



# NEWS BOX

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



There is something special in the air at The Box Project. Along with the first glimmer of spring, there is a freshness and optimism that comes with change and progress.

Executive Director Sue Patneau and her staff have been working hard improving our programs and processes

as well as planning for our future and expanding our network of referral agencies. We have welcomed new board members and new volunteers in our office.

Sadly, though, we have also had to say goodbye to some people who have been vital to this organization. Coretta Scott King recently passed away. More than forty years ago she gave the name and address of a family living in rural poverty to Virginia Naeve. Mrs. Naeve's subsequent relationship with that family inspired The Box Project.

Cindy Shearer, who served as president of the board for the last two years, brought unlimited enthusiasm and genuine kindness to this organization.

Two other board members, Sue Taylor and Eva Scholfield, retired at the end of their terms. There is no way to quantify the amount of work that they all have done on behalf of this organization. They will be greatly missed.

But with spring comes renewal and new life. I, personally, became inspired in our fight against poverty last October when the board of directors traveled to the Mississippi Delta. We met with the hard-working men and women who help us to identify our potential recipient families.

While we were there, I also had the opportunity to meet my own Box Project "sister" for the first time. While we have enjoyed a great long-distance relationship via mail for the last 6 years, we had never met in person. I have to admit that I was a little nervous! It took a little while for us to get comfortable together, but before long we were

telling stories and asking questions. At one point, I mentioned that my son is getting ready to get his driver's license and that I am terrified about it. My Box Project sister looked at me and said, "You don't have to worry about him...he's a cautious kid." That's when it hit me...we DO have a connection between us! She knows my family, and I know hers! We have been supporting each other for six years! Our meeting was only a new phase of our relationship, and that is blossoming.

There is *always* something special in the air at The Box Project. This organization changes lives, brings people together, educates, and challenges. And it brings together a very special group of people.

Thank you for your participation!

*Anne Blake*

Anne Blake,  
President

## Inside this issue:

- **The Board of Directors' trip to the Mississippi Delta**
- **Educational Awards**
- **Guidelines for match families**
- **Important notes from**

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## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

On January 31, 2006 Coretta Scott King died and our nation mourned. Mrs. King was a woman of great character and vision. Her vision inspired the idea that created The Box Project. I would have loved to be there way back in 1962 when Virginia Naeve from Vermont went to that disarmament conference in Switzerland and met Coretta Scott King and Clarie Collins Harvey from Jackson, Mississippi. I can only imagine what an exciting and motivating meeting that must have been! With names given to her by these two women, Mrs. Naeve began sending boxes of supplies and food to families in the Mississippi Delta and The Box Project was born!

The occasion of Mrs. King's death gave me pause to think about the ripple effect of her life and the influence she had on the lives of people living in poverty because of one chance meeting and one simple exchange of ideas and information.

A couple of years ago Mrs. King's oldest daughter, Yolanda, along with her friend Elodia Tate, published a collection of stories and poems entitled *Open Your Eyes, Open Your Soul*. In this book that celebrates our common humanity is a short story by Kim Ripley, an author from New Hampshire who wrote about her heartfelt match experience through The Box Project. When we contacted Yolanda, King about the significance of that story to her family she was surprised. She had selected an inspiring story of love and courage without having any idea her mother was indirectly responsible.

When Mrs. King was later informed she was also surprised. She had never before known that her chance meeting with that determined woman from Vermont had effectively helped thousands of families living in poverty in Mississippi, in Maine, in Appalachia and in South Dakota. The influence of Coretta Scott King on The Box Project had come full circle.

We live our lives as best we can, never really knowing from one day to the next what we might have said or done that had an effect on someone else. Mrs. King had a profound effect on many people and she had the comfort of knowing some of her accomplishments in her lifetime. But until her daughter wrote a book with a story about a relationship made through The Box Project, she never knew that for 44 years thousands of people in this country were packing boxes and sending care and love across the miles to families living in poverty because of her small gesture of kindness and wisdom. Yet by the time she died she knew...and how proud she must have been.



*The Box Project office staff celebrates the holidays together. From left to right: Office Volunteer Joanne Devries, Executive Director Sue Patneau, part-time Finance Manager Pat Canino, full-time Administrative Assistant Jamie Newcomb, and part-time Executive Assistant Kitty McKenzie.*

When the program staff matches sponsors with recipients, we often wonder what effect each will have on the other's life. What will the ripple effect be? In truth, the work we do is like tossing a pebble into a lake and watching the ripples: some just fade away, but others are strong enough to move a floating leaf or make a small splash against the shore. We hear inspirational stories about matches in which the sponsors have helped the recipients out of poverty--or at least helped them to believe there is a way out, and just as many stories about recipient families enriching the lives of their sponsors in unanticipated ways.

There is still a lot of work to be done in this fight against poverty. Thank you for joining us to make ripples!

*Susan Patneau*

Susan Patneau,  
Executive Director

## FUND OFFERS EDUCATION AWARDS

In an effort to promote education as a way out of poverty, The Box Project offers educational awards for recipient family members. Applications are accepted throughout the year, but awards are only made in the spring and fall. Funds for secondary, college, and vocational school costs are awarded twice a year when they are available. Awards are limited to \$300 per semester or \$600 per year, and supplement other scholarships and awards and may be used for necessities not covered by other programs.

