



Times staff / ERIC HARTLINE

Matt McClain, 13, of Boothwyn, right, drops off some extra Halloween candy to Waterson Dental Care office manager Beth Davis, center, and Lisa Murphy, left, outside their office on State Street in Media.

Making life a little sweeter for soldiers in Middle East

■ As part of a nationwide effort, dentists offer to buy extra Halloween candy.

By LESLIE KROWCHENKO

Times Correspondent

MARPLE — Dressed as a soldier, 6-year-old Matt O'Neill collected more than 200 pieces of candy during a fun night of trick-or-treating.

He decided he could spare a few of them for others.

Joined by his brothers, Joey and Jimmy, Matt brought 139 candy bars to Advanced Dental Concepts Thursday to participate in the practice's "Halloween Buy Back."

Dr. Sandy White, who paid \$1 a pound for unopened candy, is involved in a program to ship the sweets to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I did it so they could celebrate Halloween," said Matt, of Drexel Hill. "I got \$4."

White and Dr. "Buzz" Waterston, of Media, were among hundreds of dentists nationwide to offer next day "cash for candy." Troops stationed in the war zones use the Milky Ways, Kit Kats and Sweet Tarts as a way of connecting with children and, ultimately, their families.

Christina Tulli was among the many youngsters to include a corre-

spondence with her confectionaries. She and her friends in Brownie Troop No. 57087 donated the money they received to the group to aid in financing its activities. Christina added \$3 to the fund.

"I got a lot of candy and brought it here to help the soldiers," said Christina, who donned a pirate costume the previous night. "I kept some for myself and brought some here."

A large garden cart was filled to the brim, with several boxes still to be weighed, outside Waterston's office. Eight-year old Sarah McCloskey, who also dressed as a buccaneer, received \$11.50 for the oversized bag she presented for the exchange.

"I brought it because I didn't need all of it," she said. "I did leave some of it at home."

Like many mothers who youngsters decided to trade their bonbons for bills, Janet Riddle suggested they return a portion of their receipts to help offset shipping charges. She said her church is a supporter of Platoon Partners, an outreach of the Concordville-Chadds Ford Rotary Club which provides troops in Iraq with monthly packages of toiletries, light entertainment, personal supplies and communication facilities. The family often discusses the various aspects of the nation's involvement in

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the Middle East.

"Donating the candy personalizes it for them," said Riddle. "I try to remind them that many of our soldiers are there as a peaceful mission for the people of Iraq and that it is not all about war."

Least the DDS or DMD following either man's name be lost in the proverbial shuffle, White and Waterston each presented the youngsters with a "thank you" toothbrush. The dentists were impressed with the number of children who visited their offices.

"I didn't know what to expect and there was a line in the parking lot when we opened," said White. "I think there is an old saying about 'good deeds begetting good deeds' and this certainly proves it."