



THE NEWS BOX

Fall
2003

P.O. Box 435 ~ Plainville, CT 06062 ~ Phone: 860.747.8182 ~ Fax: 860.793.8857 ~ Email: info@boxproject.org ~ Web: www.boxproject.org

Board of Directors

President

Pat Schneider
Ridgefield, CT

Vice President

Cindy Fredrickson
Bozemon, MT

Secretary

Eva Scholfield
Toms River, NJ

Treasurer

Anne Blake
Grosse Pointe Farms,
MI

Adell Moore
Augusta, GA

Dr. Mohammad Hoque
Itta Bena, MS

Cindy Rheinhardt
Carmel, IN

Sue Taylor
Sherman Oaks, CA

George Scheiderman
Marks, MS

Ruby Blackmon
New Britain, CT

Raymond Uses the
Knife
Eagle Butte, SD

Susan Patneaude
Leeds, ME

Sharon Workman
Buckfield, ME

Executive Director
Allen G. Pitts

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Dear Members,

Twenty five years ago I read an article in Family Circle Magazine about an organization called The Box Project, and it changed my life. The article caused me to contact The Box Project and be matched with a recipient couple in MS. After the husband died, the wife moved in with her son and his family for a few years and I began to correspond with them as well. Over the years I corresponded with my sister family by mail and phone. I was delighted the first time—and each subsequent time—that I went to MS as a Board member and had a chance to visit them in person! We hug a lot, laugh a lot, shop a bit, go to Doctor's appointments and have fun "eating out"! Each letter, each phone call, and each visit, deepens our relationship. We all know that we carry each other in our hearts and that we truly are "extended family".

To be honest, I sometimes wondered why The Box Project charged annual dues and also asked for donations—when I was already putting money toward my family's needs each month! I came to realize that membership provided other benefits. I knew that at any time, I could call The Box Project's office and talk to a staff member about my sister family, and my sister family could call them too! One year I called because one of them needed eyeglasses. Money from The Box Project Emergency Fund filled that need. Those dues also meant that my sister family was eligible for scholarships through the Education Fund. Updates from my sister family kept me current about how they were doing, and newsletters from The Box Project kept me informed about what other sponsors were doing, new areas that were being supported, and even provided ideas for holiday or seasonal box contents. The membership dues make each of those services possible.

Now that I've been on the board for several years, I truly appreciate the time and effort invested, and recognize the cost of matching and supporting our relationships. This includes responding to daily phone calls from sponsors and recipient families, finding new social service partners, qualifying new recipient families, making the "right" match, writing grants, sending mailings, developing and sending out the newsletter, etc. Our membership dues money also funds staff time to find sponsors for new families on the waiting list—so we can leave a legacy for those who join us.

I also donate and hear from several other charitable organizations. They send me well-written letters informing me that my donations will help others. But only The Box Project offers the opportunity to connect directly with another family on a deeper, personal level where the support is mutual and the potential for changing both of our lives is enormous.

This very simple model does many complex things. It promotes understanding between people of very different cultures, races and economic means. It serves as a catalyst for sponsors to take action far and above sending of a box of clothing, toiletries or school supplies. For example, when I found out that my sister family's granddaughter was not prepared to take the SAT equivalent of a test for college, I found her a site online that helped her with practice tests. She's now in college majoring in computer science...a real accomplishment! Her family's deep commitments to education and self-empowerment have been an inspiration to me. I know first-hand that they have devoted years of hard labor, standing in a dust-filled, un-air-conditioned factory to give her opportunities they didn't have. They are my heroes.

A recent message on the Chatterbox touched me deeply, for it really reflects my feelings about my involvement with The Box Project:

SPONSOR FAMILY: "We have shared our lives for more than 30 years. I am thankful to God that she and I have been friends for all these years."

RECIPIENT FAMILY: "How much it means to me to have someone who doesn't really know you, give of their time, money, thoughts and prayers."

I know many of you feel the same connection that I do and realize that as sponsors, we are the true receiving families.

Most sincerely,
Pat Schneider
Board President

We're On The Web!
www.boxproject.org

Where do Recipient Families come from?

