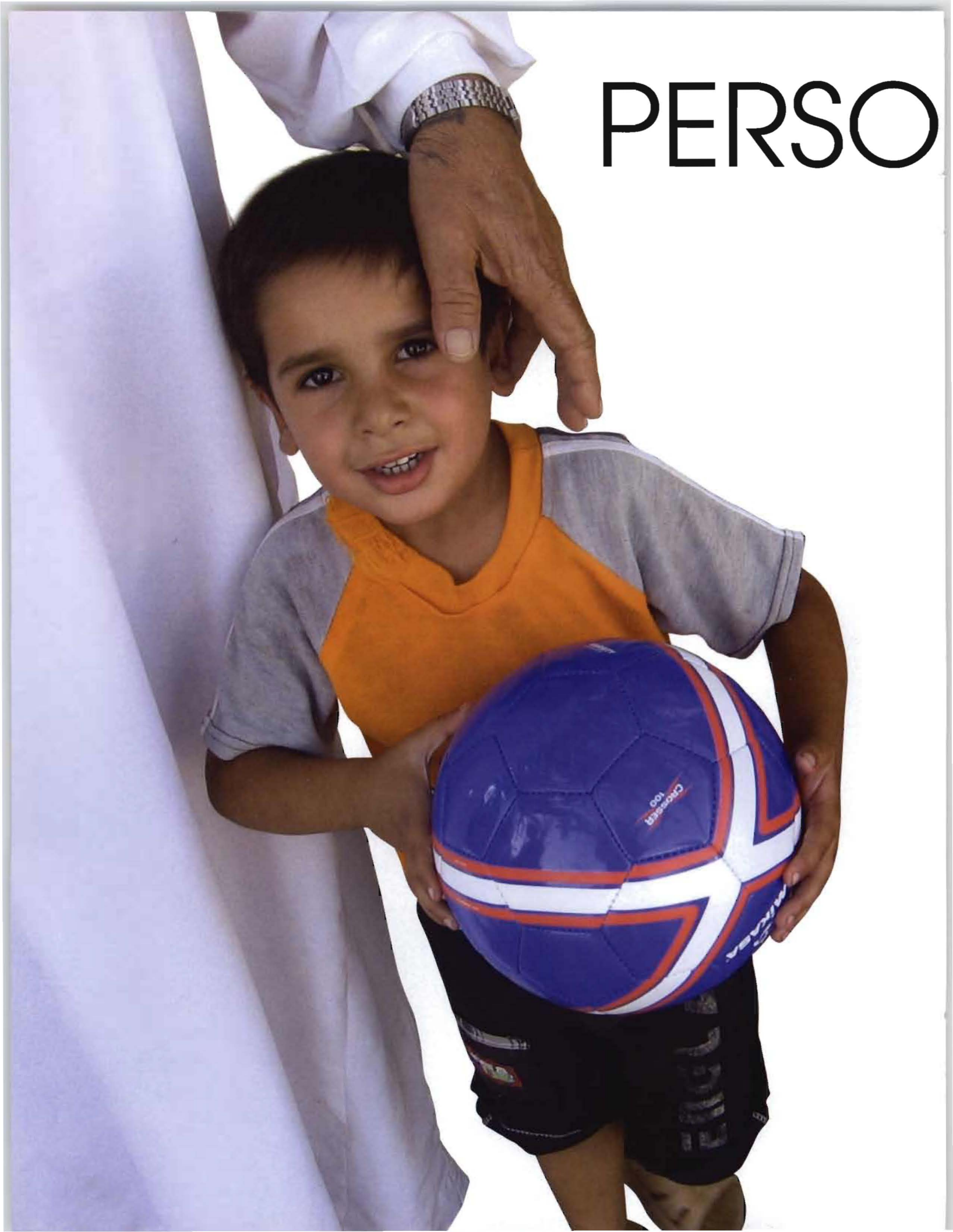


PERSO



NALIZING PEACE

MEMBERS OF THE CAL POLY COMMUNITY WORK FOR PEACE IN IRAQ

A CARE PACKAGE WITH KICK

BY KRISTEN KIDD

PHOTOS COURTESY OF STEFFAN TUBBS



AT FIRST IT WAS A SIMPLE REQUEST from just a few soldiers in Iraq: "Please get us some soccer balls to give to the kids."

