



## Welcome to the Family Match Program!

We welcome you as a member of The Box Project! Attached is a copy of the information about beginning your family match. Please read this document before you send your first letter, it will provide valuable information and resources that we want you to know before you get started. Once you choose your family(s) from the applications we send to you for review, we will email you the family's contact information. Your match family will also be notified of this match and will look forward to hearing from you.

We ask members of The Box Project to support the following goals:

- Providing meaningful personal relationships between you and a family living in rural poverty.
- Providing food, clothing, household goods and other needed items to your match family through this relationship.
- Explore and respect cultures while learning more about hunger, poverty and prejudice in this country.
- Promote educational and vocational training empowering low-income families to break the cycle of poverty and become self-reliant.

The following information will be helpful to you in developing your relationship with your assigned family and with The Box Project.

### **STARTING YOUR RELATIONSHIP**

We know you are eager to send your first letter and box. Your match family is also eager to begin this relationship. Please send a letter to them soon (within the next 2 – 3 weeks) including a self-addressed, stamped envelope and asking them to write back soon so you can start sending boxes. We suggest that you do not send a box until you have received a response from the family and the address is confirmed. Many of our families have been on our waiting list for a long time (months or longer), and their address or other information may have changed since we received the last update from them. If you do not receive confirmation from your match family within a reasonable amount of time (4 – 6 weeks), please contact us so we can assist you or re-match you.

It is important to establish a realistic relationship: Each relationship must allow for differences in background, values, needs and points of view. If your family asks for items you cannot provide, tell them truthfully why you cannot help. It may be helpful to let them know early in the relationship that you have a specific budget set aside to help them monthly, and that you will try to include some of their requests in future boxes if you can fit it in the budget. They will begin to understand the limits of your help.

Please do not ignore problems or concerns. It is best to attempt to solve issues as they arise in your relationship. Contact us if you are concerned or unsure what you should do. We are available to help you, provide suggestions, and/or recommend resources that can help your match family to improve their living conditions.

## WHAT TO WRITE

### LETTERS

We encourage you to write a letter at least once a month. Make sure your letters are easy to read, you may wish to print or type to make them more easily readable. We suggest sending a letter with each box, and even sending a letter separately if you are having something shipped directly to them. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope and ask them to notify you as soon as the box has arrived. You may also wish to let them know that The Box Project tells you to wait until you have received a letter back from them before sending your next box. It may be helpful to enclose some stationery and a supply of stamped, self-addressed envelopes in the first box that you send. It may take several boxes and some two-way communication before your family understands exactly what is expected of them, and that you desire to be their friend. Be persistent, and communicate openly with them about this. One rule of thumb: Do not send a second box until you are informed that the first box has arrived. Ask your family to let you know in advance if they plan to move so you will know where to send their boxes. Please let us know, here at the office, of any changes in address, yours or theirs.

Attached is a sample copy of the Membership Agreement the Recipient Family signs.

### PRIVACY

Your match family has the same right to privacy as you do. Questions you would feel reluctant to answer probably should not be asked of your match family, unless they volunteer the information. Each recipient application includes a confidential section of financial information that we use for qualifying their family. We offer them the option of authorizing us to share this confidential information with you, but their decision about that authorization has no impact on our approval process. We will only share that information if we have their written approval on the form.

Some sponsors do not wish for their match family to have their home phone number. If this is the case, please take care to protect your privacy. A few ways that phone numbers have inadvertently been given to match families are: 1) if you call them, your phone number may show up on their caller ID; 2) if you send a personal check, your phone number may be listed on the check; 3) if you ship a box, the shipping company may ask for a phone number that appears on the label.

### SETTING EXPECTATIONS

It has been our experience that new sponsors are very enthusiastic when they are first introduced to their match family. Some new sponsors tend to send many large boxes of items to their family in the first few months. Remember: this is not a sprint, it's more like a marathon. Send a little each month, every bit you send is something they likely didn't have. We suggest that you "go slow" at first and try to keep within your pledged amount. If you send large amounts in the beginning, your family may expect that this will continue.

The relationship that you establish in the beginning is most important. Please remember that relationships and trust are not built in one letter. Be patient and open-minded. Many match families find it very difficult to write letters. Please do not impose your values on them, but treat them with dignity and respect and allow a friendship to develop. Be open-minded and welcome discoveries of what you can learn from them. Your relationship will require love and imagination from both sides.

