

# THE NEWS BOX

**Board of Directors**

**President**  
Pat Schneider  
Ridgefield, CT

**Vice President**  
Annette Guss  
Flemington, NJ

**Secretary**  
Cindy Fredrickson  
Bozemon. MT

**Treasurer**  
Ruby Blackmon  
New Britain, CT

Adell Moore  
Augusta, GA

Lynn Bayer  
Cleveland, OH

Dr. Mohammad Hoque  
I tta Bena, MS

Anne M Blake  
Grosse Pointe Farms MI

Eva Scholfield  
Toms River, NJ

Sue Patenaude  
Leeds, ME

Raymond Uses the Knife  
Eagle Butte, SD

"Chick" Scheiderman  
Marks, MS

Advisor  
Alan Rothstein  
Avon, CT

**Executive Director**  
Allen C. Pitts

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:**

**Because one woman cared, the Box Project's unique family-to-family program was begun. Because you care, we can continue to reach out 40 years later.**

Thank you to sponsors who choose to believe that we can make a difference.

Thank you to recipient families who enrich our lives with your trust in us.

Thank you to social service partners who are our eyes, ears and hands reaching out across the miles.

Thank you to donors and renewing members who share economic resources as we strain to keep within our small budget.

Thank you to team members who so faithfully contribute so that we can continue our work.

The capacity to care is the thing which gives life its deepest meaning and significance

*- Pablo Casals*

Thank you to volunteers who share time to help with mailings, editing, publicity, ideas, advice and much more.

Thank you to holiday helpers who bring joy to families who might otherwise be forgotten.

Thank you to contributors to our emergency fund who make it possible for us to work small miracles when they're most needed.

Thank you to our board of directors for giving so selflessly of your time and your gifts.

Thank you to our staff members who are the 'wind beneath our wings.'

Thank you to our executive director whose generous heart and spirit keeps us focused on our mission.

Thank you to all of you who so deeply care about The Box Project.

Most gratefully,  
*Pat Schneider*  
Board President

**Coming Events**

There's always something happening at The Box Project!

The Board of Directors is meeting in Greenville on Oct. 11-12. During the weekend we will be meeting with the Mississippi State Directors for Human Services, Children and Families, and Education.

According to Lyric Winnick at Parade Maga-

zine, we will be having an article in that major Sunday publication around Christmas. In addition, Family Fun is also going to publish an article about us in December or January.

The fund raising task force is busily working on the annual fund drive which has taken on added importance as we anticipate many new members needing service due to these articles.

**What is a Sponsor?**  
**A Fairy Godmother and a constant surprise**

If you have web access and have not yet signed up with the Chatterbox\_group page, you are really missing some wonderful things. Members are writing and posting ideas, thoughts, information and support to each other each day. The uplifting tone of the messages has been wonderful to see and raised the spirits of the staff at the office on several occasions.

One of the messages had a lovely definition of what should be the role of a sponsor. Realizing that we cannot "save" many of our families, there was a question about what

we CAN do to change lives. One sage author wrote back her vision of a life-changing role: A sponsor should be like a Fairy Godmother and a constant surprise.

When the ball was all over, Cinderella went back home to her stepmother. The good fairy was unable to save her from that situation. But because of her act, many other things changed, which ultimately resulted in a happy ending.

Sponsors can be like that. Just knowing that someone "out there" cares about you makes a difference. By learning about your family, you can interject that special something at just the right time and place to change everything: a "special" dress for a girl, a "real" pair of jeans for a boy.

**Thank You, Lynn!!**  
Lynn Bayer will be retiring off the Board after two terms and 6 years of great service. A long time member and friend, Lynn has been a rock we've depended on many times, held Board offices and has gone "above-and-beyond" for us. Thank you!!

So how do you learn to be a Fairy Godmother? Easy! Just keep looking for something that would make a person in your family feel special. Something unique to them alone. (Many times it is something you wish YOU had as a kid, but no one understood you then.)

The more you know about your family, the easier it becomes. This kind of know-ledge cannot be put on forms or applications. It comes from learning the hearts of others. Yes, it takes effort and time, and it is harder when you cross miles and cultures. But it also is the real FUN part of sponsorship.

Who wouldn't like to have a Fairy Godmother out there?

We're On The Web!  
[www.BoxProject.org](http://www.BoxProject.org)

### How do we match recipient families ?

This is a question that gets asked quite often and I would like to explain the procedure to you. My name is Sue and I am the person who matches recipient families with sponsor families. We receive an enormous amount of mail here at the Box Project! Quite a bit of that mail includes letters asking for help, or applications from hopeful families that need our help. It comes from many different social service agencies that have graciously given us their time and effort to help screen families for us. (Please let me take a moment to thank them, for without them we could not exist. THANK YOU!!)

