

THE NEWS BOX

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**PRESIDENT'S
MESSAGE:**

Dear Box Project Members,
I've been involved with The Box Project for over 27 years – as a sponsor, a board member and now, as Board President. I have been to Mississippi many times, as well as to Appalachia and Maine and have seen first hand, our sister families struggling to raise their families in a poverty of material things but not in a poverty of spirit. I can assure you, the reputation of The Box Project is renowned. Families with little to share have housed us, cooked for us and received us into their homes and hearts because they recognize and respect The Box Project and what it has accomplished for over 40 years. This is what inspires me to stay.

The Box Project's family-to-family program is unique. We serve diverse cultural populations with wide-ranging needs and challenges. Some of our sister families will always be in need of the essentials – clothing, toiletries, books, school supplies, food, heat. Some will find it challenging to write back promptly, if at all. We know we need to focus on the systemic causes of these communication gaps or, when necessary, provide a rematch with a sister family who understands and accepts the responsibility of reaching out to us as well.

But we also know there are many recipient families who are trying to give their children and grandchildren opportunities they never had: to finish high school and attend college; some are trying to finish their G.E.D.s;

some are determined to get a technical or college degree while working several jobs. These families are trying to find ways to become more self-sufficient.

Our focus this year is on strategy and setting and implementing realistic goals helping us to sustain and expand our family-to-family program to other rural areas such as South Dakota where there are many Native American families desperately in need of our help for the essentials. We are also focusing on developing additional programs for self-sufficiency similar to our partnerships with colleges and technical schools which combine short-term direct aid and scholarship support. These programs can mean the difference between dropping out of school and obtaining a degree.

Another area of deep concern is our members – you. We want to be responsive to the need for information about the cultural and economic challenges that your families are facing; about your need for feedback from your families once you've sent your boxes; and for communication from us about what you can do to provide resources that will both sustain and move your families toward self-sufficiency.

We can't guarantee we will ever have all the answers to the challenges that we face. We do guarantee that we will work with you and be as responsive as we can to you. We hope you will stay connected to us and together we will find the answers.

Sincerely,
Pat Schneider, President

ALL MEMBER CONGRESS
Oct 11 & 12, 2002 Orlando, FL

The Board is planning to host an All Member Congress, Friday night and Saturday, just outside Disney World. We hope that as many members as possible will come and share with us, helping us plan the future. Friday evening will be a reception. Saturday, we will have discussions, presentations, the results of the survey, and an opportunity to meet other sponsors and Board members.

Arrangements are being made with the Hotel Royal Plaza. We are working on special rates for rooms and activities. To do this right we need an idea of how many people will be attending. This is your chance to come, meet with the Board, share ideas, and have fun with your family all at one place.

If you think you might come, or want to be kept informed as plans develop, just tear off this form, fill it out and mail it to us. The Box Project will put you on a special mailing list. We will stay in contact as more information is available.

PLEASE RETURN TO:

The Box Project
PO Box 435
Plainville, CT 06062

- Yes, I will be there!
 I think I can come...
 I'm not sure, please send more info...

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email _____



The Box Project Educational Fund

The Box Project's Educational Fund, formerly known as the Box Project College Fund, providing up to \$300 per semester to qualified students, continues to aid our recipient members in pursuit of higher education OR vocational training. But we've added a new twist! We recently approached several schools with the idea of looking out for families that are trying hard to be self sufficient but need a little help. Our plan is to match these families with a sponsor family who will provide mentoring and general support with the office providing financial support while the student is in school. We will follow these families closely to see if this dual approach, done in partnership with the school itself, results in a better "success rate" for families to achieve the goal of self sufficiency.

Please do NOT write us to be matched to one of these families yet! Because of the school year, it may not be until June we get our first applicants for this. The Box Project remains committed to the idea that the best way out of poverty is through education.

Emergency Funds LOW

In the last newsletter, we reminded recipient members of our Emergency Fund. It can provide up to \$300 to recipient families in a crisis. Since that time we have been **FLOODED** with requests!!

