

Sievertsen seeks help for tornado victims

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CEDAR FALLS – The final regular-season home game is always dedicated to the seniors on the University of Northern Iowa football team. However, one senior wants to turn the attention to tornado victims this Saturday when the Panthers host Western Illinois at 4 p.m. in the UNI-Dome.

Northern Iowa placekicker Tyler Sievertsen is asking fans to help his family and their neighbors in Washington, Ill., after an EF-4 tornado devastated the town last weekend by donating new toys in time for the holiday gift-giving season.

One resident was killed and about 120 others were injured in the town of approximately 15,000. Reports say 400 homes were damaged when winds reached an estimated 170 to 190 miles per hour.

Sievertsen, a Cedar Rapids Kennedy graduate, was touched by a photo of his cousin's child, who found his favorite toy in the rubble, giving Sievertsen the idea for a toy drive. The family also was fortunate to be reunited with its dog thanks to social media efforts.

A group of football players has pledged their support to help Sievertsen personally deliver the items to Illinois.

SAAC, a student-athlete organization aimed at giving back to the community, will help collect the donations at the UNI football game from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. Saturday. Student-athletes will be on hand at the north end of the UNI-Dome concourse to collect donations near the University Book & Supply store.

Sievertsen holds the school record for the most consecutive PATs. He is 110 for 110. He leads the Panthers in scoring with 93 points on 21 of 27 field goals and 30 of 30 PATs. He was a 2012 Fred Mitchell Award finalist and booted a 50-yard field goal this season.