They come from travel, personal meetings and contacts. The Box Project has established special relationships with social service agencies and individuals in many of the poorest rural areas of the country.

The Executive Director has personally gone to each of these areas to review the structures in place, verify that they meet our criteria, and identify people and agencies that can cooperatively work with us. We then form an alliance with the local social agencies to refer families that will meet our criteria. We ask these agencies to be our eyes and ears in the area and assist us if problems or questions arise. The Social service agencies look for families

that have the potential to help themselves but could use some assistance to become self supporting. The agencies help to meet a family's most pressing needs, but a sponsor's ability to respond to individual needs makes all the difference.

The agencies we work with also help to explain the concept of our program with the families they are referring. We believe this is such an important part of our referral process that we will disqualify agencies that are unable to fulfill this requirement.

The social workers work with the family to fill out a form to assure that we are receiving the key information we need. They also explain their role and responsibilities to remain in the program. They verify that recipient families meet our income guideline—not exceeding

150% of the federal poverty guidelines. In addition, we ask them to give us a brief summary of each family's situation, and anything they think is important for us or sponsors to know about each individual family. Every two years or so, we send a new form to recipients, to update our information for accuracy.

The goal of our family match relationships (and all of our programs) is to help the family to become self-sufficient and overcome the cycle of poverty. In some situations, this goal is only realistic for future generations, but we do what is possible to achieve that end.

As you know, it costs money to travel, call, and meet all the various referring agencies around the country. Your dues and donations that make this possible. Thank you!

Internal Screening

Recipient applications are always reviewed again in our office. We recheck each one for it's accuracy and make sure that we have enough information to determine if the family meets the guidelines for qualification as a recipient member.

The reviewing process could mean making phone calls to Social service agencies or the applicant themselves. We work hard to make sure that the information we collect is as accurate as possible and that sponsor families get a clear picture of their recipient family's situation.

What ARE the Poverty Guidelines?

The Federal Poverty Guidelines are established each year by the national government and are published in many places. The figures are the basis for many social programs across the country and are watched carefully.

They show the TOTAL family income from all sources, plus the value of gifts, barter or other ways to acquire goods and wealth. Most programs use the same measure used by The Box Project, 150% of poverty level.

On our measure, a family of three people with a total income of under \$22890 would qualify.

A person working full time at \$11/hour with 2 dependents would qualify. Those working at minimum wage levels obviously have even greater challenges!

February 2003 Federal Poverty Guidelines	
Persons in Family	Total Income
1	\$8,980
2	12,120
3	15,260
4	18,400
5	21,540
6	24,680
7	27,820
8	30,960

Where do Sponsors come from?

The greatest source of new sponsor families is YOU. While The Box Project is constantly working to get its message out on television, radio and in the press, it is our sponsor members themselves that are the best ambassadors. by telling their friends, neighbors, church groups, co-workers and others about their families.

Sponsors benefit in two important ways:

First, they generate assistance for their own recipient family. Many sponsors have accomplished great things by recruiting the people around them to work together.

Secondly, by telling others about your experiences, they become interested in being sponsors themselves,

and you are helping more people to share the fun of planning, shopping and sharing experiences with each other.

It is said that a sorrow shared is half a sorrow, but a joy shared is twice the joy. This is very true. The Box Project has grown the most through the simple act of sponsors sharing their joy from making a difference in someone else's life.

We need more good people like you to become sponsors! We have hundreds of screened families who are anxiously waiting for a sponsor. We need your help to spread the word about us and recruit more sponsors to help us make a difference.

Share the joy that comes from membership in The Box Project!

Video Tape Available

Do you have a group, club or gathering in need of a topic for a meeting? Are you afraid of making a speech alone? Would you like to have help and looking for a video to use to get the conversation started? Call the office and we can help!

A videotape about The Box Project is available for your use. While it is NOT to be broadcast or used on the air, it's available for your use with clubs, churches, employee meetings and similar groups.

We only ask that when you are done that you send it back to us. Call Allen or Maureen for more information at 860-747-8182.

Financial and Estate Planning

There's no end to the good you can do.

Consider the following facts: While 72 percent of all Americans support the work of charities each year, only 5.7 percent include non-profit organizations in their estate plans.

