



Christmas at Sea



THE
SEAMEN'S
CHURCH
INSTITUTE

THE KNIT
before Christmas

Winter 2026

Investing in SCI's mission-driven work on behalf of mariners and seafarers

SCI upholds our enduring legacy of serving and protecting the personal and professional lives of mariners with unwavering compassion and dedication. We are committed to partnering with the maritime industry to ensure dignity within the workplace, and the safety of vessel operations and maritime environments. Through our efforts, we strive to foster a safer, more respectful, and sustainable maritime community, both internationally and domestically.

Our core values are **compassion, dependability, and integrity.**

THE KNIT *before Christmas*

Winter 2026

The Knit Before Christmas is a publication of the Seamen's Church Institute.

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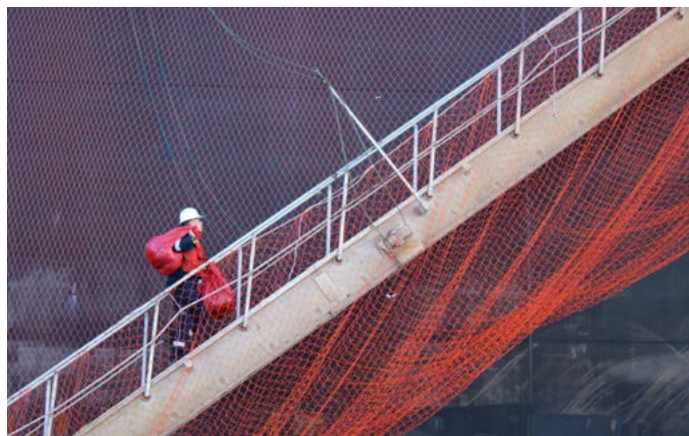
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Knit Notes:



More than the Numbers

This winter issue of *The Knit Before Christmas* is about numbers. We count hats, helmets, scarves, cowls, slippers, socks, vests, and ditty bags. We track packages shipped and mariners reached. Numbers help us see the scope of what we do together—but they don't tell the whole story.

What's harder to measure is what these gifts mean to the people who receive them. Whether it's an international seafarer crossing an ocean or a tugboat crew working along our inland rivers, the message is the same: someone thought of them during the holidays.

For many mariners, Christmas is spent far from home. Opening a package and finding a handmade item or a handwritten card can be deeply meaningful. It's a reminder that their work matters and that they haven't been forgotten. The warmth of a knit/crocheted hat or scarf is important—but so is the care behind it.

This program has been around since 1898 for one simple reason: volunteers. *The Knit Before Christmas* belongs to all of us. It exists because people show up, year after year, in so many different ways.

Our fiber artists are incredible, but they are only part of the story. We are just as grateful for the packing groups, card writers, and everyone who donates toiletries, snacks, puzzle books, and playing cards. You don't have to knit, crochet, or sew to make a difference—there's a place for everyone here.

So yes, we'll celebrate the numbers. But we'll also celebrate what can't be counted: kindness, connection, and the reminder—sent from shore to ship and river—that mariners matter.

Thank you for being part of it.