Applicants have asked for funding for everything from necessary dental work to heat and electric bills. Even after we sorted out the applications and pulled out true emergencies such as fires, major illnesses or dislocation of elderly members, there were a lot of them. Money went to replace clothing lost in a house fire; provide rent money for another family whose home was burned while they sought a new place to live; save an elderly lady's home and independence; provide propane for a family in South Dakota; restore running water to a family; restore electricity to several families; and the best one of all...prevent the imminent eviction of an 84 year old lady on Christmas Eve who was behind on her rent due to the costs of her brother's funeral. But we have to stop...There now is less than \$1400 left in the emergency fund!

Please send a donation to The Box Project today.

DIRECT AID TO FAMILIES

The Box Project offers a Direct Aid to Families Program to our members. If you are interested in sending your family a check whether once, monthly, or quarterly, we can help you.

Simply send to us:

- (1) a check made payable to The Box Project, Inc.
- (2) an envelope addressed to the recipient family
- (3) a note with any special instructions on how you want Meghan to handle your request

Please do not send cash. We, in turn, send a Box Project check to your sister family in the amount you request minus a \$10.00 handling fee. This program is available only to current active members (individuals who have paid annual dues within twelve months).

Please contact us with any questions, call Meghan 860.747.8182 at the office or email at accounting@boxproject.org. For tax information, please see your tax advisor.

**THE BOX PROJECT
STATEMENT OF ACTIVITY
YEAR ENDED 2001**

Net Assets at Beginning of year \$242,617

Unrestricted Net Assets

Support

Dues	\$82,402
Contributions	\$58,107
Grants	\$10,945
Federal Grant	\$ 1,072
Contribution in Kind	\$19,376
Direct Aid Fees	\$ 4,940
Interest Income	\$1,957

Total Unrestricted Support \$178,799

Expenses

Program Services	\$180,594
Supporting Services	\$46,872

Total Expenses \$227,466

Decrease in Unrestricted Assets \$48,667

As you can see, there was a drop, and a very painful one. Donations did not come in at the end of the year as in previous years.

Temporarily Restricted Assets

Interest Income	\$ 849
Restrictions satisfied by payments	\$13,716

Decrease in temporarily restricted Assets \$12,867

Decrease in Net Assets \$61,534

Net Assets at End of Year \$181,083

The decrease in the Restricted Assets is actually a good thing as it is due to the payment of education costs to students who were part of the old "Scholarship Program" from previous years. This program has been closed, but will continue to pay out from the funds that were set aside for these particular students over time.

Please visit our website at www.boxproject.org

3,986 !

Because of donations and support to The Box Project itself, last year we were able to match, support and help 3,986 needy families!! This is absolutely incredible for our small organization and shows how much good your donations to The Box Project can do.

WHERE DO RECIPIENT FAMILIES COME FROM?

With families located in several states, it is not possible for The Box Project to have our own staff in all these locations without an incredible increase in dues and administrative expenses. Our focus is on families, not our organization. So, the Executive Director meets with regional social service agencies in these states to form partnerships benefiting both organizations. We offer certain social service agencies the opportunity to have one more tool they can offer to appropriate families in need - referral to The Box Project's program. In return, we have the benefit of people who live in the immediate area who will check on things if there is trouble.

In this partnership, the social agencies select the families they think would be the best candidates for our program of sponsorship. Then they fill out a four page questionnaire with the potential family. The forms must then be individually verified and signed by a director or supervisor approved through that agency.

Once the forms are filled out, they are sent to The Box Project for a third screening by Susan. She checks for validity and accuracy. For example, if the family claims to be on disability, but says that they do not get food stamps, why not? Or if the income level reported doesn't match the child support levels for the children, what is causing this?

Many applications are rejected for these reasons. If there is a legitimate question, Susan calls the referring agency about it. In this way there are three screening levels for each application: the social workers, their supervisor and Susan. We also are looking more and more at the family's OWN efforts and probabilities that the family, or at least their children, can ever move up and OUT of poverty, or if they are stuck even with the best of sponsors' encouragement.