When asked most people say they never thought about it. A thorough financial planner should bring up this topic.

We would love to be considered in your estate plans. Please call us for details.

The Box Project Wish List

#1 Priority on our wish list: New sponsors

Please tell your friends and co-workers about The Box Project. Our best referral source is YOU. Right now we have over 450 families awaiting sponsors and no one to match with them. Sharing your experiences with friends and encouraging them to join is the best way to help.

#2 Publicity

Who do you know in the media? A reporter? Perhaps you know someone at the local news or TV station. Let us know and we can send you information to share with them!

#3 Foundation and Grant contacts

Our members know a lot of people. It is wonderful when members make the initial introductions to a corporate or foundation contact. If you know one, or might BE one, please let us know.

What is a Community Center Sponsor?

Often we find generous people who really want to help, but are not in a situation that they are ready for the on-going commitment of sponsoring a family. Pressures of time and variables in income all play a part. But they still want to help others in need, reach beyond themselves, do the right thing.

Community Center Sponsor is a great match for people:

- > *Not ready for an on-going commitment to a single family*
- > *Concerned about variables in their own income*
- > *Worried about making time to prepare boxes*
- > *Able to help out every now and then, but can't commit to a regular schedule*

Community Center Sponsors are matched to a specific regional social agency we work with. They help out as they can—and when they can—by donating through the agency to ALL the families in that area. This program is great for community or group drives and special events work.

What's a Holiday Sponsor?

Once the holidays are over, Holiday Sponsors have no further commitment.

Holiday Sponsors are members of The Box Project who aid a family just during the winter holiday season. This works very well for our members who have the desire to help others, and prefer a limited time commitment.

We start the matching process in August and try to have it completed by early November to allow time for families to first write to each other, then shop and ship packages. It's a LOT of fun to plan and shop, especially when there are children involved.

Many of our family sponsors enjoy this activity so much that they request a match to an additional family just for the holidays. If you would like a Holiday match, contact us NOW—matching is complete in a few weeks!

Several companies have selected this great activity for a group project. Some companies even pay the membership dues for their employees because it raises employee morale, increases communication and teamwork, and provides good public relations without decreasing worker productivity.

Each year approximately 25% of Holiday Sponsors find that they had such a good experience that they ask us to match them in our family match program!

Please feel free to pass this idea along to your friends or groups looking for holiday service ideas. They can join online at www.boxproject.org/volunteer.html.

Our Direct Aid Program

There are times when sponsors wish to send money to recipient families through The Box Project itself. To meet these needs, The Box Project has a Direct Aid Program. Sponsors provide the office with:

- 1) A check made out to The Box Project/Direct Aid, and
- 2) An envelope made out to the recipient family or center they wish to help

The Box Project will cash the check, then send the money to your recipient less a \$10 processing fee.

We recommend that you check with your own tax advisor for details on whether this is tax deductible for you.

Shop and Save

Now you can shop for your sister family or yourself, save a bundle of money, and benefit The Box Project all at once!

Through our new partnership with The Estore.com, you can shop from over 10 million competitively priced products on the Internet. Each time you make a purchase, you will be saving 25% on your purchases, and The Box Project will receive 40% of the profit margin of all products purchased.

The Estore offers a variety of items such as apparel, electronics, and much more.

This is a great way to fill a box for your sister family, or even shop for your own family and friends. Visit our Estore online at www.boxproject.theestore.com.

Member Services

Your Member Benefits

Your membership dues entitle you to a wealth of services. Whether you are a new sponsor or have been a member for 30 years, situations may cause questions to arise. Your membership means you are never alone. We are here to help.

Phone

The Box Project maintains a toll-free line for our members to ask questions and share information. Staff members are available weekdays from 8:00-4:00 ET to assist you at :

1-800-268-9928

Referrals

Sometimes we do not know the answer, but we usually know someone who DOES! We can put you in contact with them and get answers together. One of the nice arrangements we have with our referring social services is that we can call upon them for help in situations where we do not have our own expertise or local representatives.

Website

Many of your questions may be answered by just visiting us online at:

www.boxproject.org

Chances are good you will find your answer, and maybe even a few other interesting things you didn't know.

