

Port's International Mariners Center gears up for busy Christmas season

The International Mariners Center (IMC), located at the Port of Hueneme is gearing up for another busy Christmas season at the Port. Each December, relying on local contributions and volunteers, the Center prepares Christmas packages for the hundreds of International Seafarers (both male and female) who, due to their profession, are not able to be with their families this Christmas. According to Bill Flothmeier President of the Center's Board of Directors the Center will begin distributing gifts packages the first week of December and continue through the holiday season with a goal of providing a gift to every single seafarer on every ship calling at the port.

Items gift wrapped and boxed include watch caps, socks, shaving gear, candies, soaps, shampoo, after shave, combs, hand towels, nail clippers, toothbrushes with toothpaste, cup-of-soup, chewing gum, pens, writing pads and airmail stationary.

Last year the Center distributed more than 500 gift packages. With even more ships scheduled to call at the Port this season, the Center again anticipates distributing at least that many or more.

Most gift items from International Mariners Center are purchased with funds provided through the Port's Maritime Day recognition, held each year. This year the Port's Maritime Day open-house took place in September generating over \$16,500 for the International Mariners Center. "Donations from local churches and civic groups provide a very important element to what the Center provides", said Flothmeier. "This year for example, the Ventura County Chapter of the Thrivent Financial for Lutherans provided \$5,000 in matching funds to compliment the Port's Maritime Day contribution."

The International Mariners Center actively encourages volunteers wanting to learn more or wishing to help to call the center directly at (805) 271-5161 and leave a message or call Bill Flothmeier directly at (805) 701-9876.



A familiar sight on the docks is the Manager of the International Mariners Center Will Berg, who poses with the Center's new shuttle van recently purchased with funds generated by the Port's Maritime Day gala held annually in May.