With gratitude,

Joanne Bartosik
Associate Director of Development & Christmas at Sea

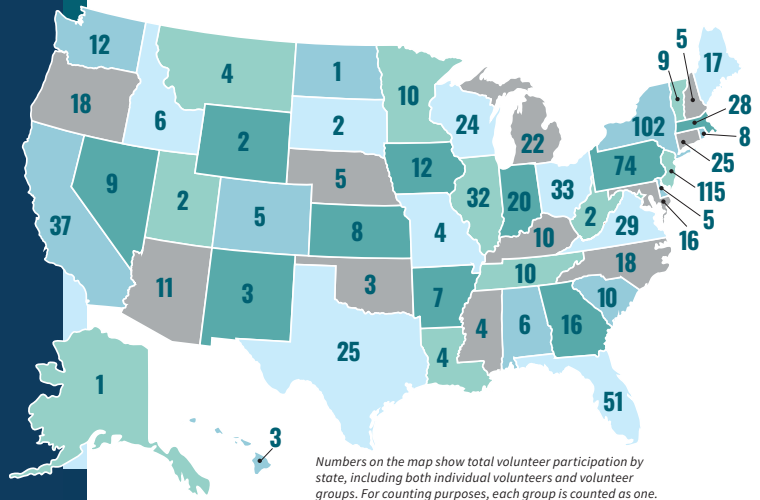
ABOVE: SCI staff behind the scenes at Port Packing Day (L-R): **Michelle McWilliams, MSW**, Chaplain, **Bridgit Patterson**, Communications Associate, Social Media Coordinator, **the Rev. Mark Nestlehutt**, President & Executive Director, **Joanne Bartosik**, Associate Director, Development & Christmas at Sea, **Matthew Morse, Esq.**, Director, International Seafarers' Center, **Amy Mugavero**, Director, Advancement & Strategic Initiatives.

CAS by the Numbers

Total number of donations:

- Knits/crochets/ditty bags – **25,121**
- Number of knits/crochets donated – **20,934**
- Number of ditty bags donated – **4,187**
- Number of CAS volunteers (individuals) – **748**
- Number of new individual volunteers for 2025 – **116**
- Number of CAS Groups – **145**
- Number of new CAS Groups for 2025 – **18**

Number of volunteers from each state:



Names and states of the top 3 individual volunteers*:

- Helga K., NC – **648**
- Loretta Z., TX – **412**
- Judy H., NY – **375**

Names, cities, and states of the top 3 groups*:

- Saint Ann's Episcopal Church, Old Lyme, CT – **434**
- The Church of St. Mark and All Saints, Galloway, NJ – **265**
- Hope Lutheran Church Prayer Shawl Ministry, The Villages, FL – **255**

* (defined by the total # of knits/crochets & ditty bags)

Volunteers abroad:

- Belgium, Canada, Italy, and the U.K.

Port Newark:

- **4,075** ditties delivered to **170** vessels between December 1, 2025, and January 6, 2026.

CAS on the River:

- **11,439** knits/crochets delivered along inland waterways for mariners.



Spread the Word

Christmas at Sea is sustained by our fiber artists—this program belongs to you. Every handmade gift is deeply appreciated and never taken for granted.

Mariners share with us how meaningful these items are and how much comfort they bring. Knowing that someone took the time to make something just

for them makes a lasting difference. We'd love to be able to provide more of this comfort to even more mariners, **but we can't do it without you.**

We would love your help **spreading the word.** Please consider sharing *Christmas at Sea* with your fellow knitters, crocheters, guilds, and fiber art communities. With your help,

we can reach even more mariners with the warmth and care you so generously create.

Thank you for all you do and for being an important part of this community.

ABOVE: A group of volunteers from Iowa! Standing: Rita Front row (L-R): Suzie, Edna, Kaye, Patty



A huge THANK YOU

to our packing group volunteers 2025...

- Joanne Filocamo, Turid Ostensen & Regina Refstie (NY)
- Calvary Episcopal Church, Flemington, NJ
- Christ Episcopal Church, Glendale, OH
- Edie and Dave Klink & Sue Goff (NJ & DE)
- Green Marine (Louisiana)
- Notre Dame High School, East Stroudsburg, PA
- San Jacinto College, Maritime Campus, La Porte, TX
- St. David's Episcopal Church, Cranbury, NJ
- St. John's Episcopal Church, Little Silver, NJ
- TowWorks (Louisiana)
- Trinity Episcopal Church, Cranford, NJ
- Trinity Episcopal Church, Vicksburg, MS
- The Woman's Club of Morristown, NJ
- Women's International Shipping & Trading Association (WISTA CT, NJ, NY)



And a shout-out to the Shipping Association of New York and New Jersey for providing toiletries and nonperishable snacks in support of Port Packing Day.