Many social service agencies tell us this is a wonderful arrangement for them because The Box Project can help in cases where there simply are no appropriate entitlement programs - or the application would take too long. In addition, we provide a human contact, not just a case number for some federal bureaucracy. And, because of these partnerships we have people we can call quickly if there is a problem or emergency.

VISA & MasterCard

For several years members have asked if they could make donations or pay annual dues using charge cards. So, along with several other changes... We will be adding the ability to pay dues or make donations using VISA or MasterCard to our updated website.

We hope that you will take advantage of this option.

This will be for dues or donations only. We do not have the ability to process direct aid checks or other transactions using charge cards. We are limiting cards to VISA and MasterCard due to the fees involved for other cards. To update your annual dues or make a donation, please visit:

www.boxproject.org

We thank you for your continued support!

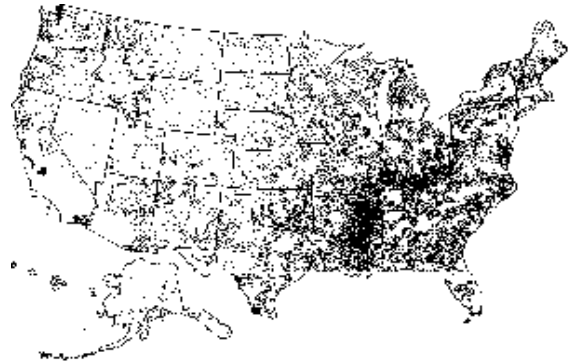
TWO COMMON PROBLEMS

Despite the pamphlets and discussions, the specially worded application and talks to families, some recipient families still see **ALL** help as being a bureaucratic entitlement program. They are so accustomed to dealing with welfare agencies, housing agencies, and other faceless organizations they simply do not "get it" that The Box Project is different.... it's a real person, a family, a volunteer. If recipient families are unresponsive or unwilling to participate in a relationship, we need to give them time to understand this difference and change. However, if the problem persists, then it's time to notify the office, terminate the relationship, and try with another family.

A second problem can be titled "Help vs. Save". Several sponsors have called us after being overwhelmed with requests for major financial and material aid. Sometimes these unrealistic requests reach thousands of dollars and there is simply no way the sponsor could ever do this. In short, they are being asked to "save" the family. The Box Project does NOT expect sponsor families to meet these unrealistic requests. While we can understand the problems and emotions involved, this is not what sponsors agreed to do nor should they feel pressured to do so. They must explain to their family that they have to live on a budget and cannot provide many of these things for their own family. Communication is the key to a successful relationship.

Why should I donate to The Box Project?

I already give to my sister family!



Every small dot in the picture above represents **two hundred people** still living in some of the worst poverty areas of America....RURAL poverty. No Perrier water, many do not even have hot water. People enslaved by isolation, ignorance, and economics as tightly as iron chains. No way to move. No jobs. No education. No way out. And all around, even the air itself seems thick with despair, prejudice and fear.

The Box Project, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization that was started in 1962 with the simple mission of smashing through the isolation of rural poverty by matching these families with sponsoring families from all over the country. Working family to family, one on one, The Box Project's programs provide friendship, mentoring, material aid and support, scholarships, emergency aid, and most precious of all, realistic hopes for a better future.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Enhance the lives of individuals and families living in rural poverty by matching them with other Americans who offer friendship and material aid, and by providing educational and vocational training opportunities, empowering them to break their cycle of poverty.

GOALS

- ◆ Provide friendship, mentorship, immediate support and hope through our family-to-family sponsorships to relieve immediate needs.
- ◆ Provide opportunities for the economic development of member families, empowering them to break the poverty cycle itself.
- ◆ Provide for educational and training opportunities for members to end the poverty cycle forever.