## WHAT TO SEND

As a general guideline, let your match family be the best judge of their needs. Always asking "What do you need?" in your letters can sometimes set the tone of the relationship. The response could be only "I need/I want etc." If your match family is shy about telling you what they need, try creating a simple check list that they can fill out and return. Sample checklists are available in the files section of our Chatterbox. See the Website/Chatterbox section for more details.

### FOOD

Send lightweight dietary supplements that will stretch your postage money. While many match families receive food stamps, they may only have isolated rural stores available to buy food, often at high prices, with few choices. You can help by sending nutrition education and introducing them to good buys, nutritional products, or foods your family enjoys.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS

Cleaning solutions, laundry detergent, cleaning and hygiene products cannot be purchased with food stamps. Send toothbrushes, toothpaste, baking soda, Band-Aids, deodorants, disinfectants, small toiletries; anything you would use yourself.

## HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

Most houses have electricity and indoor water, but some may have only cold running water. Winters in the South are short but it does get very cold. Warm bedding and clothing are welcome due to poor heating and lack of insulation, which can make it difficult and expensive to keep the house warm. Rummage and garage sales are good sources of help to fill your boxes. Please only send gently used items or items you may be willing to use. Most families can use:

tableware	wire coat hangers	towels
kitchen utensils	radios	dish clothes
electric irons	clocks	plastic dishes
bedding	bedspreads	curtains

Space heaters, inadequate wiring and lax building codes cause many house fires. A smoke detector (with battery installed) and carbon monoxide detector are an excellent idea. Please do not send candles!

## CLOTHING

Children must have clothes and shoes to be allowed to attend school. Some schools require uniforms (such as a specific color pants or skirt and/or shirts). Check with your family about their specific school requirements. Also important are socks, boots, rainwear, underwear and coats. **Check with your family for their current sizes.** *Remember, the information on their application may be a few months old, and sizes can change quickly.* Send clothing for the proper season, since many families may not have storage space. Second-hand clothing is fine as long as it is clean and in a condition that you and your own family would wear. Sending some new items occasionally is also appreciated. We desire to encourage a sense of self worth in the match family. Some family members may wear large sizes. In some cases, this may be due to their diet—since low cost foods may not always be most nutritional. Sears, Target, WalMart, Montgomery Ward, and Lane Bryant are good sources for large size clothing. If you (or a friend) sew, there are patterns for large sized clothing that are relatively simple to make.

## FOR THE CHILDREN

In many school systems today, families are required to provide their own school supplies. Children may need lined paper, pencils and pens for their school work, notebooks, crayons, paints and book covers. Many classrooms have supply checklists; you can ask your family what their child's classroom requires. Some children have never had a store bought toy of their own. We encourage educational toys as gifts. Also, families may not be able to afford to buy children's books. Magazines are a good idea and can be packed as a finishing touch in a box, or given as a subscription gift, providing 12 months of fun. If there is a college student, or potential college student in your match family, you may also assist the student in locating scholarships or Federal and State Financial Assistance Programs.

Do not be surprised (or offended) if you receive requests for expensive athletic shoes, video game, or the latest fad from the children in the family. They are subject to the same advertising pressures for the "cool stuff" as are our children. Share your feelings about this kind of pressure with them.

## INTERNET SHOPPING/MAIL ORDER BOXES

Many sponsors find that having boxes sent from an online or mail order store is an easy way to send a box—without the time and cost of packing and mailing it yourself. You may want to do this occasionally, or all of the time. Drugstore.com, Netgrocer.com, halegroves.com and other online grocery and pharmacies are good sources for food and supplies and will ship the box directly to your family. Note: if your match family does not have a street address, you may be limited by what stores will ship to a PO Box. You may wish to ask the family if they have a work address or other address where they can receive packages of this sort. Other popular online or mail order stores include: Target.com, Walmart.com, toysrus.com, amazon.com, oldnavy.com, JCPenney.com, and Sears.com. Many of these stores offer free shipping over a specific

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dollar amount! Instead of making shipping companies' rich with shipping costs, more of your money is going to supplies for your family.

