

F O R
25
Y E A R S



PROJECT
THE BOX
INC.

Friendship, Material Aid, Information, Action

1962-1987 Purpose

The purpose of The Box Project, a national non-profit incorporated organization, is for charitable and educational purposes, specifically: assistance to families living in poverty directly or through community based organizations.

The Box Project, Inc. serves these needs by:

- a. *Providing assistance to members who wish to channel charitable material help and educational assistance to individual needy families and groups in the United States particularly in those areas designated as 'poverty areas'.*
- b. *Providing an opportunity to increase understanding and cooperation between people in order to alleviate tensions and inequality.*
- c. *Promoting changes which would lead to equal opportunity for all people to live in dignity wherever they choose to make their home.*
- d. *Assisting needy families to use personal and community resources and programs effectively.*

Articles of Incorporation

What We Mean By "Sister-Family"

The term "sister-family" is used for both members giving to those in need and for those receiving through our program. We use this term to convey the idea of what we want our program to be. We do not want "good people" to reach down to "those poor people", nor the "poor people" to put on a false fawning attitude towards the "good people."

Sister-families reach across in friendship and mutual respect. This develops when both in the relationship realize that letters and the caring shared are more important than the boxes and money sent and received. Each sister family can receive just as much as they give.

Letter From The Board of Directors

Dear Members and Friends:

For twenty-five years, this unique and special organization of people has been sending care, concern, and aid to other American families in need. What makes The Box Project unique is that we trust the good will of our members to do what is best, within their means, for their assigned sister-family. We trust the goodness of those receiving. We allow the two parties in these sister-family relationships to write and send directly to each other. We believe people of diverse backgrounds can come to know and care about each other. Those in need are not stereotypes.

Our members are committed. Of the 864 Helpers who have been members for over five years, 68% have remained with their original sister-family assignment. *"My husband and I support several other charitable organizations, but none really gives us the emotional satisfaction of personally helping someone else like we feel from The Box Project. The Project has done a lot of good for me, as well as letting the Ivory family know that someone is interested in their need and understands their joys and sorrows."*


Our program is designed to alleviate the suffering of American families in need through material aid, information, advocacy, and friendship between families or individuals in need and helping families or groups. We encourage change by informing and educating our membership on issues.

Sister-families have told us what this program means to them. *"Can't begin to tell you all what the people in this program have done for us. It have put food on our table and clothes on our back and help pay bill." "You made my tough spot smoother." "I like the things they send me but most all I like the letter I get. It like having a big sister far away and can't wait to hear from her." "Our Box Project family help us feel important, to help ourself, to share with us their family. They was there for me when we really needed them."*

This booklet is dedicated to the wonderful people who started it, who have given, who have received, and who have worked with the Project during the twenty-five year history of The Box Project. The Project has made a difference in almost everyone's life. Virginia Naeve, The Box Project founder, wrote in a recent letter, *"I think the person-to-person idea was a good one - - so the project has continued Certainly the situation in the South is still very serious, but some people were helped and pulled out of their destitution No one could be the same after having been involved with the person-to-person program, seeing what poverty really was."* Our heartfelt thanks to everyone.

Sincerely,

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS


President

History of The Box Project, Inc.



The seeds of The Box Project were sown at the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1962 when Virginia Naeve of Jamaica, Vermont, met and talked with Clarie Collins Harvey from Jackson, Mississippi, and Coretta Scott King from Atlanta, Georgia. They talked about war and segregation as part of man's inhumanity to man. Back home in Vermont, Mrs. Naeve began to think about what she could do to lessen this inhumanity. Letters to Clarie Harvey and Coretta King brought the names of needy black families in Mississippi and Georgia to whom Mrs. Naeve began to send letters, clothing, household items, and food. From a gift subscription to a black newspaper in Jackson, Mississippi, Mrs. Naeve learned more about problems there. This resulted in her sending books for a new Freedom Library in Meridian, Mississippi.

To involve others who felt strongly about injustices in the south, Mrs. Naeve held a Civil Rights Fair at her home. Clothing or food served as admission and she reaped 250 boxes worth! In order to get the clothing to where it was needed, she wrapped and stacked boxes near her front door. Everyone who visited was asked to mail a box. By the time the last box was sent, people had begun to realize they ought to pack and mail their own boxes and were asking for the names of families.

Two other women in addition to Virginia Naeve formed the first volunteer staff. Myrtle Lane of Montpelier, Vermont, furnished all the mimeographed material needed for appeals and for reports. A Canadian friend, Mary Knight, made the mailings possible by donating \$5.00 worth of stamps each month. This sharing of information was one of the chief factors in the growth of the project.

By the end of 1967, the project had arranged for 300 families in 18 states to correspond with and help other families in the south. The first Center relationship began with Women Power Unlimited's Clothing Center in Jackson. People from all over the United States answered appeals for children's clothing for black children attending integrated schools. This early clothing center was housed in a makeshift renovated chicken coop behind Rosie Redmond's house. Rosie is now Rosie Holden and continues to receive and give out clothing to families in need.