Email

Members can also get information and help from our staff by emailing us at:

info@boxproject.org

We receive a huge volume of emails daily, so it may take a day or two to respond to you, but we will respond. Unfortunately we get a lot of email with no name and no way to identify who the e-mail came from. Please be sure to include your name and address in case we need to research a situation before we answer.

Letters

Maureen, our Office Manager, regularly returns from the post office with a shopping bag full of mail. We get hundreds of letters each week, and each one gets answered.

Chatterbox

We cannot say enough good things about our members on the Chatterbox on-line group. They constantly surprise us with their ingenuity, creativity and caring. There are lots of great ideas to be found there. Join in to participate or just read the messages online at:

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/boxproject_chatterbox/

With a little help from my friends...

Your Membership

Being a member of The Box Project is more than just helping one family. It is your way to be part of a national TEAM of people that offer knowledge, ideas, and expertise in many different areas. Through your membership, you have access to information and help. But you also aid others in their work. Your membership supports our ability to provide **all** of our members access to the information and skills that help us be the very best sponsors and helpers possible.

The Education Fund

Each year The Box Project provides a limited number of scholarships to students from our recipient families for college or vocational education. Designed to supplement a Pell Grant or other similar aid, these small scholarships often provide for the necessary items that the larger grants ignore. Textbooks are one of the main ways these College Funds are used!

We try to keep application procedures and requirements for this aid as easy as possible.

- 1) The student's family must be members of The Box Project
- 2) The student sends us a letter with:
 - a) an outline of their plans and goals
 - b) a copy of their schedule of classes showing the student is registered
 - c) a copy of the registrar's printout showing the costs and all other aid applications

Completed applications are sent to the screening committee for consideration. Awards range from \$100 to 300/semester.

The Emergency Fund

Thanks to recent donations from our members, the Emergency Fund has resumed limited abilities to respond quickly to major crises in the lives of recipient families. Grants of up to \$300 may be awarded for **major** emergencies and are designed to help our recipient members while more substantial aid is being processed by other agencies. We welcome your donations to this fund.

ClassMatchSM

The ClassMatch program is off and running. We have 22 classes matched in the pilot program that range between grades 2 to 5. Initial packets have already been sent to the teachers and more information is to come.

This is a new program for The Box Project. Matching elementary school classrooms across regions and cultures in the USA seems like such a natural extension of our matching programs. We are excited about the partnership with Smithsonian American Art Museum and look forward to taking advantage of their educational resources.

We want to thank those teachers who signed up to take part in this pilot program! With their help, we will be able to refine and expand this program in the future to involve many more classrooms around the country. We would like to thank the following teachers for helping us to get this program off the ground:

<i>Elizabeth Denny</i>	<i>Bonnie Dick</i>	<i>Margie Hagedorn</i>
<i>Gail Kiefer</i>	<i>Betty Lalich</i>	<i>Jammie Coyle</i>
<i>Heidi Mills</i>	<i>Kristie Tays</i>	<i>Barbara Sachs</i>
<i>Danny Janklow</i>	<i>Michelle Gross</i>	<i>Janet McCaskey</i>
<i>Shelly Branch</i>	<i>Barb Muth</i>	<i>Peresa Causey</i>
<i>Patricia Rankins</i>	<i>Willie Doris Love</i>	<i>Betty Terrell</i>
<i>Dannette Savannah</i>	<i>Bertha Townes</i>	<i>Geraldine Perry</i>
<i>Gerturde Brown</i>		

Schools in Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, Mississippi, North Carolina, and Michigan are involved in the pilot program.

OUR BOOKLET IS HERE And it looks GREAT! Thank You, Inland



Not long ago we received a generous grant from Inland Paperboard and Packaging, Inc. to develop a booklet illustrating the unique relationship between our sponsors and their families.

We were delighted that we were able to secure the services of Ron Goulart and Orlando Busino, nationally known comic book writers and illustrators, to

collaborate with us on this project.

We told them about our mission and our programs and asked them to create a story and visual introduction to our programs that could be shared with your children, and read by adults for their own enjoyment too.