SERVICES

The Box Project's Family-to-Family program began in 1968 with the simple idea of just mailing critically needed supplies to families living in rural poverty. Virginia Naeve began by sending boxes from her home to names supplied by Mrs. Martin Luther King. Soon other families joined in and word-of-mouth recruiting added more sponsoring families from across America. **Currently (Jan 02) our memberships are 3980 sponsoring families providing aid to 4100 recipient families. While we have recipient families in 22 states, our main target areas are the Mississippi Delta, West Virginia, rural Maine, Kentucky and South Dakota.** The Box Project seeks out families in rural areas who want to better themselves, work and learn. We match them with Helping Families who give encouragement, advice and boxes of needed supplies about once a month. As the families come to know each other, trust and friendships grow. Knowing someone else cares makes all the difference. The Box Project staff and affiliated centers help step by step, providing Helping Families with support, information, ideas and referrals all along the way.

The Box Project also has an **Education Fund** that provides supplemental funds designed to match with Pell grants and allow students from rural poverty areas to attend college or vocational trainings. Part time students who also work while going to school are left out of most financial aid programs. In response to this need, The Box Project expanded its education fund program to target students working 30 or more hours a week and still carrying 6 credit hours in school.

GOVERNANCE

The Box Project is a 501(c)3, non-profit, charitable organization which is incorporated in the State of Connecticut. Membership is based on annual dues and members come from throughout America. The Box Project is governed by a Board of Directors of up to 12 persons drawn from our membership for terms of three years. They are unpaid volunteers.

STAFF

Based in its national headquarters in Plainville, Connecticut, The Box Project has chosen to have minimal paid staffing of only 2 full and 2 part time people. By using our alliances with other organizations and volunteers, we are able to focus our resources into our programs instead of administrative costs.

FINANCES

The primary thrust of The Box Project is enabling and supporting our volunteer family-to-family activity. Because of this structure, we are able to accomplish a great deal with very little administrative expense. Our total budget for FY 2001 was only \$175,000. Expected budget for 2002 is under \$207,000. Because of our unique structure, only 16% of the budget is for administration. The rest is programming

The primary income source for The Box Project has been the membership dues of \$5/yr from sponsoring families. But even with over 3500 sponsoring families, only 66% continue to pay annual dues after they have been matched to a family. We are increasing first year dues to \$50 but even then, by itself, the money from these dues will not support a national organization and its attendant requirements. Newsletters are over \$10,000. Postage is over \$6,000. Telephone costs over \$4,000. Mandatory insurance is \$13,700. The annual audit is \$4500. Rent is \$11,500. Even the state registrations required just to be a charity in various states costs us over \$3000. There are many more costs we must pay to exist at all as a national organization. Box Project members who recognize the need for the other programs and services provided by the organization, annually contribute approximately an equal amount.

The balance of the income must be made up through special appeals, bequests, or grants.

Yet looked at from a "bang for the buck" perspective, The Box Project is providing significant help for less than \$60/family, but because of our volunteer structure it provides hundreds of dollars worth of goods and services.

SUCCESS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2001

Despite its budget of \$175,000 and only two fulltime and 2 part-time paid staff in 2001, The Box Project was been able to leverage vast resources to meet our mission.

In just the past year alone:

- Over \$3 million in needed goods was sent in parcels by sponsors to recipient families
- \$ 350,000 in needed services was provided or paid for by sponsoring families
- Approximately 36000 contacts were made between families, ending isolation and providing friendships.
- Two community Day Care Centers were able to get 1:1 sponsors for EVERY CHILD they found needing family support.
- Over 1000 new recipient families were found, screened, matched to sponsors

While the numbers and activity level of members ebbs and flows with the changes in the social and political climate, the overall organization has been stable for decades. The Box Project continued to provide much needed help and support to thousands of families even when rural poverty and politics were no longer in American headlines. In the past three years, The Box Project has expanded its targeted areas to include Appalachia and Native Americans on reservations in South Dakota. Because of our unique structure and effective work, it has been endorsed on TV by Oprah Winfrey (10/5/2000), several times on Mike Gallagher's national radio show, and most recently in Redbook Magazine (2/02) in addition to many appearances around the country on local TV and news outlets.