When Virginia Naeve became ill in 1967, a Regional Coordinator system was established to administer the program through volunteer coordinators. While Janet Johnson in Seymour, Connecticut, set up and kept a master file, Sally deLeon of Windsor, Connecticut, screened needy families through southern contacts and assigned families. Regional Coordinators from around the country sent her the names of the new helpers who had joined from their area.

National publicity resulted in a great influx of mail and the growing need for a central office. In March 1969, the National Office was established at the Plainville (CT) United Methodist Church with Patricia Augur as Director. Pat previously had served as mid-Connecticut Coordinator and had taken an active role in forming the National Office. The name Mississippi Box Project, was simplified to The Box Project. By-laws were passed and the organization was incorporated in Connecticut. Janet Johnson served as first president.

Pat Augur's newsletters provided a welcome source of information, quotes, personal stories and encouragement. In 1969, approximately 3,500 helpers were assisting 2,875 families. Otis Brown of Indianola, Mississippi, was one of the first of The Box Project's necessary and important field workers. Another is Willie V. Crump who began visiting families in 1973 and still continues. She has also served two terms on the Board of Directors.



When The Box Project had outgrown the church space in 1971, Mr. & Mrs. Cadwell Hoerle of Plainville offered rent-free space in the Corley Building. That same year, due to the need for a steady base of financial support, annual dues were initiated with \$3.00 allotted for administration and \$2.00 for the newsletter, called **Person-To-Person News**.

An article in the 1973 *Woman's Day*, "What One Woman Can Do," was initiated by Lynn Schneiders. The article elicited an overwhelming response which resulted in 2,000 new helpers. Lynn was an outstanding member of The Box Project who, for many years, pushed The Box Project to be a vehicle not only for helping the poor but also for educating helpers in the reality and injustice of poverty and in government responses to it. She aggressively spoke out on the issues of welfare, legal services, and food stamps.

An appeal for a \$2.00 raise in dues for a full-time Director led to the hiring of Richard Barnett in February 1973. Pat Augur retired that fall, leaving a legacy of fine leadership, ability, and commitment.

During almost five years with The Box Project, Richard Barnett revised and streamlined the administration and improved the efficiency of the National Office. During this time, the By-Laws were extensively revised. The new By-Laws provided that helpers and sister-families be voting members of The Box Project. In April 1977, members approved the new By-Laws on the annual ballot.

A long time dream was realized when Nemiah Wayne, a native Mississippian, was hired as The Box Project's first full-time Field Consultant in February 1975. He possessed much empathy and was very able. Mr. Wayne took a position with the Delta Housing Corp., in the fall of 1977 and The Box Project hired Catherine Leonard.

In addition to working with Southern poverty families, the Project worked with Chippewa Indians living on the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota. Melvin Clark worked closely with The Box Project in assessing the needs of the families living there. Although The Box Project work in this area began to phase out in 1977, ten

Minnesota Indian families continue to maintain their relationships with helpers. Because there was a continuing interest in serving Native American families, a new relationship with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians was established in 1977.

Nancy Normen began her work with the Box Project as a volunteer in the National Office in 1969, joined the staff six months later, and became Executive Director in January 1978. Nancy developed accounting procedures and financial reports. Services to all members improved and increased. The Santa Program, matching families and helpers for a special holiday sharing, was initiated in 1979. The gift of a computer from Ruth & Virgil Mielke facilitated the administrative tasks.

When Odell Durham joined the staff as Field Consultant in 1978, she believed that by the end of 1985 families would not need Box Project help. Her feeling was "way wrong." Odell writes, "Now, since so many jobs are gone and assistance is being cut, the need for The Box Project will continue to grow. In many cases, The Box Project help is the only resource needy families have which is dependable."

