

# Fallen Soldier's Family Continues Mission of Love for Iraqi Children

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**Calif., native 1st Lt. Casey Zimmerman of Company C, 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, hands out footballs at a school in Mullah Fayad March 27. All the items were donated by the family and community of Sgt. Nathan Barnes, who served in the area and was killed in Rushdi Mullah July 17. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Tony M. Lindback, 3rd BCT, 101st Abn. Div.**

**PATROL BASE YUSIFIYAH** — Whoever said violence begets more violence never met the family of Sgt. Nathan Barnes.

American Fork, Utah, native Sgt. Nathan Barnes, a Soldier with 4th Battalion, 31st Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was killed in Rushdi Mullah, Iraq, when his unit came under attack by small-arms fire July 17.

Rather than hold bitterness toward the people of a foreign land where their son died, Barnes' family is embracing them. Barnes often sent home photos of children in the areas he served. His father, Kevin, said Nathan truly loved the Iraqi children.

Nathan's love for those children inspired his father and other residents of American Fork to collect enough donated items to fill a 40-foot shipping container. Sewing machines, book bags, newborn kits, personal hygiene items, food, toys, children and women's clothing, school supplies and even wheelchairs were donated to residents in and around Rushdi Mullah and Yusifiyah, places Barnes did most of his service in Iraq.

Rushdi Mullah, where Barnes was killed, is one of the communities now supported by Rakkasan Soldiers of 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault). The Rakkasans took on the task of distributing the items once the shipping container arrived in Iraq.

Company C, 3-187th Inf. Regt., distributed some of the gifts at a school in Mullah Fayad, an impoverished Yusifiyah community.

Santa Barbara, Calif., native 1st Lt. Casey Zimmerman, who helped hand out the donations at the school, wanted everyone to know the source of the aid.

“I made a point at the beginning to convey who Nathan Barnes was, how he died, and what kind of loving family and country he belonged to,” Zimmerman said. “I bet we saw over 1,500 men, women, and children – mostly children.”

The generosity of the Barnes family and the American Fork community led to a similar address in Rushdi Mullah by Brig. Gen. Ali Jassim Muhammad Hassen Al Frejee, commander of the 25th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division.

“A Soldier who came from thousands of miles away and was killed here – his family spends money to rebuild this area,” Ali said. “We have to respect that.”

Capt. Clifford Kazmarek, commander of Company B, 3-187th Inf. Regt., said the experience was remarkable and humbling.

“I have just the greatest amount of respect for that family for doing this, and I know that the people here truly appreciate it,” Kazmarek said.

The citizens received most items with a smile and without hesitation. But there was one gift that had many children puzzled.

“The Frisbee befuddled them,” said Pittsburgh native Capt. Michael Starz, commander of Co. C, 3-187th Inf. Regt. “They didn’t quite grasp the concept. They thought it was a serving plate so we had to engage with the kids for a few throws until they got the idea. In the end, though, they still said, ‘Where’s the football?’”

There were many footballs – soccer balls to Americans – handed out as well.

Thousands of Iraqis from Rushdi Mullah and Mullah Fayad benefited from the generosity.

“I never imagined a family – American or otherwise – could provide unmitigated charity to the people of a foreign town in which their son was killed,” Zimmerman said. “The Barnes family and those who have contributed to their noble foundation are true testaments to America’s values.”