Then a year ago, while embedded with the 4th Infantry Division in Baghdad, broadcaster **Steffan Tubbs (JOUR '92)**, interviewed several soldiers who echoed the same appeal – describing the balls as "gold" to Iraqi children.

So once back with his employer, Denver radio station 850 KOA-AM, Tubbs launched an all-out, on-air campaign on behalf of the soldiers. And listeners responded – with a staggering two tons of school supplies and more than 8,000 soccer balls.

The outpouring caught the attention of Sports Authority, the national sporting goods retailer, which offered to sell the balls at a discount and ship them directly to individual soldiers.

Tubbs' efforts were also supported by **Trevor Slavick (JOUR '92)**, an American Airlines pilot and longtime friend from their days as Cal Poly KCPR newscasters. Slavick knew the extraordinary impact of soccer balls from his own experiences in the Caribbean and Central America. "I've seen the

smile firsthand on a kid's face when he realizes the ball is for him. I sometimes wonder how many kids one soccer ball can affect. I like to think it's a lot."

An avid soccer fan, player and coach, Slavick convinced Tubbs to take the campaign nationwide. As a start, they enlisted soccer star Cobi Jones as spokesman. The world-famous soccer star donated generous amounts of time to promote the project on ESPN and local media outlets.

This year the two Cal Poly alums plan to double the distribution and expand the project into other countries.

Little Feet, Big Goals will soon be an official nonprofit organization, which means contributions may be tax-deductible. But even now, a \$10 donation will send a colorful soccer ball directly to a soldier.

Traditional care packages will always be welcomed by the troops. But a package from Little Feet, Big Goals may be even more prized and create untold opportunities for one-on-one soccer ball diplomacy. For more information, go online to www.littlefeet.com. □

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EXTENDING THE OLIVE BRANCH



(L-R) Joe Sabol, faculty emeritus, and Steven Knudsen, San Luis Obispo Farm Bureau, planting along Foothill Boulevard in San Luis Obispo

BY PAT KETCHUM

SOLDIERS FROM THE 164TH BATTALION in Iraq are getting by with a little help from their Cal Poly friends.

Countless goodie boxes and letters of encouragement arrive from the United States almost daily to boost their spirits.

But recently, a most extraordinary care package landed at Camp Anaconda, the largest support base in Iraq – four giant crates filled with 200 olive trees.

This unique cargo was a gift from the California Rare Fruit Growers Association and part of an important goal of the 164th Corps Support Group.

“We wanted to leave something behind when we go home – something that also happens to be an international symbol of peace and friendship,” explains Master Sgt. Patricia Marsano, who spearheaded the olive tree project in Iraq.

After concluding olive trees are perfectly suited to the sweltering conditions there, Marsano “Googled” her way to the California Rare Fruit Growers Association.

Her written plea to the CRFG for 164 olive trees landed in the hands of Cal Poly Professor Emeritus Joe Sabol. He accepted the challenge, coordinating the donation and shipment of 200 saplings.

“I’m proud of our soldiers, and I’m proud to facilitate the

extension of a literal olive branch of peace to the people of Iraq,” Sabol says.

Tom Burchell, Cal Poly alum and owner of a nursery in Oakdale, offered the trees at half price and an anonymous donor covered the remaining bill. “Burchell Nursery is a family-owned company started by my grandfather in 1942. We’re always glad to help a cause greater than us.”

Legal hurdles and paperwork delays did not deter the mission. The trees were shipped to Iraq in early December, compliments of FedEx. They arrived just in time for a Christmas Eve planting ceremony.

“For a few brief moments we forgot about where we were and why we are here,” recalls Marsano. “The ceremony included Iraqi citizens, and peace was the pure essence of their speeches. I will never forget how proud I was at that moment to be an American.”

Meanwhile, the gesture of peace also took root in San Luis Obispo, where Sabol and many community residents planted matching olive trees along Foothill Boulevard.

Marsano, an Ohio native, says she looks forward to visiting the trees planted in California someday. “I think that will make my journey complete.” □