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DEOMI Students Donate to Local Non-Profit

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*Story by SFC Lance Pounds, DEOMI Public Affairs
Photos by Michael Marks*

PATRICK SPACE FORCE BASE, Fla. — Students in the Equal Opportunity Advisor Course, Class 23-02, donated more than 200 pounds worth of items to a local non-profit that supports neglected, abused or abandoned children on May 3, 2023, here at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute. One student's personal connection with children in foster care situations inspired the donation, and it coincidentally coincided with April's Child Abuse Awareness Month.

In mid-April, the EOAC 23-02 student body came together to come up with ideas for their class project. This is when U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Candia Naulings, assigned to U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa in Vicenza, Italy, recommended hosting a donation drive for children in need.

“Supporting children in the foster care system is something that is near and dear to me, because I was one,” said Naulings.

Naulings was in the foster care system for eight years. It was a difficult period in her life that led to several bottled-up emotions and counseling as a young adult.

“Counseling changed my life for the better because I learned to share my experiences with others,” said Naulings. “Sharing can lead to helping other kids get through similar difficult situations.”

Naulings said having her class rally behind her was extremely moving and touching.



The student body agreed, and they promptly reached out to Space Launch Delta 45’s Violence Prevention Director Susan Alexander to support the Team Patrick-Cape annual donation drive for The Haven for Children, a local non-profit organization that provides therapeutic shelter care in a home-like environment for children up to 18 years old removed from their homes due to neglect, abuse or abandonment.

Alexander said she was “surprised, enthused and eager to learn more,” about the students’ class project. She provided the students with a list of items needed and requested by the non-profit organization. The list included items like boys and girls clothing, snacks and hygiene products.

The student body’s donation drive at DEOMI ran for two weeks. In that time, they collected more than 200 pounds worth of listed items, to include several gift cards. On May 3, the donated items were placed in boxes



and containers and handed over to Alexander, who was accompanied by Space Launch Delta 45's Family Advocacy Program Assistant Chazzie Valverde.

Alexander said seeing an overwhelming number of students smiling and laughing as they carried numerous bins and boxes overflowing with donations astounded her.

“In that moment, my heart skipped a beat and I felt overwhelmed with emotion. I felt extremely blessed to have the generous support from an organization whose students, who live in other communities and states, greatly supporting neglected and abused children who live in the Team Patrick-Cape community,” said Alexander.

The DEOMI team is an inclusive force that values and develops all individuals and thrives on their contributions. Since its inception in 1971, then known as the Defense Race Relations Institute, DEOMI has developed and delivered innovative education, training, research, and collaborative solutions to approximately 52,000 DEOMI military and civilian graduates.

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