I read all these, and answer the letters by sending out applications, then sit down to review the applications that I already have. It is not an easy process by any means. Some will be rejected and others need to be sent back to the families for more information. Still others may be sent back because the family failed to get an agency to verify their form. The rest are accepted and entered into our databases. I make individual files for each family and sort them according to family size, ages of the children, levels of need, location etc.



I then go to the list of potential sponsor families, who almost always have a preference in the size or type of family they would like to help. This information is a wonderful thing because it helps me to find just the right family for them. It may not be a perfect match, but we try to come very close.

Finding that one family is done by hand. We do not have a complicated computer system that does it for us. I read the sponsor's application and their preferences and then I go through the applications again, one by one, rereading each family's information until I find a good match. It is a time-consuming process, but one we think is worth it. We

really are more concerned with making a good match, rather than a fast one. We hope you are too!

My concern now is that so few sponsor families will help a larger family, and I have several that have been waiting months for a sister family. If you know of anyone, or maybe a group, that can help a larger family **please** let me know.

Susan Deschaine

### DUES OR DONATION ????

In the past years we have received checks from members with the words "donation," or "contribution," or nothing at all written on them indicating their intention. We have entered these in as donations. Other checks, marked "dues" were entered as dues renewals.

### Dues and donations are two very different things!

Not only are they separate line items in our budget and database, they have to be reported separately in the IRS and state registrations. We have to keep them very clear and separate.

A problem arises when we send our dues renewal reminders to those of you who sent a "donation" check intending that it would be applied to your dues. If you are among these members, please let us know. We will be happy to make the change to reflect your intentions. We try very hard to meet the needs and desires of our members and appreciate your support. We want to be sure to get it right.

**WHY SHOULD YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?**

**We have over 400 families waiting for a sponsor. Help us find them a friend**

### **WE NEED MORE SPONSORS !**

We've got hundreds of good families from the worst areas of rural poverty in America waiting and hoping for a sponsor like you. At this time of year it is really hard to tell them that no one is there to be their friend and mentor.

YOU know the miracles The Box Project has done and continues to do. Can you tell your friends about us? If our members would just share the good news with their friends, we would be able to find these families sponsors very quickly.

### **PLEASE TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT US**

### **Emergency Fund Help**

Emergency help is available to recipient families of active members in a crisis. In the past 2 months these have included help for:

A family summarily evicted when they called the health department after the landlord refused to make improvements. (the house was condemned anyway)

Two families whose homes were burned out by fire and a third home in which the mother was severely burned.

It is only through your memberships and donations that we were able to provide these and many other kindnesses.

### **A Cross-Cultural Smile**

Amazing Grace sung in Cherokee ?

Yes....and it sounds absolutely wonderful !!!

<http://members.aol.com/black4hawk/Page11.html>

Have you seen the newest way you can write to other sponsors from all over the country? You can learn what they are doing and share ideas. Lots of great things are happening.

Go to [Yahoogroups.com](http://Yahoogroups.com) and join [Boxproject\\_Chatterbox](http://Boxproject_Chatterbox)

**USE THIS FORM TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP**

Just fill out the information and send it in with the \$35 (or more!) **annual dues renewal**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

**This form is for renewals ONLY—not for new memberships**

RENEWING memberships are only \$35 per year

You can also renew online using a credit card at [www.boxproject.org](http://www.boxproject.org)

NEW memberships are \$50 and use a different form in which we get more family information for matching. If you would like to join as a new member, please call us at 1-800-268-9928

**Got Questions?**

**Boxproject\_Chatterbox Has Answers!**

I recently discovered the most valuable resource of my Box Project "life". The Boxproject\_Chatterbox Group on Yahoo! allows a wonderful forum of Box Project members that are simply there for each other. Consider it your own Box Project support group. Got questions? Someone else will surely have an answer or an opinion. Have a great idea for a theme box? Share it and the "group" may borrow it or build on it to generate other creative ways to enrich our sister families. If you're having a dilemma or want an opinion about something related to your sister family, there is a whole group of people that can share their experiences and give you insight or feedback on the situation. Best of all, membership is free, and the messages are online, so you can participate when it is convenient for you--no matter what time of day.

