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Toms River family finds that it's better to give than to receive

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BOX PROJECT: The Box Project is currently looking for sponsors. More than 450 families have been screened and are in need of assistance as the holiday season approaches. For more information, call (860) 747-8182.

By MICHAEL AMSEL
TOMS RIVER BUREAU

TOMS RIVER -- In 1994, one of Eva Scholfield's colleagues at the Girl Scouts of Ocean County told her about The Box Project, an organization that helps improve the lives of families living in rural poverty.

Now, after nine years of involvement with The Box Project, Scholfield of Toms River feels her entire family has benefited from the experience.

"One of the reasons I got involved was because I was looking for a way to teach my own sons (Joshua, Adam and Ben) about helping others," Scholfield said. "I was pleased that my family could build a friendship through a one-on-one relationship and help another family in the United States."

The Box Project, a national nonprofit organization that began in 1962, pairs sponsors with carefully-screened individuals and families living in rural poverty that want to become self-sufficient and overcome the cycle of poverty. It currently serves areas that include Mississippi, Maine, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Sponsors can send needed items to the corresponding families and maintain a relationship by telephone, mail or e-mail. The commitment to send items can be monthly or based around holidays.



STAFF PHOTO: BRIAN FERREIRA

The Box Project participants, Eva Scholfield (left) and Merrell Newman, both Toms River, pack a box for a receiving family.

The Scholfields were linked nine years ago with a family in Mississippi -- a single mother with five children -- and sent them a box of supplies, including cough medicine, food, coloring books, old magazines and toys.

"As I filled the box up, I was thinking of what the kids may like," said Scholfield, who is married to Asbury Park Press photographer Steve Scholfield. "I wanted to put in some extras that I know they would enjoy."

Involvement in the organization is much more than just sending boxes of material goods to a family, Scholfield said.

"It is the one-on-one relationship with the family members that makes it so rewarding," Scholfield said. "The family feels as if we are someone who they can talk to when they need some help with things. We support them and they, in turn, support us."

"I still get letters from the oldest daughter, who is a teenager now," Scholfield said. "I really love those letters. I think the match is as rewarding an experience for our family as it is for the recipient one."



STAFF PHOTO: BRIAN FERREIRA

Some of the items are meant exclusively for children.

Michael Amsel: (732) 557-5733 or mamsel@app.com

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