

A Gift for Max

For the past 14 years, Samaritan's Purse – a world relief organization headed by Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham – has been delivering gift-filled shoe boxes and the Good News of God's love to millions of children through its Operation Christmas Child project. Life Care has been a national sponsor of the program for 11 years, since 1995.

Graham said one of these children is Max, an 11-year-old boy who was thrilled when shoe box gifts were delivered to his village in Nicaragua. "Max was even more excited upon learning about the Savior, Jesus Christ, and later received Him into his heart," Graham related.

"Nobody had told me about God's love before," said Max. "Now I know He loves me without conditions. I share this with my friends."

It all starts with the power of a simple gift – a shoe box filled with small toys, school supplies and hygiene items – to bring joy to a child like Max who lives in difficult circumstances, Graham said. "Over 46 million of these boxes have been delivered to boys and girls in some 120 countries since 1993. Best of all, children are introduced to Jesus Christ, God's greatest gift, through gospel booklets offered during distributions and follow-up discipleship programs. As a result, many children and their families have experienced changed lives, both now and for eternity."

Samaritan's Purse's goal this year is to collect 7.8 million shoe box gifts. Life Care's target, company-wide, is to gather 400,000, up from 319,819 received a year ago. We can do so if we ask churches, schools, civic clubs, businesses and families in each of our communities to join us in this endeavor, and to bring their gifts to our centers as relay sites.

National Collection Week is November 13-20, but the campaign is already under way in most of our centers across the country. Many of our associates start preparations immediately after Christmas when post-holiday sales offer remarkable buys. They also take advantage of other opportunities, such as back-to-school sales, to pick up articles at great value.

Weeks ago, Life Care shipped to our centers a package that included promotional items, brochures, Life Care-produced videotapes and the Samaritan's Purse 2006 DVD that reports the 2005 results and promotes this year's collection (and this is the one that should be shown to churches and other groups outside of Life Care).

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For details on drop-off locations or other information about Operation Christmas Child, please go to www.samaritan'spurse.org or call (800) 353-5949. You may also call my office at (423) 473-5532.

Let's all join with Samaritan's Purse in bringing the true meaning of Christmas to children around the world this holiday season. It will be an exciting time for our residents and our associates as we reach around the world with arms of love. And it will also get some positive media coverage for you.

--Beecher Hunter