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A drive to help others

LaSalle sends school supplies to Afghanistan

By MICHAEL WANBAUGH
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND -- For the past few weeks, promotional posters lined the hallways of the LaSalle Intermediate Academy. Pleas were part of the morning announcements.

"This has been going on for about two weeks," said Lauren Dollinger, an eighth-grader at LaSalle. "We've been staying and packing after school and during lunches."

Members of the LaSalle student council concluded its campaign to gather and send school supplies and clothes to children in Afghanistan Tuesday afternoon.

The students filled a pickup truck and mini-van with about 70 boxes of supplies -- more than 5,000 items.

The supplies were mailed Wednesday to a town near the Afghanistan capital of Kabul and the U.S. military compound of Camp Phoenix.

Diane Eaton is a social studies teacher at LaSalle. Her son, Sgt. Brian Eaton, is an Indiana National



LaSalle Intermediate Academy eighth-graders Branden Wawrzyniak, left, Alex Bowman and Lauren Dollinger load boxes of school supplies into a pick-up truck Tuesday afternoon. The 70 boxes of supplies are being sent to students in Afghanistan.

Tribune Photo/GENE KAISER

Guardsman stationed at Camp Phoenix, where soldiers train members of the Afghan National Army.

"The Afghan children would go up to my son and say 'pen, pen,' " Eaton said. "He didn't understand. He thought they were asking for candy. He would pull out his pockets and show them he didn't have any more candy.

"But they weren't asking for candy. They were asking for pens for school."

Many schools in Afghanistan are being rebuilt, Eaton said, but there aren't enough school supplies.

Eaton's son spoke to LaSalle students while he was recently home on R&R. That is when the student council decided to organize the impromptu supply drive.

"We get some things thrown at us every once in a while," said eighth-grader Alex Bowman, who is co-president of student council. "But, usually we have a little more time to put things together."

Paper, pencils and markers were collected, along with some clothes and other supplies.

All the items had to be inventoried and boxed. Each box had to have a United States Postal Service customs form completed in full.

"We probably filled out at least 120 of those customs forms," said eighth-grader Bethy Williams, the other student council co-president.

Fifth-grade teacher and student council faculty adviser Mary Ann Peterson helped coordinate the drive.

"We knew it would be big," Peterson said, "but had no idea it would be this big."

Eaton's husband, Jim, is the labor relations manager for Rieth-Riley Construction Co. Inc. He and Rieth-Riley Vice President Brian Inniger helped load the boxes Tuesday and drove them to the post office.

Rieth-Riley volunteered to pay for the shipping of the supplies. The postage cost more than \$700.

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