We think they did an exceptional job and are delighted that it is now available. A copy is being sent to each recipient family in hopes that they will read it with their family and discuss the importance of caring, sharing, and friendship. It will also be made part of the intake materials for new recipient members in the coming year.

Sponsors and others can also get their own copy of the booklet just by asking the main office.

**Thank you, Inland,
for making a dream come true!**

WE HEAR YOU!

The Box Project staff are continuously in touch with our members and listen carefully to their needs. Our sponsors told us the two biggest things they wanted were more interaction from their recipient families and help with shipping costs. We heard you!

Working in partnership with Inland and FedEx, we are happy to share two activities which will meet sponsors' needs.

How can friends join The Box Project?

It's Easy! Cut this out for them!

They can give us a call, write a letter, or email us to tell us their interests. Then we'll send them more information about signing up.

OR

They can sign up immediately, right on our Website at:

www.boxproject.org/forms.html

P.O. Box 435

Plainville, CT 06062

Phone: 1-800-268-9928

Email: info@boxproject.org

New FedEx program provides special sponsor discounts

Sponsors of The Box Project now have an opportunity to save money shipping packages to their sister-families!

FedEx has set up a special program for us. By getting your own FedEx ground account and linking it to The Box Project, you can eliminate the costs of drop-off site fees and also get an additional 8% discount on FedEx Ground packages (or 11% on boxes over 30#). This is a great discount—especially since many members say FedEx ground was already the most frugal way to ship.

To take advantage of this opportunity please send an email to: **eric.blumenthal@fedex.com**

Or, if you don't have email, you can call him at 800-448-9961, press 2#, then 9013# for his voicemail.

Be sure to specifically tell him you want to join the FedEx/Box Project discount program and also provide him the following information in your email

First name

Last name

Address, city, state, zip

Your Email address

Phone

Fax number if have one

Eric will then get it set up for you. The more members we have using this program, the better the discounts we can get for you in the future!

Thank you Eric and FedEx!

the
BOX
PROJECT™



P.O. Box 435
Plainville, Connecticut 06062-0435

Phone: 1-860-747-8182
Fax: 1-860-793-8857
Web: www.boxproject.org
Email: info@boxproject.org

Non-profit Org
US POSTAGE

PAID

Permit #9
Plainville, CT 06062-0435

The Box ProjectSM is a national, non-profit organization encouraging families and individuals living in rural poverty in America to become self-sufficient and overcome the cycle of poverty by offering them friendship, educational and material aid.

The Last Word

Wow, this is a busy time of year for us at The Box Project! This newsletter, the annual fall appeal, the recipient booklet, Holiday Sponsor Program, our annual Board meeting, launching the ClassMatchSM

pilot program, and developing new relationships with corporate sponsors all have come at once.

We're putting the finishing touches on a new Website design, and redesigning protocols for some of our programs to provide better services. But most of all, we are actively looking for better ways to serve our members and recruit new members to sponsor the long list of waiting families.

Of course, none of this would be possible without a great deal of time and activity from you. You have done

amazing things this year.

Your participation is truly valued. On a national scale, it is becoming harder to recruit people into volunteer service. For many reasons people are unable or unwilling to commit to an on-going, long-term relationship.

Events of one day, or one weekend, or just one appeal are continuing as usual. But asking for a longer term commitment is more of a challenge. The reasons for this are diverse, but the effect is a reduction of volunteer activity for many organizations.

We need more new sponsors like you! We have hundreds of families waiting and no one to sponsor them. Please talk to the people around you about The Box Project—even for short-term commitments like our Holiday Sponsor program..

Would co-workers, group members,

or your friends be interested in joining?

Perhaps you know a family or group that would enjoy being a Holiday Sponsor for one of the larger families on our waiting list?

How about the people at your church? We can even loan you a video about The Box Project if that will help.

Word of mouth is the best advertising!. When people hear about what YOU are doing, they may want to join us too!

In the meantime, we're working hard to make The Box Project grow and succeed. We appreciate hearing your needs and are trying to provide the services and programs that support you as a sponsor and stay true to our mission of helping those in rural poverty to become self-sufficient. Together, we will not only survive, but thrive.

Allen G. Pitts