For those of you not familiar with Yahoo! Groups, it's not quite like online "chatting"--so no one will be bothering you with instant messages. Members post messages online or by sending an email message to the Yahoo! Group, and everyone subscribed to the group will then receive the message via email. To make it easy, when you want to respond to a question or comment, simply reply from your email software and send off the message. Yahoo! even lets you decide if you want to receive each message from the group as a separate email, just one email of all messages each day, or no email--because you just want to read it online at the Yahoo! Group page. Decide when and whether you want to post messages, or just sit quietly and "listen" to the ongoing conversations. After you've joined the group, you can always go back and read archives of past messages and "catch up" on all of the recent great ideas. You may even find one or two ideas that you can use right away.

It's easy to join. Just visit <http://groups.yahoo.com>. In the groups search box, type in boxproject and search, it should take you to a summary description of our "boxproject\_chatterbox". If you select the highlighted word boxproject\_chatterbox, it will take you to a page where you can select "Join this group." If this seems like too much work or too confusing, send a blank email to [boxproject\\_chatterbox\\_subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:boxproject_chatterbox_subscribe@yahoogroups.com) and you will receive an email message with detailed instructions on how to complete your subscription. I must warn you, Yahoo! Groups subscription details change pretty

frequently. If you're having difficulties subscribing, feel free to contact me at my email address [sue@meritageconcepts.com](mailto:sue@meritageconcepts.com) for assistance.

Without giving away all of the goodies, I can tell you that we have many donor family participants and even a sister family that occasionally shares experiences and feedback. It's feedback directly from the source. You can't imagine the warm glow of happiness inside and encouragement you can feel from hearing about how the Box Project truly transformed someone's life. The success stories are amazing and we all share in the joy.

The Boxproject\_Chatterbox group is really a fantastic source of good ideas, great advice, and valuable feedback. As more Box Project members join our electronic community, our group becomes an even greater resource. Your participation will add even more value. Why don't you increase your value by joining our Chatterbox Group today?

*Sue Taylor*  
[sue@meritageconcepts.com](mailto:sue@meritageconcepts.com)

**WHY SHOULD YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ?**

**If there is a problem we can fix it fast. We can usually get information for you, call the family, or even get a social service agent in their home area to help you in your sponsorship.**

**Teachers / Educators**

**who have been or would LIKE to be in classroom matching programs across the country are asked to contact the Education Committee.**

**We urgently need to hear and learn from them as we develop a program matching classrooms across the country.**

**Email: [Muhammad\\_r\\_Hoque@hotmail.com](mailto:Muhammad_r_Hoque@hotmail.com)**

**What's a "GOLD MEMBER" ???**

A Gold Member supports The Box Project with a dues donation of \$150 or more a year which helps us help others.

**What is WIC ????**

Many of our families get WIC help, but sponsors want to know what this is. WIC is the Women's, Infants' and Childrens' Program for new mothers. It is for low income pregnant or new mothers and provides nutritional help. Women can be in he

program while pregnant and for the first 6 weeks after the child is born. Sometimes the local WIC agency (it is run through local social service agencies) may run out of funds for the year. If so, they have to go on a priority system of choosing who to help even if the family is eligi-

ble. The aid is ONLY in supplemental food and medical information. This is not the same as the Food Stamp Program which helps families in poverty on an ongoing basis. If your family may qualify, have them see their local Health Department or social service agency.

### Did You Know...

It actually costs The Box Project \$140 to find, match and support an average family pairing through their first year together? Even with initial dues at \$50 we LOSE money with every new sponsorship. We can only stay active through the donations of our members above and beyond basic dues.

Please remember us this season.

### Congressman Jim Maloney meets with The Box Project



(L-R) Allen Pitts, Exec. Dir; Pat Schneider, Board Pres.; Rep. Jim Maloney and past board Pres. Alan Rothstein

On Sept 2nd, Congressman Jim Maloney (D-CT) met with past and present leaders of The Box Project to discuss the issues of rural poverty in America.

Poverty is not an urban problem. Of the 200 poorest counties in America, 195 of them are rural. In 1998 the poverty line for a family of four was set at \$16,530. But even today, poor working families in rural areas earn an average of only \$7,400 a year... less than half! If the family is headed by a single mother, it's even less at \$5,700. How can you hold a family together with so little? The national problems of education, community supports, job training and transportation to jobs are tremendously compounded in rural areas.

### WHY SHOULD YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

Only members and their families can be eligible for the educational or emergency fund assistance.

Although thousands of family have been matched, we still have hundreds of families waiting and hoping for a sponsor.

**A life in American rural poverty means a lack of access to economic, cultural and social opportunities. It's a level of economic, social and spiritual isolation unknown to most Americans, but all too typical for the Box Project's families.**

### Isolation leads to Strange Ideas

Australia has many very strange animals. The reason, we're told, is that the continent is isolated. Alone at night we imagine odd sounds and sights. We are isolated. My grandmother used to tell me, "Rich folks have psychiatrists; poor folks have friends."

