The spirit of Christmas

Giving is the spirit of Christmas. Giving so children can be happy is its essence. The MPO accomplished both by mailing more than 325 pounds of used books to schools in Probistop, Republic of Macedonia. They arrived within two weeks. The books were sent to augment English language classes, required in all Macedonian schools for students in grades 1 – 12. Now a library can be established so students can read in English to their hearts content.

It all came about through the generosity of people who attended the MPO convention in the Hyatt Regency Columbus last September. They took the time to go through their collections and brought boxes and sacks filled with books and magazines to entice the students to increase their English language skills.

It also was made possible by the astuteness of Evelyn Dina, Detroit, who noticed many books were left when her church rummage sale ended. She gathered them up, and together with fellow Detroiter George Rochette (who did the heavy work for her) shipped them off.

Dr. Leon Speroff, head of the MPO’s Gotse Delcheff Foundation, agreed that foundation funds could be used to pay shipping expenses.

Early last summer, Peace Corps Volunteer Michael Erhartic sent out a plea for used books to entice his students in Probistop to read. He didn’t need textbooks. What he wanted was interesting used reading material such as travel brochures, maps, children’s books with fun themes, biographies, and magazines.

The call went out through articles in the TRIBUNE – the books had to be used; packaging had to be kept at less than $50 value for custom purposes and because the recipient in Macedonia had to pay to receive them. Any other way made them unaffordable.

And the books were gathered, packaged and sent — two large boxes from Detroit, five International Postal bags from MPO Headquarters, Fort Wayne.

“The selection of reading materials was wonderful, attested to by the excitement among the students and teachers who had rarely, if ever, seen a child’s book written in English,” writes the man who started it all – US Peace Corps Volunteer Michael Erhartic.

The looks on the teacher and students’ faces attest to the success we often call the spirit of Christmas between like people in two different countries.

Lane Buckner, Postmistress of the Arcola (Ind.) USPS station, and Mike Harris, owner of Toscani’s work to package six international postal bags filled with 12 boxes containing 250 pounds of used books. Toscani’s Pizzeria is located in the Macedonian Tribune Building, Fort Wayne.