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Knowing Christ & Making Him Known

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(800) 252-LWML(5965) • lwml@lwml.org
801 Seminary Place, Suite L010 • Saint Louis, MO 63105

TDD/TTY through Missouri Relay
(800) 735-2966 • FAX (314) 268-1532

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Listening to Your Story

Upon reading the Summer 2018 LWQ, Irene Gehring of Seattle, Washington, responded with a story of her own.

Dear Sister in Christ, Patti,

This morning I read your President's article, "Someone Took Time to Listen." As I read the last paragraph — "I'd love to listen to your story. Send me an email" — I just knew that I had a story to share with you.

In June 1992, Patrick Gehring enlisted in the United States Army and was immediately sent to Kosovo. His first letter home began with "Dear Mom and Dad: The kids here don't have warm clothing. With winter coming, could you round up some clothes and send them?"

Soon after, Patrick emailed a detailed list of 128 children, including ages and genders. Patrick's dad, Dave, shared this information with their church, Hope Lutheran, telling the congregation of the need and asking for their help. Each child would receive an individualized package containing a coat or jacket, three shirts, two pair of pants, gloves or mittens, scarf, warm hat, and a new pair of shoes.

Immediately, a man handed us a \$20 bill for postage. This act was followed by an overwhelming response from the congregation. In just one month, people donated more than enough clothing and money for postage to ship everything overseas!

There were many suggestions of charities that might ship the packages for us. In the end we decided that the best way to send it was to our son's APO address. The totals were amazing! It cost \$2,000 to send 1000 pounds of clothing!

The shipment took about a month. After all 21 boxes were received, the three village schools were closed for the distribution to take place. Despite some confusion, the day went well and the boxes were greatly appreciated.

In honor of Pat's celebrating his 20th birthday while in Kosovo, and realizing his heart for helping the children of the three villages, his parents decided to send Pat sports equipment for the children. We sent basketballs, baseballs, soccer balls, and Frisbees for him to distribute to the village children. Needless to say, these gifts were cherished!

Several years later our son and his wife visited the villages. The distribution was still remembered by the citizens. It was exciting to see young people still wearing Seattle Mariner and Seattle Seahawk shirts and hats! This proved that the items were still around and being used!

This heart-warming memory is very special for many people — the people of Kosovo who received the gifts, the people of Hope Lutheran Church who donated clothing and money, and especially for us, Dad and Mom, who are so humbly proud of our son, Pat — who retired from the Army as a Major three years ago — who cared and served so well! *Q*



A joyous reunion for mother and son, after Pat returned home from Iraq in 2009. Top photo: distributing the boxes of winter clothing to 128 children in Kosovo in 2001.