The point is, to keep an even keel on life we all need to have contact with the outside. Without interaction with others outside of our own locality, we begin to have strange ideas and perceptions. Cults seek such isolation so that they can become more delusional. Clans often become delusional because they are isolated.

If I only know my local area, where girls get pregnant at 16, men are almost unanimously alcoholic, no one seeks higher education and generations have been taught to have little ambition because it doesn't matter anyway.... then what outcome should we expect of my life?

If my elders have taught me from my birth a history of being cheated, degraded and even killed by Western civilization, then why should I trust anyone outside?

SPONSORSHIP is not easy! It is far, far more than just sending a box. It is reaching out across cultures and history, demanding a LOT of patience and understanding. It's not for people looking to

have a "pet family." Sponsorship is for families looking to learn, share and love even the UNlovely. It is only through reaching out through the isolation and myths and histories that we can break the isolationist thoughts and patterns and come to a greater view of the world. We teach and we learn with each letter or phone call. Sometimes the lessons come very slowly, but each contact chips away at the isolation.

The Box Project helps to break this isolation and overcome this tragedy by allowing Americans to directly help other Americans in need, one on one, one to another.

Remember to tell a friend about us! Word-of-mouth is the BEST "advertising" of all!

### WHY SHOULD YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP?

This newsletter brings you information, ideas and help with your sponsorship.

### Child Poverty Worst in Rural Areas

Sometimes it seems to take a major study to tell us what we already knew. But a new major study recently released by Save the Children, Inc. showed that one in six children living in rural America is also living below the poverty line! Among the "extreme pockets" they noted were Appalachia, Mississippi Delta, and American Indian reservations in the Dakotas. In these areas the child poverty rates are "two to three times the national average."

### Did YOU know ...

Fewer than 10% of "rural" Americans live on a farm? Only 7.6% of the total employable US rural population is employed at farming.

*Of America's 200 POOREST counties, 195 of them are RURAL*

CQ CQ CQ de W1AGP

Any Licensed Amateur Radio Operators who are Box Project members are asked to contact W1AGP . SK



Article sent by C. Styles.

It was an absolutely IMPOSSIBLE MISSION accomplished by ordinary people doing extraordinary work in 4.5 days! Twenty-five determined people, young and old from the First Presbyterian Church of Foley, MN., traveled to the tiny rural community of Kilmichael, Mississippi, to repair an ancient house that belonged to Annie and John Butts. Because of the deteriorated condition of the home, they had been forced to abandon it and move into a trailer home.

The Young United Presbyterians ( YUPS) of Foley started to help this family over 30 years ago through the Box Project. This is a charitable organization that was started 40 years ago in the east. They wanted to do something for those in need on a people-to-people basis rather than a government to people program. The organization has grown and

It was an amazing transformation, which Annie and John could not believe.

has thousands of helper families helping thousands of people around the United States in need. It was Annie Butts' mother, Katherine, and her family whose names were first given to the YUPS by the Box Project. Carol and Cliff Stiles have continued to have close contact and assist the family since then, including Annie and John in Kilmichael, MS, and Annie's brother, Jimmie, in Orlando, Florida.) When it was learned that Annie and John with their eight-year-old daughter, Briana, had been forced out of their home, the mission committee from the Presbyterian Church decided to step in and help. Most of the building supplies were purchased or donated here in Foley and trucked to Kilmichael.

The congregation of the church raised money for the mission team with an auction of member services. Each member of the team contributed \$250 toward the project and expenses of the trip. The entire crew arrived on Sunday afternoon, June 9, 2002, after two long days of driving, including a stopover at a Presbyterian Church in St. Louis.

Immediately, the entire house was stripped inside and out, including removal of a partially constructed room on the back of the house. New plywood covered the decaying roof before it was completely shingled. Gray siding, purchased at an auction near Foley, soon covered the old, wooden walls. New floors were built in the bathrooms and new tubs, toilet and shower fixtures installed. Linoleum was

### IMPOSSIBLE MISSION ?

Not if you know the dedication and creativity of Box Project members like Carol & Cliff Styles

"...with a little help from my friends"

placed in the kitchen and bathrooms. A newer upright freezer and stove were brought for the kitchen. The interior ceilings and walls were all sheet rocked, then textured sprayed and painted white. All new windows with new curtains were installed, including a large double window in the living room that cranked open. New doors on the rooms were placed, including a door and screen door on the kitchen, which opened out onto a new porch and steps. New light fixtures were installed and old, dangerous gas room heaters were replaced with base-board electric heaters. Wall-to-wall carpet was laid in the living and dining room. Some original art work was hung on the walls. It was an amazing transformation, which Annie and John could not believe.

