



Members of the U.S. Army display some of the candy they received from the Wisconsin State Council. Under a program called "Treats for Peace," Wisconsin Knights sent Tootsie Rolls from their funds drives to the state council, which in turn shipped them to soldiers serving overseas.



Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Justin Arnold (second from left) and a team of U.S. Navy sailors transport a victim of the Haitian earthquake to U.S. Naval Hospital Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for treatment. HC3 Arnold, who is a member of Msgr. Newman Council 4665 in Louisville, Ky., was among the many members of the U.S. Armed Forces who responded after the earthquake struck Jan. 12.

Sweats for Vets

St. Elizabeth Bayley Seton Assembly in Sterling, Va., and Pope John Paul II Assembly in Potomac Falls teamed with the VFW and the American Legion to host a "Sweats for Vets" drive to benefit the Martinsburg VA Medical Center. Volunteers collected 700 sweat suits and \$1,000 in cash donations.

Fort Hood Memorial

Our Lady of Lourdes Council 11809 in Sun City West, Ariz., and Sun City Assembly celebrated a memorial Mass Dec. 2, 2009, in honor of the troops killed at Fort Hood. At the Mass, a series of candles were lit in memory of the victims.

Television Donation

Mary Immaculate Council 12769 in Secaucus, N.J., and Msgr. Peter B. O'Connor Assembly in North Arlington held a veterans breakfast to purchase new televisions for the Veterans Memorial Home in Paramus. By teaming with Best Buy stores, Knights were able to purchase nine 19-inch televisions at a discounted price.

Appreciation Cards

Honorable W. Patrick Donlin Assembly in New Haven, Conn., distributed 500 cards to area churches that parishioners could fill out and

send to members of the Armed Forces. The cards were pre-printed with the message, "Thank you for your service to our country. May God bless you and keep you safe."

Religious Goods

With support from an area Wal-Mart store, The Four Chaplains Council 13901 in Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., raised funds to purchase Bibles and rosaries for soldiers serving overseas.

Calling Home

John Paul I Council 7165 in Woodbridge, Va., donated \$500 worth of pre-paid phone cards to members of the U.S. Armed Forces serving in Kabul, Afghanistan. Knights also collected 400 calendars for distribution to service members at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

Airport Greeters

St. Joseph the Worker Council 13470 and Mary, Queen of Peace Assembly, both in Arlington, Texas, are part of a contingent of veterans, civilians and school children who regularly greet returning troops at the Dallas Fort Worth International Airport. About 275 soldiers, Marines and airmen arrive at the airport daily from Iraq and Afghanistan.



Members of Our Lady of Sorrows Council 6302 in Wahiawa, Hawaii, and St. John, Apostle and Evangelist Council 14663 in Mililani serve breakfast to attendees at a going-away party for the U.S. Army 25th Infantry Division based out of Schofield Barracks. Knights served more than 300 soldiers and their families prior to the soldiers' deployment overseas.



There for His Buddies

Catholic corporal steps up to tend the spiritual well-being of his company.

by Steven Sims, CNS

Like all Marines, Cpl. Matthew Munoz is there for his buddies, but the 23-year-old has also stepped forward to help tend to the spiritual well-being of his comrades in arms.

Munoz is second in command of his squad of about 14 men, an assistant patrol leader with a Marines' weapons platoon stationed deep in Afghanistan's Helmand province — Taliban territory.

Munoz, however, also serves as the company's Catholic lay leader, combining his Catholic faith with special training provided by a military chaplain. In this role, he serves as a faith presence for Catholics and non-Catholics at a military camp where the men sleep in unheated tents, have no showers and use plywood with holes over barrels as toilets.

There's no shortage of razor wire, sandbags and dust, and the cocoa-colored earth is deep in mud where pools of water formed from the last downpour. Temperatures surpass 130 degrees in summer and fall below freezing in winter.

Munoz told Catholic News Service that when his "very religious" mother and devout Catholic father separated, he went with his father to San Diego. At age 15, he entered the Catholic Church during the Easter Vigil at San Diego's St. Mary Magdalene Church. He prayed more, joined the parish youth group and became an altar server.

When his father died, Munoz moved to Coos Bay, Ore., with his aunt, Teresita, where he continued as an altar server and graduated a semester early from high school.

"I enlisted a week after graduating," the six-foot, 200-pound Marine recalled. "My mom's side of the family was big into the military, but had no Marines. I wanted to be the first."



U.S. Marines patrol their base in Helmand province, southern Afghanistan, a region rife with Taliban strongholds. This is the same province where [inset] Cpl. Matthew Munoz, 23, serves as a Catholic lay leader, providing spiritual support to his fellow Marines.

Munoz was first deployed to Iraq, where "there was only one chaplain for about 1,000 of us, and he always looked tired." A gunnery sergeant asked if Munoz would volunteer to become a lay leader to help fill the need.

"I said yes. I consider it a privilege," Munoz said.

A battalion chaplain then trained Munoz, providing tips on how to spot Marines needing special support and how to help and encourage them.

"Sometimes it's as simple as praying with them," Munoz said.

He also received training in providing Catholic liturgies, such as those he leads for up to 10 men each Sunday near the camp's canopy-covered chow tables. They begin with prayer, followed by an inspirational reading.

"We always use the Bible," Munoz

said, adding that the participants also share stories to uplift and encourage one another.

The liturgies end with more prayers, including one for a quick, safe trip home.

Communion is not distributed, he said, because the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, banned the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament after desecration allegedly occurred in Iraq.

"I miss the Mass," Munoz said, noting that he has not had access to the Eucharist since his deployment in November 2009. "Mass means a lot to me and makes me feel good, but as long as I've got my guys, I'm good."

Munoz is tentatively scheduled to return home in June and plans to pursue a career in personal fitness training. ♦

STEVEN SIMS writes for the Catholic News Service.

SOLDIERS: CNS photo/Goran Tomasevic, Reuters. MUNOZ: CNS photo/Steven Sims