

Dear friends,

Quilters have the biggest hearts in the world. American quilters now have a unheard-of opportunity to do a good deed that will help our country's image, aid our troops stationed in Iraq, and help Iraqi women who are bearing the brunt of so much destruction in their country. This is not a political project—it is a project started by one quilter's husband who is now stationed in Iraq. I have looked into it personally and think it is a marvelous effort to make a difference—I feel certain that many quilters will want to help this happen!

The project is: IBOL—IRAQI BUNDLES OF LOVE. And in good old Army parlance, we're starting The Festival Brigade to help this project succeed. Major Art LaFlamme (his wife is Kristin, who has a quilt in this fall's Houston show) is the originator of the project. It's simple, it's easy, and it will do so much good. Here are the bare bones. For more details, including how to package your Bundle of Love, go to Major LaFlamme's website for the project:

<http://ibol.wordpress.com/2009/08/03/iraqi-bundles-of-love-the-intro/>

First, go to your stash and see what you can spare—fabrics, scissors, thread, thimbles, notions like needles and pins, etc. No books—too heavy. If you're also a knitter, yarn and needles would be great to include. Lots of us have duplicates, even triplicates, and what a great way to lighten your stash, gain storage space, and do good, all at the same time!

Then go to the post office and get one of their large, flat-rate FFO/APO boxes, which are fairly sizable (one quilter sent 9 pounds in one box). At just \$11.95 to mail, it's a great tool to use in this project. Package your donations according to Major LaFlamme's directions (this is very important as it will reduce the help needed to unpack and distribute these supplies) and mail it to him in Iraq at his special project address (the post office will ask you to fill out a customs form, too).

Once your box arrives in Iraq, Major LaFlamme and his great group of volunteers from the US armed services will open the box, lift out the package, and easily deliver it to its distribution point, where it will go either to an individual Iraqi woman or to a shop that is making scarce, badly needed supplies and has almost nothing to work with. (You see why it is VERY IMPORTANT to follow his packaging directions?)

Here, in his own words, is Major LaFlamme's description of how the IBOLs will be distributed: "Some would be delivered by US forces, to local individuals and to local groups and small businesses who have had micro grants or loans from either the US or the Iraqi government. I see this as reinforcing good with more good. Some would also go out with US forces, to places like rural villages, camps for displaced persons, orphanages (which often means single moms who are without tribal men to provide for them), and the like. And some would go to our partners in the Iraqi security forces or police.

They would work with their subordinate units and local tribal leaders to then get the stuff out to those who can use it. This is important, as it does things that range from letting them engage the locals in ways other than questioning or arrests, to showing the locals that the Iraqi government,

by proxy, understands and is working to meet their needs. It's not the same as electricity 24 hours a day, but it shows that the government understands and is trying."

All you have to do is get a flat-rate APO box from the post office, fill it with extras from your stash, package it according to his directions, and mail it for \$11.95. I think it would be a lovely gesture to include a photo, your first name, and your state, so that the lucky recipient knows this came from a real person in a real state in a real country with a really big heart. You could send a letter, too, but remember that English is not widely known. But anyone can understand a photo, a name, and a state.

Timing is essential. Major LaFlamme wants these gifts from the heart to be delivered during Ramadan, and that means we have to move fast to get them overseas in time for him to deliver them. He needs to receive them no later than September 17; allowing about 10 days transit time, that means boxes need to be postmarked by September 7. So don't put this off till later...DO IT NOW! Join with the rest of the quilters in The Festival Brigade and let's make this project happen!

The address for this is below. You won't find it on the Bundles of Love website, but I'm sharing it with you here in this e-mail. Major La Flamme is keeping it off of the web, since this project is set to come to an end with Ramadan in mid to late September. Feel free to share it with others, but please help us respect his request—both for safeguarding this address, and for getting these bundles into the mail by September 7.

211th RSG
IBOL - Population Donation
APO, AE 09393

Again, in the Major's own words, here's why he thinks this is important: "I want this insurgency to end. I want peace in this land. I want the Iraqi government and police and security guys to be able to meet the needs of the people here, from water to power to security and law and order.

And as a long time student of both Iraq and counterinsurgency, I understand that these kinds of changes are themselves big. I see IBOL as a tool, no different than a hammer. You may not be able to build a boat with just a hammer, but used right, it can sure make a difference."

I know how much receiving a Bundle of Love would mean to me if I were living in the conditions the Iraqi women endure, and I urge you to take action IMMEDIATELY to participate in this fine project. What an impact this can make.

- * The extra stash was paid for long ago.
- * The postage will run \$11.95 if you use the APO flat-rate box.
- * The box is free.
- * The goodwill is priceless.

Karey Bresenhan
Director, International Quilt Festival—Houston, Chicago, Long Beach