

# Operation Christmas Child

the journey from here to there  
by Mark Hale



Mark Hale, DBU dean of students, shares his experience of traveling with Samaritan's Purse to deliver Christmas shoeboxes in Ecuador.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of serving as the coordinator of the Operation Christmas Child shoebox collection drive at Dallas Baptist University. Operation Christmas Child is a ministry of Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse, whose mission is to bring "joy and hope to needy children around the world through gift-filled shoeboxes and the Good News of God's love."

This ministry provides DBU students, faculty, and staff, along with others in area churches, schools, and organizations, with an opportunity to participate in global missions without ever leaving their hometown. By packing a shoebox with small gift items and necessities for children in impoverished countries, participants are able to take part in the delivery of an invaluable message to these children—Jesus loves them and cares for them.

Last year, I had the honor of going with a group of about 100 volunteers and staff from Samaritan's Purse to Ecuador to deliver boxes into the hands of these children. As we traveled with our small groups through this beautiful country, we met children and shared with them the love of Christ and the hope that is found in Him alone.

One of my most vivid memories was traveling inside a women's prison in the capital city of Quito where we celebrated with the inmates' young children, who also live inside the prison. The joy of sharing the generosity of others provided me with a wonderful memory that I will never forget. Helping the kids open their boxes and trying to demonstrate how to operate a yo-yo to a child who has never seen one before was a unique experience. The notes and pictures that were included from the families who packed the boxes were a joy to share with the kids; and through the storybook that is included with every shoe box, we were able to tell the kids about Christ's love for them.

I believe that Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child are planting many seeds in the hearts of these children. This simple ministry is impacting the world in a mighty way for the glory of God. The contribution we are able to make here at DBU as a relay center for the Operation Christmas Child effort has grown through the years. In 1999 we contributed approximately 600 boxes to this effort. This year we were able to collect and deliver 3,718 boxes to be placed in the hands of children who need to know they are loved.

Each year we pray for the children whom God has determined will receive the boxes that are collected here at DBU. Thousands of miles away, in some remote village, prison, or shelter, the connection is made and the door is opened to a child's heart.



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