PORT PACKING DAY (Thursday, November 13, 2025) is our annual special event that brings together neighbors from the Ports of Elizabeth and Newark, and the wider port community for a one-day packing extravaganza. Local companies and community organizations form teams to help pack Christmas gifts for international seafarers, honoring those who spend the holidays far from home. The event showcases the power of collaboration and community spirit across the port region. We would like to thank and acknowledge our 2025 participants.

- Council on Port Performance, Workforce Development Implementation Team
- East Coast Warehouse
- Hapag-Lloyd
- Maher Terminals
- ONE, Ocean Network Express
- Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
- Port Newark Container Terminal (PNCT) & Ports America
- United States Maritime Alliance, Ltd. (USMX)



Scan the QR code to view photos of our fantastic packing groups and volunteers in 2025.



Mariner Thank-Yous



Calvary Episcopal Church, Flemington, NJ

My dear friends!

I want to thank you very much for the very pleasant surprises and gifts that you gave to the sailors.

This morning, I received a bag of sweets and a handmade hat and scarf. And I felt like a child again, finding gifts under the Christmas tree.

I want to say the kindest words of gratitude to you.

May God always be with you and help you do good actions and may God protect you and all your relatives.

With respect from me 🙏

Chef Jack 😊

Peace and love from all of us ❤️



Deon Ellison (Kirby Corp.)

Thank you, Emily W. from AL,

I really like the hat. If possible do you have matching scarf and gloves. I would love those!!!



Grand Orion

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! From the officer and crew of *Grand Orion*.

Thank you for sharing GIFTS & Blessings across the seas.

Best Regards,
Capt. Leonilo A. Espanto
Master of *Grand Orion*



Merry Christmas from the M/V Michael Akiu #86 Florida Marine Transporters



MV Contessa Crew

Dearest Ma'am / Sir,

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

We would like to thank you for the gifts. We truly appreciate your efforts and sacrifices for us seafarers. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.

May God be with you always.

From MV *Contessa* Crew



Nord Vanguard

Dear Folks,

It is 25th of December and we're in the Atlantic, having a small celebration for Christmas.

Our messman brought us these gifts and almost immediately the messroom was abuzz and having happier conversations.

Special thanks to Cathy from Florida and Lauren from New York for the cap and muffler.

Merry Christmas to You and a very happy new year!

Best Regards and Seasons Greetings,
Kinshuk Bhakta
Second Engineer
Nord Vanguard



Cecilia B Slatton in New Orleans

Thanks for the beanies.



@parkertowing

Thank you for the awesome presents to keep us warm on the water. Much love.



M/V London Express

Hello,

My name is Abhijeet, and I am currently sailing on the London Express.

I wanted to sincerely thank you for the beautiful handmade cap sent to me as a Christmas gift. Being away from home during the holidays, receiving something made with such care and love truly meant a great deal to me. The cap fits perfectly, and I am very grateful for the time and effort that went into making it.

I have attached a selfie wearing the cap, as requested. Please extend my heartfelt thanks to Ele H. and everyone involved.

As the Bible says,

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.”
— Numbers 6:24–26

I deeply appreciate the compassion, generosity, and support shown to seafarers through the Seamen’s Church Institute. Your work truly makes a meaningful difference in the lives of those sailing far from home, especially during the Christmas season.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.
May the coming year bring peace, good health, and many blessings.

Warm regards,
Abhijeet, M/V London Express



118 Export Street,
Port Newark, NJ 07114

The Roper Legacy Society: Supporting Mariners

The Seamen's Church Institute's **Roper Legacy Society** honors the generosity and vision of individuals who have chosen to include SCI in their estate plans, making a lasting philanthropic commitment to advance the Institute's mission. We gratefully acknowledge and thank these donors, whose foresight and dedication will ensure SCI's work continues to serve mariners for generations to come.

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*Deceased



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