To apply for an Education Award, a student must submit a completed standard application along with all the required documents, such as references and transcripts. To qualify, the recipient family and/or the sponsor must be current, dues-paying mem-

bers of The Box Project, must be enrolled in an approved setting, and must have passing grades. An application form can be downloaded from the website at [www.boxproject.org/edfundsapp.pdf](http://www.boxproject.org/edfundsapp.pdf). When we receive all the required materials, the application will be reviewed and the student will be notified of the decision of the awards committee.

Anyone wishing to contribute to the Educational Awards Fund may do so by check or donate securely on our website. Please be sure to indicate your intention so we can apply your gift to the appropriate fund.

### GUIDELINES OFFERED FOR MATCH FAMILIES

The Box Project has developed recommended guidelines that clarify our expectations of the intended long-distance nature of our match relationships and issues of confidentiality and accountability. They emphasize the importance of letters and/or email and suggest that recommendations and precautions be taken by match families who choose to expand their relationships outside of the intended letters to include telephone calls or in-person visits. The following is our guideline:

The Box Project matches families with the intention that they will develop a long distance relationship and communicate through letters or sometimes e-mail. Our program is based on written communication, and you are not required to have phone calls or in-person visits just because your match family requests it. The Box Project primarily uses referring agencies to enroll and maintain relationships with recipients in the program. Sponsors generally sign up for the program online or through the mail, but The Box Project does not screen either recipients or sponsors for criminal backgrounds or any other personal information. The Box Project is not responsible for any relationship outside of letters, e-mail, and boxes. Such a relationship is at your own risk and re-

sponsibility, and The Box Project does not accept any liability if both you and your match family agree that you want to include telephone calls, face-to-face meetings, or visits to each other's homes. You are under no obligation to have telephone visits or meet face-to-face with your match family. You are also not under any obligation to help your match family with family issues beyond what you can send in a box or through the mail. If you ever feel that the relationship with your match family is inappropriate or makes you uncomfortable or unsafe, please notify The Box Project immediately so we can address your concerns.

### Members' Privacy Protected

Please be assured that under no circumstances does The Box Project sell or release any information about our members to anyone. We hold all information about sponsors, recipients, and other members in the strictest confidence.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETS IN MISSISSIPPI

At our Annual Meeting in October of 2005, The Box Project Board of Directors met in Mound Bayou, MS for an open forum with referring agencies, recipients and volunteers from around the state. Our host for the event was one of our referring agencies, the St. Gabriel Mercy Center, which is located in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. Sister Donald Mary Lynch, RSM, is the director. Their focus is on the education of families through programs that empower them. The overall goal of this ministry is to strengthen families and communities. We learned as much as we could about the MS Delta and the stories we heard will provide an impetus for improving and expanding our programs. The Box Project board is grateful for the free exchange of information and were humbled by the generous hospitality of our wonderful friends.

**Left:** Box Project President Anne Blake meets Llosharla Smith, the mother of her match family

**Top Right:** Sister Donald Mary and Sue Patneau were reacquainted.

**Bottom Right:** The whole group .



## A Few Notes from the Office...

- We'll be starting a "*Back-to-School Fund*" drive this summer. If you are interested in donating to purchase school supplies, uniforms and other necessities for recipient families waiting for a match, send your check or donate securely online. We'll have more specifics about the program and how you can help in the next newsletter.
- Your annual dues keep The Box Project operating and accessible to all members--sponsors and recipients alike. Please remember to pay your dues when you get your notice in the mail. As long as a sponsor's dues are up to date, the recipient family is eligible for many valuable programs such as aid from the Emergency Fund and the Education Awards. Annual dues make member benefits such as this newsletter, the website, and Chatterbox possible.
- The Box Project is planning to host some regional get-togethers for members to meet each other. After all, one of our strong points is the one-to-one relationships we promote between sponsors and recipients, so why not take it one step further and facilitate one-to-one relationships between sponsors and other sponsors? If you are interested in planning and hosting a state or regional get-together, contact The Box Project office.
- **To opt out of receiving this newsletter, please call or write to The Box Project office and ask us to remove you from our newsletter mailing list.**
- A great resource for sponsors looking for advice and support is right at your fingertips. Our online group, Chatterbox, has proven to be an invaluable resource for many members, both with meeting each other and with sharing useful information. Chatterbox also maintains files of useful information about shipping, resources for sponsors, healthy low-cost recipes, themed box ideas, and more. To join Chatterbox, go to [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/boxproject\\_chatterbox](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/boxproject_chatterbox) and follow the instructions. If you do not have a Yahoo ID, you will be guided through the very easy steps to get one before joining Chatterbox. You can choose to read the posts to the group in one of three ways: receive an individual email (listed as "individual") as each message is posted, receive all the messages of the day combined in one email (digest form) or just go to the Yahoo group page online and read the posts at your leisure. We recommend that you start with the daily digest; you can change your reading preference any time.



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