



Metro photo by BEN CALWELL

**Nitro Mayor Rusty Casto, right, and Cross Lanes resident Brad Morgan, chaplain of the St. Albans American Legion Post 73, hold items destined for schools and orphanages in Afghanistan. Casto is urging Nitro area residents to donate items to the Post 73 project.**

# SCHOOL SUPPLIES, PERSONAL CARE ITEMS ON WAY TO AFGHANISTAN ORPHANS

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A St. Albans American Legion Post 73 project to help children in Afghanistan got a boost recently when **Nitro** Mayor Rusty Casto got involved and started urging town residents to help out.

The Post 73 effort is getting needed school supplies to students in Afghanistan and personal care items to children living in orphanages there.

The project is an offshoot of a Post 73 "care package" mission that benefits troops.

"For over three years, we've been sending care packages to deployed troops," said Post 73 Chaplain Brad Morgan of Cross Lanes.

When the Parkersburg-based 1092nd Engineering Battalion of the West Virginia National Guard deployed recently to Afghanistan, medics familiar with the care packages for troops project, contacted Morgan and asked him to get Post 73 involved in helping school children and orphans.

"The medics, especially, get involved with the schools and orphanages to help the children, and they asked if we could gather items for the orphans and school children in Afghanistan," Morgan said.

A medic e-mailed Morgan a list of needed items for the children, who range in age from 5 to 15. The needed items include new clothes, including socks and shoes. The clothes, however, must not display any references or logos that would identify them as coming from the United States.

For example, no clothing with "USA" designs or logos, or any clothing with American sports teams' logos on them.

Personal care items are also needed, such as soap, shampoo, toothbrushes and vitamins, and school supplies for students are needed, including pencils and notebook paper. Items with wires or batteries are not permitted.

Post 73 started sending the requested items and then got additional help from some students at Andrew Jackson Middle School. The students learned of the project at a Bible school at Cross Lanes United Methodist Church, where Morgan attends.

"They collected seven nice boxes of different items to send to them. They gathered school supplies, toiletries and clothing," Morgan said.

The project got some additional support when Casto, who also attends Cross Lanes United Methodist, heard about it from his friend, Morgan.

"Rusty was out there one night, and I was telling him what the middle school was doing, and he said, 'How could I get involved with it?'" Morgan said.

Casto started getting the word out in the city newsletter and by notifying area churches. He also posted information about the project on Facebook.

"My first six boxes of stuff I got because I put it on Facebook," Casto said.

Since then, he's received another seven boxes of items.

**Nitro** City Council "has agreed to underwrite the cost of mailing [the boxes]. It costs \$12.50 a box to mail them out," Casto said.

For school supplies, Casto said he's been emphasizing such things as pencils, notebook paper and notebooks. For personal hygiene items, he's asking for soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, shampoo and vitamins.

For clothing, Casto emphasized that clothing sent to Afghanistan must be new, not used.

"If you say, 'clothes,' people tend to clean out their closets," he said.

And because the clothing is destined for a war zone, Morgan stressed that all donated new clothing items must be free of anything that could identify them as coming from the United States.

Those wanting to donate school supplies, toiletries or clothing can bring them to **Nitro** City Hall on 20th Street.

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