

## **Holy Cross School students to send blankets, school supplies to Afghanistan**

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SCOTT — Students at Holy Cross School cut brightly colored blocks of fleece material and tied two large pieces together to make blankets for children overseas.

The goal was to complete 100 blankets for schoolchildren in Kunduz, Afghanistan, who now attend classes in tents and sleep on mattresses on concrete floors. Students also are collecting school supplies and cash to help the Afghan students.

The effort began when school development director Cathy Zehms learned from her brother-in-law, a surgeon stationed in Afghanistan, that students there badly need blankets and school supplies. Lt. Cmdr. Chad Zehms of the U.S. Navy was sent to Kunduz in September and said he quickly realized how in need students there were.

"They walk an incredibly long way to get to school and they have nothing to work with but a chalkboard," he told Holy Cross students via an Internet web camera Friday. "They don't have all the nice things we do. ... I could see the clothes they were wearing, I could tell it was getting colder outside."

Average daily temperatures this time of year in the northern area of Afghanistan can be in the 40s during the day and can dip into the 30s or even high 20s at night, he said.

Chad Zehms works in a hospital for injured soldiers but also helps local townspeople in need of care. His German counterpart at the base is working to collect school supplies for students as well. The Germans also are funding a new permanent school for the students, he said.

Soldiers will record the event when the Afghan students receive the blankets so Holy Cross students can observe. Chad Zehms said he would visit the Green Bay-area school after he returns in April.

"I can't wait for the kids to see when these blankets arrive," Cathy Zehms said. Supplies will be sent as they are collected, and she said cash will be sent to purchase larger items, such as desks or additional chalkboards. The blankets will be sent soon, she said.

"I think it's really cool," said eighth-grader Mari Vogel about the project. "I thought it was interesting that they walk so far to get to school. It's really cool we get to help them."

Classmate Jordan Saari also praised the project.

"It feels good to be helping people in Afghanistan, especially with everything going on with them with the war and everything," she said. "Especially when they have to sleep on cement, it feels good we are making blankets to keep them warm."



Students at Holy Cross School in the town of Scott have been making blankets to send to schoolchildren in Afghanistan. Kiely Kelly, Conner James Dreier and Sophia Schauer tie up the two layers of blanket on Friday. (Jim Matthews/Press-Gazette)