

## Box Project Member Testimonial

I have a six year old boy and a four year old girl who just LOVE the idea that they can share some of their things with kids who don't have such stuff, and that there are tons of things we can share with people who need it. Packing a box is like packing up a giant gift, and they love giving and getting gifts, so they just love helping with boxes. They made up the gift analogy themselves!

When we got some photographs of the family, the two little ones crowded around to look at them, They stare at the pictures and ask to see them, because as soon as the people who were receiving the "gifts" we sent became real people to them, the poverty hit home.

The kids' schools are doing drives for food, clothes, hats, gloves, books, stuffed animals...you name it. The principal told the kids in an assembly that some of the things they donated would be used right here in our community. Later, some of the kids were talking to the first grade teacher and said that they didn't know any poor people. My son said HE knew some poor people, and told about packing these boxes. He became the class expert, and he expounded on how some people are poor, but others are poorer and can't even afford enough food or clothes, and that people are not poor because they don't have money, they are poor because they don't have opportunities to make enough money. Then he told them that once you have one kind of problem, you automatically get others along with it, like if you don't have enough money to buy meat and vegetables, you eat a lot of cheap spaghetti and gain weight and get sick and then you can't work anyway and you can't afford a doctor and it gets harder to find clothes that fit and other things. He's six, remember. I thought that was a pretty interesting understanding of poverty!

His teacher told me that the class was totally awed by the concept that it was possible to become poor, that poor people could be victims of circumstance and not just lazy people who didn't want to get a job at McDonald's or maybe people who weren't born into poverty. The idea that you could become poor threw them for a loop, I think. One of the kids asked my son why our match family just couldn't all go work at McDonald's and get free food, too. So my son said there weren't any McDonalds around them. When asked why, he had to think a minute, then he said "because no one can afford to eat there, so McDonald's just built them where there were people with enough money to eat there."

I didn't tell them any of this stuff (well, not in so many words!), so you can just see how much they're learning. Also, I like how they developed the idea of gift giving, that we are giving this stuff with no expectations of a payback and that we think about what our match family would like or need. And every now and then they'll gather up a bunch of little odds and ends, like a box of crayons or some fun erasers or a few kids' meal toys that haven't even been opened, and stick them in a box for "our family."

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