At the same time.....
The basic need is still there.

Why should you donate to The Box Project?

**You do it so we can go find her
And give her help and hope
and a friend like you.**



Dear Box Project staff,

I am a licensed social worker living and working in the Mississippi Delta. Last year we were sent Box Project Applications through one of our umbrella agencies, Bolivar County Community Action. I started completing applications and honestly didn't know what to expect.

This year I truly forgot about it when I had clients telling me about the boxes they were receiving. I was amazed! And I have even been more amazed about the relationships that have developed between the senders and receivers. One of my clients is determined to go and visit her sponsoring family.

First of all, this actual connection shows that you in CT are doing a GREAT job! Second, it is remarkable to have such a wonderful resource that works thanks to those sponsoring families. I recently had the pleasure of speaking with a sponsoring family in MA. I have been so excited! I have asked for them to send me some information about themselves just for my information and I would like to write an article in our local newspaper - by the way I am from Cleveland, MS. I hope this publicity is ok. I logged on to your website to get some history about how the box project got started. I also saw the article in Redbook magazine.

I do not know if any of you have been to the Mississippi Delta, but resources, jobs, transportation, housing, are very limited, It is very rural! Sometimes I feel like I am pushing against a steel wall. I see clients who want to work, but have no means of transportation and lack skills if there were an abundance of jobs. This job also makes me realize how lucky I am. I have worked hard to get what I have and will never forget the people who helped me reach goals. I wanted a degree in social work years ago. I went to college for several years then got married, had children, got divorced, etc... but went back to school to get a degree in social work. This is what I want to do -but I just wished I could do so much more and I am so delighted that the world still has people like you and the sponsoring families to give a little hope in the world that sometimes seems hopeless!

I would love to have the opportunity to meet and find out about all of the staff and any way that I can help! Any additional information you can send to me would be great!

Sincerely,
Paige Morgan

THE CHATTERBOX

I am a brand new sponsor. I already see numerous questions arising that I would love to ask of current sponsor families and of The Box Project. Are there any plans in the works to set up a bulletin board system for the web site or maybe a yahoo group or something that we could ask real time questions? Is this even a possibility? I know that there are many web services that could help with this for free. The two questions that are answered at one time on the chatterbox page are helpful but it would be more helpful to ask questions and get ideas from actual box project sponsor families on a larger scale.

Thank you for your help, Rhiana G.

The last time a bulletin board system was suggested, the Chatterbox page resulted. At that time, it was a more manageable way for The Box Project to provide a forum for members. The Box Project, working with a limited budget has had to rely on volunteers with limited time. However, things change and so is The Box Project website www.boxproject.org, and along with it, the ChatterBox. We will be creating a bulletin board. This will provide exactly as you mentioned, the opportunity for sponsors to respond directly to other sponsors or anyone wishing to post a comment or question. We feel the Chatterbox is an important tool for our members. This coming upgrade will help. Keep sending in your ideas and suggestions!

LARGE FAMILIES Need Sponsors

We have several large families with 6 or more people in them who need sponsors. Most sponsors ask for families of only 3 or 4 people, making it difficult to find sponsors for these larger units. If you have a group, church or some way to be a sponsor to a larger family, please let us know! It's a shame to have these good families waiting, unmatched. If you can help a larger family, please call or email Susan at info@boxproject.org with your request.

SELLING NAMES?

Many of our members have asked if The Box Project ever shares its database or sells names of members to other organizations.

The Box Project does not sell, rent, share, or disclose information that identifies you personally to any other organization.

The Box Project will not sell or share any personal information you provide us through mailed requests, with any third party or while using our website, www.boxproject.org. We believe in privacy, and will respect yours.

CAN'T FIND LARGE CLOTHES?