### **GIFT CARDS/GIFT CERTIFICATES/TELEPHONE CALLING CARDS**

Many sponsors find it convenient to send gift cards or gift certificates instead of boxes for birthdays, holidays, special occasions, or just for general needs. You can save a lot of shipping costs (particularly for heavy items) by sending a gift card from Wal-Mart or a local grocery store that may have what your family needs. This is also a great idea around the holidays—when sending a turkey or pumpkin through the mail may be impractical, a gift card to the grocery store could mean the difference between a bountiful holiday dinner, or what happens to be in the cupboard at the end of the month after food stamps ran out. Your match family application may list the name of stores close to them, if not, check with your match family for stores where they shop. Some grocery stores will allow you to call them with your credit card and have them generate a gift certificate in a certain amount for your match family to pick up. Be sure to alert your match family if you are making this arrangement for them. It is a good idea to send gift cards for small amounts, or send them with insurance—requesting a delivery confirmation if you are concerned about them getting lost or stolen. Also, telephone calling cards are a nice option that may allow them to keep in touch with friends or relatives that are long-distance. We suggest that you keep a copy of the calling card. This is beneficial if you want to add money to the card; or if it is lost, you can give them the access numbers so they can continue to use the minutes available on the card.

### **KEEP RECORDS**

We recommend keeping a list of everything you send in each box. This serves several purposes: 1) You remember what you sent several months ago; 2) you have a record if the shipping company loses the box and you have an insurance claim with them. You can also include a copy of the list in the box, and ask your match family to write notes about what they liked, didn't like, need or don't need. Without those lists, it is easy to overload some members and overlook others—or send too much of one item or another.

### **PACKING AND MAILING**

Medium sized, strong cardboard boxes are ideal for mailing. Boxes sent through the U. S. Postal Service, UPS or Fed-Ex, are weighed to determine the price for shipping. Most of those shipping companies have telephone or online pricing available—you tell them the zip code where the box is starting and where it is going, how much it weighs, and they can tell you the approximate cost. This way you can compare pricing. We suggest that you always require signature for delivery, to prevent boxes being left on a doorstep where they can be stolen. You may also want to request I.D. verification for delivery. Make sure arrangements are made for delivery to your match family, i.e., some carriers require directions to their home, via the nearest Post Office and/or the number of the closest telephone/utility pole. Some will not deliver to rural areas or P.O. boxes. Always check with the carrier if they deliver to these areas and what services they provide.

We recommend that you insure each box for the value of its contents. Most shipping companies provide up to \$100 of insurance included in the base shipping price, and offer additional insurance for a fee—the US Postal Service charges a fee to insure your box. You should verify the insurance coverage with your shipping company. If you do not hear from your match family within three weeks after you send a box, have the shipping company trace and report on delivery. By keeping a list of the contents of all boxes, you will be able to collect the value of the contents if the box is lost. If the box was delivered, you will be able to learn when it was delivered and who signed for the package.

### **BILL PAYMENT REQUESTS**

Your match family may occasionally ask you for assistance with bills. This is not what our program is about, and you are not obligated to help in this way. However, if you decide you would like to assist them with some bills, we suggest that you let your match family know that if you pay a bill, it will be instead of a box that month. Also, we suggest that you ask for a copy of the statement or bill showing the amount due, and let them know that you will send a payment directly to the creditor's payment address on their behalf.

### **TAX DEDUCTION INFORMATION**

Contributions to The Box Project, including membership fees and donations are tax exempt. Goods, postage, money, or anything specifically sent to or earmarked for your specific match family technically is not eligible for a tax deduction. Ask your tax professional for guidance on this if you have questions. We cannot give receipts for goods mailed directly to your family.

## ANNUAL DUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

While our annual dues are a major source of support, they do not cover the full costs to administer and maintain the programs. The annual membership fees help cover costs to maintain and continue our program. Sponsors must maintain an active sponsorship by paying the \$50 annual membership fee in order for their match family to receive assistance from us.

Each year we match sponsor families directly with families living in the worst areas of rural poverty. Membership fees do not fully cover the expenses of our program, administrative costs, telephones, computers, newsletters, correspondence, travel and so much more that is needed to keep The Box Project going. We count on additional donations to sustain The Box Project. Membership fees are only \$50 annually.

We welcome contributions all year around. Traditionally, most contributions have been through checks sent to our office. We also accept all major credit cards to make it easier for members to make contributions or membership dues payments. We have added secure processing to our Website to allow donations, and memberships to be submitted online at

<http://www.boxproject.org/forms.html>.

