the troops.

This is Stewart's third deployment to the Middle East. He served two four-month stints at Air Force operations in Kirkuk and Baghdad, Iraq, respectively.



*(Top) Air Force Capt. Andrew Stewart distributes soccer balls at a school near Gardez, Afghanistan, in the fall of 2008. Capt. Stewart, a former Kansas resident, is serving a year-long tour of duty in Afghanistan, where his family's goal to hand out as many as 1,000 soccer balls to impoverished youth was reached in just six months. (Bottom) Capt. Stewart pictured with some of the youths he met at his first base near the Pakistani border.*

But when the U.S. Army asked the other Armed Forces for help shoring up their ranks, Stewart volunteered for a 12-month assignment in Afghanistan.

During his current deployment, Stewart's wife, Jami, and the couple's children, Wrigley, 3, and Kearny, 1, are living in Tacoma, Wash., near McChord Air Force Base.

It has become routine, Carol Stewart said, for her son to contact family mem-

bers by e-mail as soon as he arrives at a new assignment, and they routinely ask what they can send him.

So when he arrived in Afghanistan "the first thing he said was, 'Send soccer balls.' I'm sure he was thinking five or 10," his sister said.

But as Carol Stewart noted, her daughter rarely does anything "in a little way." She immediately came up with a goal of sending her brother 1,000 soccer balls by the end of his deployment in July.

Goatcher forwarded the first e-mail request to about 30 friends. "And then it just exploded," she said. "We were getting e-mail [messages] from people we didn't know."

Goatcher contacted the owner of a sporting goods outlet located just a mile from her home who agreed to let donors drop soccer balls off at his store. He also linked his store's Web site to Goatcher's Web log and offered donors a discount on their orders.

After surpassing the 1,000 goal, Goatcher said she would continue the project even after her brother returned home. But for now, Stewart

has kept his family updated by sending photos from Afghanistan showing children playing with their shiny new soccer balls.

"Andy is a logistical officer, so he finds a way to get these balls to schools, villages and wherever his troops can give them away," his mother said. ♦

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