Maureen found a catalog company, Vicki Wayne's Old Pueblo Traders, which specializes women's clothing, all sizes, including womens. To order a catalog, please call Old Pueblo Traders at 1-800-362-8400

NOTICE REGARDING DUES

We at The Box Project take customer service very seriously and want to provide both the sponsoring families and the recipient families the best possible match as well as continuing support.

In reviewing our current dues policy we found that the major expenses that The Box Project incurs are at the time of the "match" and in that first year of membership. With that in mind the board has increased the first year annual dues to \$50.00 and all renewing dues will remain at the current fee of \$35.00.

We appreciate your loyalty and continued support of this organization.



Nancy Hicks and her church group are not only avid Box Project sponsors, but VERY creative! They did a skit about Colonial Mothers and used the proceeds for their families. Nancy also won a JC Penny writing contest and did a major presentation about The Box Project in Kansas City recently. By getting her friends involved too, she can do a lot more than working alone. Great work, Nancy & Co. !!

Ideas for Spring Boxes

SEEDS...No matter where you live, it's always nice to see flowers growing. Flowers can lift our spirits in paper cups or formal gardens. Mats are available which have the seeds right in them—just unroll and add water. These can be used almost anywhere and are great for kids.

MAGNIFYING GLASS...As we get old these sure come in handy. But even kids find plenty to see in the spring, inspecting bugs and leaves.

CURTAINS...You've been cooped up all winter. It's time to let some fresh air and sunshine in. New curtains help lift spirits.

BASIC TOOLS...Hammer, pliers, screw drivers and such to fix up winter damage.

DUCT TAPE... always a useful item

GOT "SKY MILES" ?

Here's a painless way you can help The Box Project! With families all over the country, it takes a lot of traveling to keep things coordinated. You can help by donating your "sky miles". We need them for meetings, committees and finding new families.

Redbook Article

The Box Project was featured in the February 2002 edition of Redbook Magazine in their "Get Involved" section. From this we have gained many new sponsors! Special thanks go to Jodi Beebe and her family for their help in this.

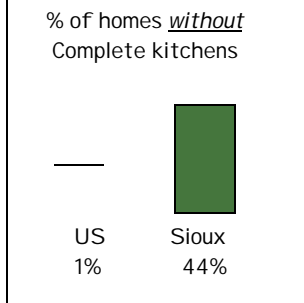
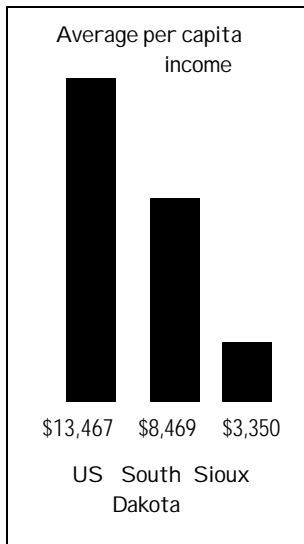
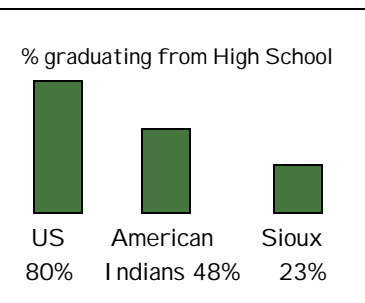
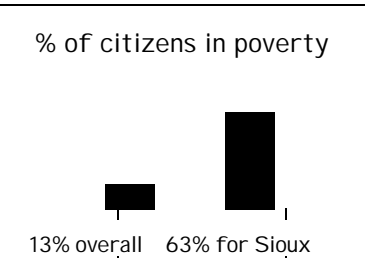
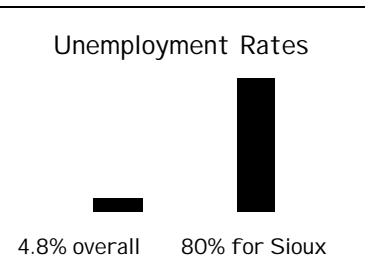
BOX PROJECT PRESS RELEASES

The Box Project is looking to send press releases to local newspapers. To accomplish this task, we are requesting that our members send in their newspaper information to us. We are looking for Name of Paper, Editor, and email address.