Many of our generous and creative members have encouraged friends to support us by asking for donations in lieu of gifts for birthdays, weddings, and special events. Employees have taken advantage of employer's charitable contribution matching programs to increase the value and impact of their donation. Some very special friends that supported us through their lifetime, have continued their good work by asking for donations in lieu of flowers at their funeral. We welcome discussions or questions about planned giving, stock donations, or other contributions.

In addition to an annual membership dues reminder, we may send occasional requests for additional contributions. We encourage members who can give more to make an additional contribution. However, if you wish to be removed from our mailing list for other contribution requests, please let us know.

## NEWSLETTERS

"THE NEWS BOX" our bi-annual newsletter covers important topics such as stories from our Box Project families, education, sponsoring ideas, regional information, and program updates. It also provides a forum for our members to exchange ideas and concerns.

The insert in the newsletter is designed to be information for you and your match family(s). When you are finished reading the newsletter, we recommend that you put the insert in one of your future boxes or letters.

## WEBSITE/CHATTERBOX/FACEBOOK

Our website is [www.boxproject.org](http://www.boxproject.org) has a great deal of information for members. It also has information about signing up for Chatterbox, an online discussion group just for sponsors to share ideas, suggestions and support each other. The Chatterbox also has an online files section with checklists, recipes, and other resources ready for you to print and include in your boxes. Details about this free online discussion group are available at <http://www.boxproject.org/discuss.html>. We will also share occasional information on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/TBP1962>

## LETTERS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM MATCH FAMILY FRIENDS/NEIGHBORS

Sometimes your match family may share your name or address with friends or relatives. If you receive a letter from another family in need asking for your assistance, please let them know they can only be considered for a match in our program is by going through our application process with one of our approved local referring agencies. They can contact us for the name of a referring agency in their area.

## PROBLEMS

Please contact our office with any problems you may experience, such as a lack of response, too many "I wants," special needs, or changes in your own situation. We are here to assist you in your relationship. We realize that sometimes a match just isn't a good fit. If this happens, we will ask you to communicate honestly with your match family about the situation and give them the opportunity to change. If that isn't possible, we can try to match you with a family that might be a better fit. We know that it is important for this to fill your needs as well as the needs of the family you are helping. We would rather try to re-match you with another family than lose you from our program altogether. We always have a long waiting list of screened families waiting to be matched. If you decide to cancel your match, a form letter will be sent to your match family telling them that you will no longer be able to help them, and giving them instructions for being considered

as a candidate for re-match. It is important that you share your concerns with us, this will help us know if we can simply get updated information, or if we should have their local referring agency re-verify their income and other information. We have included an evaluation form at the end of this document. We welcome you to provide us with feedback to improve our program. We may also contact you occasionally, asking you to give us an update on your satisfaction with your match family and with the program. Your responses are important to us, and help us improve the programs for future matches.

### **CONSENT AND RELEASE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEOTAPING AND CREATIVE WORKS:**

By becoming a member of The Box Project or submitting your photo/creative works to The Box Project you are giving us permission to legally use photos/creative works of you or your child to publish in any medium whatsoever including but not limited to publications, websites, broadcast, display and exhibitions to promote philanthropy and the missions of The Box Project and The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi. I agree that I and/or child shall have no right, title or interest in any photo/ creative works and waive any right to compensation for such use.

### **OUR MISSION**

The Box Project is a program of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization whose mission is to encourage families and individuals living in rural poverty in America to become self-sufficient and break the cycle of poverty by offering friendship, education, and material aid.

The responsibilities of Sponsors to our organization are as follows:

1. To support the purposes of the organization through active participation.
2. To support the administration of the Office through payment of annual dues.
3. To advise the Director or staff of any problems or questions and provide feedback on the programs.
4. To help us spread the word by telling friends, family, and advising us of opportunities for articles in workplace or religious newsletters.

Again, welcome to The Box Project. We are an organization that prides itself on offering a personal touch and facilitating a way for individuals and families to make a difference in the lives of a family in rural poverty. If you have any questions, concerns, ideas, or comments, please email, write or call. We are a resource for you in your new relationship.

