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**The Box Project Unwraps Summer Campaign for Rural Poor,
Reminds Americans “Poverty Never Takes a Vacation”**

ORMOND BEACH, Fla. (Summer 2006) – As the weather warms up and vacation plans are being made, The Box Project is rolling out its summer awareness campaign for America’s rural poor. The “Poverty Never Takes a Vacation” campaign is the organization’s latest effort to help more than 37 million Americans now living in poverty, nearly half of whom are children. Through primarily grass-root efforts, the campaign is intended to find more supporters – families, businesses, churches, and other organizations – willing to help break the cycle of poverty in America by joining The Box Project as a member, as a donor, as a Family Match sponsor, or as a Center Match sponsor during the critical summer months.

“Falling between holiday and back-to-school drives, summer is typically a slower time for philanthropic giving,” said Susan Patneaude, Executive Director of The Box Project. “Many people are understandably occupied with family vacations and getaways, rather than focusing on those in need. By reminding Americans that ‘Poverty Never Takes a Vacation,’ we hope to stir something in their hearts and encourage the ongoing commitment that is so desperately needed in rural America, throughout the year.”

According to Patneaude, Americans struggle to fully comprehend the extent to which poverty adversely affects the country, especially children. In 2005, the number of Americans living in poverty grew by 1.1 million to 37 million, with nearly half being children. “The poverty rate for children in the United States is two- to three-times higher than any other major industrialized nation, with one out of every six children living in poverty. Now that school is out there will be children going hungry with no school breakfast or lunch programs and no one to oversee their well-being in their usual school setting”, added Patneaude.

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By acting as a matchmaker, The Box Project joins individual, family or group sponsors with carefully screened Americans living in poverty in some of the poorest regions of the United States. About once a month, each sponsor sends box of food, clothing and other needed supplies directly to their recipient family. Sponsors control the amount of time and material resources they contribute each month, but the program's most unique aspect is the direct communication between sponsors and recipients, who keep in touch through letters and/or phone calls.

"The friendships and relationships that develop over time are immensely valuable to everyone involved," said Patneaude. "We often hear from people who were originally matched as sponsors and recipient families 30 years ago or more, who worked together to end that cycle of poverty, and have maintained strong friendships well beyond the initial material need. It's a real testament to the success of this program. Parents of young children use The Box Project's family match experience to teach their children that they have a responsibility to help those less fortunate, and usually the giver is as rewarded by the match as the receiver."

Focusing on those states and counties with the highest rates of poverty according to US Census Bureau statistics, The Box Project makes matches between sponsors and families living in rural poverty in Maine, West Virginia, Virginia, Mississippi and Kentucky, as well as Native Americans living on reservations in South Dakota. Sponsors and recipients are supported by the organization through an online Chatterbox, newsletters, and on-going information, referral and technical assistance provided by a small staff dedicated to making the match experience as meaningful and successful as possible. To date, The Box Project has helped more than 15,000 families, and has 200 pre-screened families currently waiting for sponsors of their own.

Founded in 1962, The Box Project, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization with headquarters in Central Florida. Working to help Americans living in areas with the highest rates of rural poverty, The Box Project seeks to ease the effects of poverty and increase mutual understanding by establishing meaningful relationships, promoting education, and offering material aid. With the help of referring agencies located in the areas served, The Box Project offers programs that simply alleviate the suffering of some, while also providing opportunities to support the growth and success of others seeking to learn how to better themselves, and willing to work toward the goal of achieving increased self sufficiency. For more information, visit www.boxproject.org or call 386-677-8094.

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