The hospitality of the community, both white and African American, was wonderful. A black Baptist minister made arrangements for us to use the air conditioned community center, where the group could sleep in comfort.. The kitchen provided space to prepare meals and a dining area allowed everyone to sit down for their meal. The Mexican American gentleman who headed the Community Center stopped every day to be sure everything was working well and there were no problems. He arranged for a group of ladies to bring in dinner one evening of "local soul" food, including collard greens, green beans in ham, pinto beans in beef, potato salad, corn bread, buttermilk biscuits and two large pans of banana "puddin", all of which disappeared quickly. The minister also hosted two from our group at his home. The police chief and mayor came out to visit, because they had heard we "was fixin' Johnny Butts' house." Several reporters from the local newspapers were there to report the story. The white hardware store owner in Kilmichael gave us a 10% discount on everything we purchased, while saying he "wanted to help, but please don't tell anyone."

Most store owners in Winona, MS, a larger town 15 miles away, were very cooperative and gave us a break on purchases, including the restaurant where the group had dinner out on the town one evening. It is still apparent that discrimination has not totally



ended in the south, but at no time were we in any danger. This whole project could not have been done 30 years ago, when the Stiles family visited Katherine and her family, who lived in a small house about five miles outside Kilmichael.

As the group packed up and prepared to return to Minnesota, they gave Annie a tour of her new home. She could only stand there, shake her head, and say, "It is my dream home. I never thought I would get me my dream home."

While Briana was flying up and down the stony driveway on a new bike, wearing the new clothes that the group had brought her, Annie and John were left sitting on their couch, just smiling. The transformation of the house in 4.5 days was one of God's miracles.

Participants in the 1st P/C Mission Work were . Botzek, Candace . Botzek, Jared . Botzek, Joel . Botzek, Joshua . Brauen, Ben . Elwell, Tammy . Ennenga, LeRoy . Gibbs, Sandy . Hemsworth, Aly-



sha . Hemsworth, Amanda . Hemsworth, Brian . Hemsworth, Coderro . Hemsworth, Danielle . Hemsworth, J on . Hemsworth, Lacey . Hemsworth, Ladell . Hemsworth, Michelle . Henry , David . Jer-



Annie & John Butts

# The News Box

Post Office Box 435  
Plainville, Connecticut  
06062-0435

Phone: 1-860-747-8182  
Fax: 1-860-793-8857  
Web: [www.BoxProject.org](http://www.BoxProject.org)  
E-mail: [Info@BoxProject.org](mailto:Info@BoxProject.org)

Non-profit Org  
**US POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
Permit #9  
Plainville, CT 06062-0435

*The Box Project, Inc. is a national, non-profit organization which offers friendship, educational and material aid to families and individuals living in rural poverty in America.*

WHY SHOULD YOU RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ?

**BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO**

friends. If you would like some brochures for an event, just let us know.

It is very hard on our staff to have to tell a recipient family that we can no longer help them because their sponsor has not kept up their membership.

miracle of The Box Project going! But the job is not over. We still have hundreds of good, new families hoping for sponsors.

In the coming months we will be sending out our annual appeal letter. This year it is more critical than ever that we meet our goals. Without your help, the miracle simply cannot go on. There's no other program known quite like The Box Project, and there are no other members quite as caring as ours. Please help us to help others.

## The Last Word

The best we can do is to put them back on a waiting list and hope for another sponsor. But that waiting list has gotten very long and we have hundreds of other families also looking for help.

The Box Project needs funds just to maintain our programs, newsletter, Chatterbox, 800 hotline, contacts with social agencies, mailings, and referrals. To grow, we need even more. The recent national survey done on us showed that:

....and THANK YOU for your support, encouragement and caring over this past year. As you've read in this newsletter, we have some wonderful people doing extraordinary acts of kindness. I am honored to be part of it all.

In the best of worlds, we would be able to answer all of these heartfelt pleas for aid. If you are one of the people who have not renewed your membership, PLEASE do so now! We recently sent out renewal notices OR [you can use the form in this newsletter to renew.](#) Your help is critically needed.

**“For every \$1 given to The Box Project itself, over \$14 in direct aid to needy families is generated.”**

If you have already renewed, then we **THANK YOU** for helping to keep the

*I need your help!*  
*I also need your friends.*  
The BEST way for us to find new sponsors for all these families is through our own members telling friends about the program. Please share your experiences with your

