



Officer Don McCarver, Bellaire Police Department, spearheaded a Used Book Drive for American men and women in Saudi Arabia. With some help from his friends, McCarver collected over 20,000 books.

Bellaire Policeman Gathers 20,000 Books For Saudi Soldiers

By Debbie Dalton

The two biggest problems facing American men and women in the Middle East are the heat...and boredom. We can't do too much about the heat, but Officer Don McCarver, of the Bellaire Police Department, has done something about the boredom.

In less than two months, McCarver, the Bellaire Police Department, the Bellaire City Library and the Texas Association of Former Marines collected over 20,000 used books to ship to Saudi Arabia

"I'm a Vietnam veteran," McCarver said. "One thing that got me through Vietnam was being able to read whatever I could get my hands on. I believe the men and women in Saudi Arabia feel the same way."

McCarver first organized the used book drive with a modest, personal goal of collecting 5,000 books. The project soon grew beyond that goal and beyond the resources of two people.

"The support from the community was incredible," said Millie McCarver who started the drive by contacting used book stores city-wide. "Once people found out what we were doing, everybody wanted to help."

Don McCarver recruited the help of his long-time friend, Don Williams, the president of the Texas Association of Former Marines.

"Don was a great help," said McCarver. "The Association's involvement made my vision a reality."

McCarver also worked with Mary Alford, Bellaire City

Library's Children's Librarian, to collect books.

"All year, people donate books to the library for the 'Friends of the Library' booksale to raise funds for the library," said Alford. "This year, we donated those books to this project instead. Once people learned about the project, they donated additional books specifically for this book drive."

Reservists at the local Marine Reserve Center picked up the books from various collection areas, stamped each one with a special imprint stating that the books were donated by the Bellaire Police Department, the Bellaire City Library and the Texas Association of Former Marines, and delivered them for storage.

Where to store the books during the drive was the next problem

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the McCarvers faced; that's where Bellaire Police Chief Jerry Loftin came to the rescue.

"Chief Loftin was great," Don McCarver said. "He let us use the police station to store the books. They took up a lot of space, so we're especially grateful for his patience and support."

Another of McCarver's friends, John Williams who works for UPS, arranged for UPS to donate packing materials for the books, as well as ground transportation to Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City.

From there, the boxes of books will be shipped, on military supply aircrafts, to Saudi Arabia on a space available basis over the next 4-5 weeks. The boxes will then be distributed in equal proportions to various military units.

Last Thursday, everyone involved gathered at the Crime Prevention Center on Hempstead Rd. to start packing boxes with the 20,000 plus books.

As Millie McCarver looked around at the piles of donated books, she said, "I hate to see it end. Seeing all of this makes all that button-pushing and phone-calling worthwhile."

Don McCarver, with tears in his eyes, echoed his wife's pride in their achievement.

"There is absolutely nothing we can do for the men and women in Saudi Arabia, except give them our support," he said. "That's what I've tried to do, and that's what

everyone else who was involved in this has done."

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