



ITALY &... SPARKLING WINE IN CENTERFOLD ON PAGES 16 & 17

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BOCCE INVITATIONAL TO SUPPORT TROOPS



A U.S. ARMED FORCES HONOR GUARD presides at a recent packing event for Operation Shoebox New Jersey. Stacks of boxes to be sent to our troops serving abroad can be seen in the background.



OPERATION SHOEBOX VOLUNTEERS ready packages for transportation overseas, where they will be received by U.S. troops in Iraq & Afghanistan.

FRANKLIN, NJ - More than 500 professional and backyard bocce players are expected to participate in the first annual Operation Shoebox New Jersey (OPSHBX NJ) Bocce Invitational Tournament, scheduled for Sunday, June 3 in Colonial Park.

This exciting event is a fund raising effort for OPSHBX NJ, dedicated to collecting donated supplies and shipping care packages to American troops based in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other Middle Eastern countries.

Italian American organizations from across New Jersey, as well as professional bocce players from as far away as Florida and California, have registered for the tournament.

Veterans of the deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan will be honored during the tournament's opening ceremonies, which begin at 9 am. Soldiers, Marines and their families will be the guests of honor.

Helping to run the tournament will be "America's Mr. Bocce," Phil Ferrari, the U.S. Singles Bocce champion and founder of the World Bocce League. He will supervise the tournament, provide instructions, and demonstrate the basic standards of play according to United States Bocce Federation guidelines. Ferrari will also supervise all judging.

Teams of four will participate in a round robin, single-elimination best-of-three format. The Somerset County Park Commission has built 16 regulation courts in a picturesque setting bordered by flowering trees and evergreens, in between the park's Rose Gardens and Perennial Gardens.

The opening ceremonies will also feature color guards representing all U.S. Armed Forces, as well as the Somerset County Sheriff Honor Guard and the Somerset County Pipe and Drum corps. A fly-over of vintage airplanes, led by Joe Borin and his checkered red-and-white BT-13A WWII trainer, will cap off the ceremonies.

Several dignitaries, celebrities, and professional athletes are also expected to attend.

First- Second- and Third-place winners will be presented with gold, silver and bronze ribbon medallions during the awards dinner, which will begin at 6 pm. A silent auction and 50-50 raffle will be held during the dinner.

OPSHBX NJ, a registered non-profit New Jersey corporation based in Somerville, New Jersey., maintains a supply line of personal care packages and letters that are sent by volunteers to U.S. troops serving abroad. Since February 2005, OPSHBX NJ has shipped close to 10,000 packages overseas with thousands of volunteers participating in community packing events.

In conjunction with the tournament, OPSHBX NJ will host a large-scale packing event from 9 am to 4 pm adjacent to the bocce courts. All players and spectators are invited to participate. Everyone will be asked to write a letter or greeting card to a soldier or Marine which will be enclosed in each package.

Those who attend the tournament are asked to bring a shopping bag full of items that can be sorted by OPSHBX NJ volunteers before they are packaged and shipped that day.

Suggested items include powdered drink mixes, lip balm, small cans of pop-top tuna fish and fruit, sticks of gum, packets of moist towels, bars of soap, small bottles of shampoo, beef jerky, granola bars, writing pads, pens and batteries.

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