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NEWS RELEASE DETAILS

April 18, 2006

GIFT Chapter Celebrates Youth Service, Supports OIC

Secaucus, NJ, USA – People to People International's GIFT student chapter is celebrating its 3rd annual National & Global Youth Service Day (GYSD). National & Global Youth Service Day, (www.ysa.org and www.gysd.org) is the largest service event in the world, mobilizes young people to identify and address community needs through service, supports youth on a life-long path of service and civic engagement, and educates the public about the role of youth as leaders and assets.

PTPI's GIFT chapter is contributing 100 School Supply Kits to Iraqi children through the Operation Iraqi Children program. OIC was founded by author, Laura Hillenbrand (*Seabiscuit: An American Legend*) and actor, Gary Sinise (*Forrest Gump*, *Apollo 13*) and aims to support both the Iraqi children and the men and women of the U.S. military serving in Iraq. The school supplies will be sent to the OIC Warehouse and will be transported from there to Iraq where Coalition troops will distribute them to the children. This is the GIFT chapter's 2nd OIC project with OIC. Last year the group sent over 100 stuffed toys to the Iraqi children.

This year, the GIFT chapter is learning about Iraq from two special guests, Corp. Luke Smentkowski and Capt. Hank Padley, both of whom served in Iraq. Smentkowski, a local Secaucus resident, was with the Marine infantry and was injured during his service. Padley was with the Army Police to train the Iraqi Police force. By distributing school supplies to Iraqi children, the U.S. soldiers will have the opportunity to make a positive impact in the areas they are helping to develop.

Many Iraqis are very grateful when they see soldiers passing by the villages, especially the children. If the soldiers do not see children running to greet the soldiers, they would be extra cautious and suspicious of the area. Both Smentkowski and Padley recalled that the Iraqi children gave them big smiles when they distributed candies and school supplies, and many have learned to say "Thank you Sir!" "It makes you feel good," Smentkowski said.

PTPI's GIFT chapter did not forget about the soldiers' needs. They are sending 300 reading books through the Operation Shoebox organization. The group sent a shipment of similar size last year. A short memo of best wishes, such as "Stay Strong or Be Safe" is inserted in each book. The group has received letters and emails of thanks from the soldiers.

The chapter also supports local programs by contributing personal supplies items to Wrap4ASmile foundation, Inc. Twenty family bags of personal care items were packed and will be distributed to Hope House in Jersey City. Future plans also include serving meals at the PERC homeless shelter in Union City.

For more information on PTPI's GIFT Chapter, visit www.gointernationalfortomorrow.org.