Please send to:
The Box Project, PO Box 435, Plainville, CT 06062, Attention: Webmaster or email pressrelease@boxproject.org.

THE REALITIES OF SOUTH DAKOTA NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILIES

As many of you know, we have begun sponsoring families from the Sioux Reservations in South Dakota. In February, the Executive Director Allen Pitts, went there to coordinate referrals and also recruit colleges there to work with us.



Obviously the need is great. The historical, cultural, and economic impediments are daunting. But as Coretta King told our founder, Virginia Naïve, "Don't try to save the whole world, just help one family."

Our goal is not to change the world, just to help one family at a time to become the best they can be. Our sponsors have a long history of caring across miles and cultures. We don't "take over" people's lives, but learn both about them and also from them, then help them in their own world. We believe that by extending our mission to include South Dakota both our sponsor families as well as the recipients will learn and benefit greatly.

Build a BUG CATCHER!
Got old sheer curtains? Got duct tape? If you are about to toss out some old sheer curtains this spring, hold on a moment. Take the material and tape it into a long funnel shape. Add a loop of wire from a clothes hanger to one end to hold it open. Tape to the end of a stick. Give to a child and smile.

Looking for something light to send?
If your house is like mine, you can never have enough of those scrubby pads—the sponges with a nylon scrubber on one side. They come in handy for all sorts of things.

Phone Cards
Many sponsors have found that their sister-families are not good at writing letters, but have become close on the phone. They send pre-paid phone cards for the family to call them and chat.

Disposable Cameras
Now you can send a disposable camera AND a pre-paid pack that will let your family take pictures and get prints for themselves—and digital copies of the pictures emailed to YOU. Check this out at most large pharmacy chains or WalMarts.

The News Box

Post Office Box 435
Plainville, Connecticut
06062-0435

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

Phone: 1-860-747-8182
Fax: 1-860-793-8857
Web: www.BoxProject.org
E-mail: Info@BoxProject.org

The Box Project, Inc. is a national, non-profit organization matching volunteers with individuals and families living in rural poverty. We seek to eradicate the causes and effects of poverty, and increase mutual understanding through people-to-people assistance.

The Last Word

First, to those members who sent a donation to The Box Project in the past few months, we can only say THANK YOU! Your help is carrying us through this difficult time.

If you have NOT yet sent in a donation, may I ask you to please consider doing so now?

Following September 11th, donations to charities not connected with the attack were down all over the country. People stopped donating to smaller organizations like ours, and this affected The Box Project at a time when we were hoping to make our end-of-year targets. Despite the appeal in the December newsletter, we fell short of our budget for 2001.

The annual dues of \$35 have never paid for the cost of running the program. At best, they only cover about

40% of the expenses of finding, screening, matching and supporting the thousands of families we help each year. On average, it costs about \$140 to establish and support a new family pairing in their first year. This is a major reason why the Board increased initial dues. The rest must be made up from donations.

When you give to other charities, the organization decides how much to keep for its own expenses and how much to distribute to recipients. However, The Box Project is unique in our DIRECT family-to-family pairings. While you can be assured that the goods and funds you send to your sister family are put directly and immediately to use, this giving structure does not cover the costs which are vital to helping us to expand and maintain our program.

Matching families with sister families is the very heart of our program, and we are committed to continuing this

work. However, if The Box Project is to survive in its present form, we must raise contributions from members.

The Board of Directors is so concerned about this issue that it has become our #1 task force item. While we continue to solicit funds from other sources (foundations, corporations), our primary source of support is YOU.

If you believe in the idea of direct family-to-family matching

If you feel that a personal letter, call or contact is important

If you like the idea of knowing your recipient family.....

Then PLEASE HELP US NOW!

Your contribution to The Box Project, no matter how small, will be used wisely. We need your help to help those we serve.

Allen G. Pitts
Exec. Dir.