## The Box Project Comment/Feedback Form

Please tell us how your new relationship, through The Box Project, is developing. We encourage you to share both your joys and concerns. Your input helps us improve the program for everyone.

Kindly complete the following form and return it to us to the address or fax number at the bottom of this page. If you would like to speak with us about your match family, please phone us between 2pm and 5pm CST. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Donna Goldman

Director

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Match Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I write to my match family:	___ Weekly	___ Monthly
	___ Twice a month	___ Every few months
I receive letters from my match family:	___ Weekly	___ Monthly
	___ Twice a month	___ Every few months

I have sent \_\_\_\_\_(number) boxes or letters to my match family.

Were your boxes or monies acknowledged? \_\_\_\_\_

In what ways has the program and your match met or exceeded your expectations?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In what ways could the program and/or your match experience have been improved?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**315 Loshier St., Suite 100, Hernando, MS 38632 ~ Telephone: 1-800-268-9928 ~ Web: [www.boxproject.org](http://www.boxproject.org)**

**Our Mission:** To encourage and enrich the lives of families and individuals living in poverty in rural America by establishing meaningful relationships, promoting education, and offering material aid.

**SAMPLE****MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT**

Should I, \_\_\_\_\_ (applicant name) be deemed qualified as a recipient member of The Box Project. I agree to the following:

- Write or communicate with my sponsor after receiving any box or letter.
- Share information about my family and my home regularly.
- Inform my sponsor of any special needs; such as medical needs.
- Keep my sponsor and The Box Project informed of any changes within my family or household (marriages, births, deaths, divorce, etc.).
- Contact The Box Project and my sponsor immediately if I move to another address or change my phone number.
- Keep myself informed about The Box Project through the newsletter or the Web site: [www.boxproject.org](http://www.boxproject.org)
- Contact The Box Project and my sponsor if my financial status changes.
- Ask my sponsor only for basic need items for my family
- Do not ask for money, payments of bills or luxury items (like "name brand" clothing, expensive toys, computers or play stations)

**A Sponsor agrees to:**

- Try to develop a personal relationship with match family
- Provide friendship, encouragement, advice and boxes of basic needs about once per month.
- Encourage educational and vocational training, with the hope of helping their family break the cycle of poverty and become self-reliant.

**The Box Project agrees to:**

- Strive to match your family with a sponsor-family or group who will provide friendship, encouragement, advice and boxes of basic needs about once per month.
- Provide periodic newsletter containing articles and information or resources that might benefit you.
- Provide help to resolve issues between you and your sponsor.

**Consent and Release for Photography, Videotaping and Creative Works:**

By submitting your photo/creative works to us or signing this agreement you are giving us permission to legally use photos/creative works of you or your child to publish in any medium whatsoever including but not limited to publications, websites, broadcast, display and exhibitions to promote philanthropy and the missions of The Box Project and The Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi. I agree that I and/or child shall have no right, title or interest in any photo/ creative works and waive any right to compensation for such use.

**Important Notice:**

*The Box Project matches families with the intention that they will develop a long distance relationship and communicate through letters or e-mail. Phone calls or face-to-face meetings are not part of our program, and you are not required to have phone calls or in-person visits just because your sponsor requests it. Please do not call your sponsor unless they have specifically asked you to call.*

*The Box Project primarily uses referring agencies to enroll applicants in the program. The Box Project does not screen sponsors for criminal backgrounds or any other personal information.*

*The Box Project is not responsible for any relationship outside of letters, email, and boxes. The relationship is at your own risk and responsibility; The Box Project does not accept any liability if both you and your sponsor 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 sponsor. If you ever feel that the relationship with your sponsor is inappropriate, makes you uncomfortable, or feels unsafe please notify The Box Project immediately so we can address your concerns.*

I have read or had explained to me The Box Project Membership Agreement. And understand that if I do not keep to the terms of this agreement, The Box Project retains the right to terminate my membership.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Date)**\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Applicant's Signature)**\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Print Name)**

The Box Project is a program of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi, a non-profit agency that matches families for friendship, mentoring, cultural insights, and aid for basic needs. Our sponsor families look forward to communicating with you, getting to know you and offering you aid with basic needs as best they can. However, the most important goal of our Family Match Program is to promote understanding and communication between you and your Sponsor Family. If selected, you will be expected to be in touch with your sponsor on a regular basis.