

Immigrants celebrate their first Halloween with help from college students

Written by M. McNeil

Tuesday, 25 October 2011 14:14

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54 immigrants in the Quad Cities will be receiving trick or treat bags this month...but they are not going to be stuffed with candy and popcorn. These “special care” bags are going to be filled with essentials like shampoo, toothpaste, and toothbrushes.

These treat bags are the brainchild of some graduate students in the Occupational Therapy program at St. Ambrose University. Professor, Christine Urish, says the Black Hawk College program at the Church of Peace in Rock Island is the perfect place to help her students learn how to teach functional living skills. Every day, approximately 54 immigrants attend “English as a second language” class at the church. The program is a cooperative effort among Black Hawk College, the Secretary of State, Rock Island School District, the Regional Office of Education Lights ON, Rock Island Library, and the Church of Peace.

Dr. Terry Schlabach and Dr. Urish say their students are teaching the refugees such skills as reading a recipe, writing a check, using a phonebook, understanding clothing sizes, and using US currency. Since this is the Halloween season, the students decided to do a self-care drive and collect items such as shampoo, toothpaste, and toothbrushes to put in a bag to give to each of the refugees. Kelsey Nolan, a first year student in the St. Ambrose Master of Occupational Therapy program, sent emails to family and friends seeking money to buy the toiletries. “I felt personally compelled to do. I admire the determination with which the family literacy program participants work to better their own lives and the lives of their loved ones. I figure the least I can do is help to provide for some of their basic needs”.

The “treat bags” will be handed out to the students on October 25th at 11:00. The media is invited to attend the event and interview teachers, students and the immigrants. The students are from many countries with the majority being from Myanmar (used to be called Burma), Iraq, and Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tanzania).

WHO: Quad City Immigrants

WHAT: “Special Care” treat bags distribution

WHEN: October 25, 2011 at 11:00 am

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WHERE: Church of Peace 1114 12 Street Rock Island, IL 61201