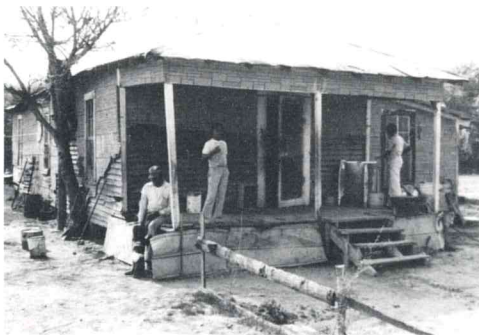
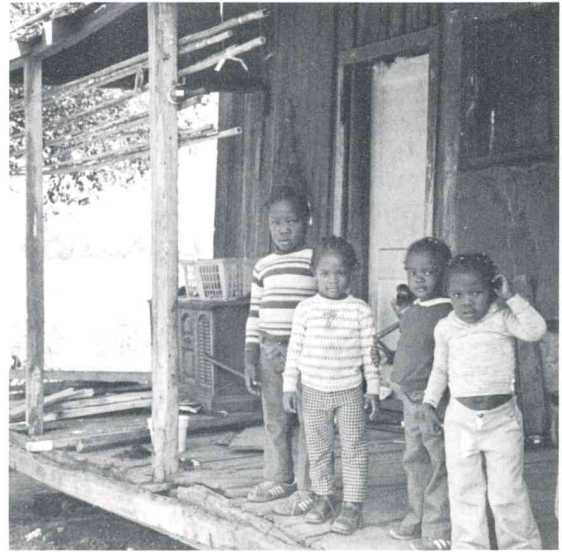
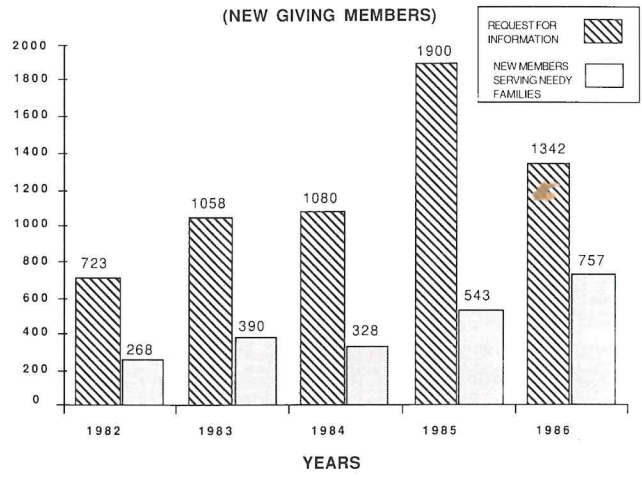
The Box Project continues to coordinate activities with community and day care centers, including Mississippi Christian Family Services, Rosie Holden, the St. Francis Center, the NCNW Day Care Center, We Care Community Services, and The Box Project Thrift Shop.

In 1985, The Box Project Board of Directors and staff began to push 'forward' the dream of expanding The Box Project to serve additional areas of need, with the National Office overseeing coordination.

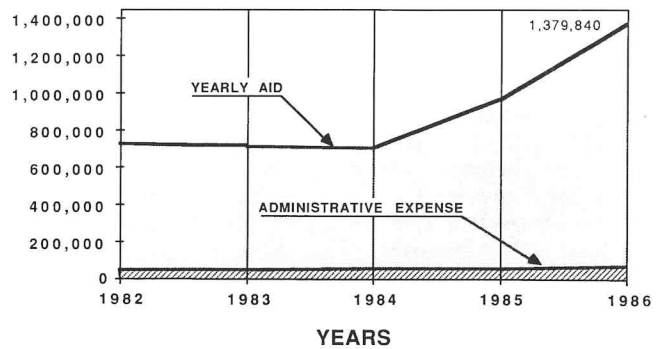
The Box Project is presently celebrating twenty-five years of service.



Requests For Information



Estimated Annual Aid



HOW THE BOX PROJECT WORKS

The media people -- the reporters, the television people -- do the first important work for the families The Box Project serves. They probably do not realize how important they are. They write and publish the stories that spread the word about this unique opportunity. They give the address and phone number where interested people can write or call for information. Without these special individuals who see the story of the relationships, the Project would not exist.

Interested people write or call The Box Project for more information. They are sent a brochure and application, and are put on the mailing list to receive newsletters for one year. People or groups who would like to join, then complete an application which specifies the amount of monthly support they are able to pledge, the sizes of clothing they have available, and other pertinent information which will help The Box Project match them with a family. The application is sent to the national office with the annual membership fee.

The national office matches the new member with a family in need according to age and clothing size, or fills any special requests if possible. Information about the sister family as well as general guidelines and suggestions are sent to the new member to help them get started. At the same time, the office notifies the sister family that they have been assigned a helper. The two then begin to correspond, and the exchange of letters and the sending of help in the form of a box of material goods begins.

Also part of the program is a home visit by the Box Project Field Consultant or other Field Contact person. Visits are requested through the national office. Otherwise, home visits are made to each sister-family every two years to reassess their needs and living conditions, and update records.

A large part of the role of the national office is to provide both sister families with information about programs available to help them. Eight newsletters are sent a year, five to helping families and three to sister-families. These newsletters contain suggestions and guidelines about developing a good relationship between families, as well as information about poverty, government programs, and other areas of interest. The office welcomes all sister families to write or telephone about specific problems and questions, as well as successful tips they would like to share.

Another role of the national office is to aid helping members in sending monetary aid to sister-families. This aid in the form of money has grown to over \$105,000 a year. The Special Needs fund also has grown and now disburses over \$5,200 for a wide variety of needs. Every other year a survey is made to determine the average value of goods and money given per family. In 1986 this estimated value of goods and money totaled \$1,320,820. Even more important, The Box Project, through its members, gives care, hope and comfort to the people it serves.

Since initiated in 1971, the dues have been increased from the original \$5 to \$20 per year for helping members. The Box Project Team, a group of former helpers, supports the entire program with contributions. In addition, the sister-families contribute \$2 a year to the Special Needs Fund. This program supports itself through member dues and contributions. It is only because of the staff's dedication and commitment and our members generous support that the Project can continue to operate.

Magazine Stories

FELLOWSHIP '66 '67 '81
WOMAN'S DAY '73 '85
GOOD HOUSEKEEPING '74
FARM WIFE NEWS '75
FAMILY CIRCLE '79
NEW AGE '82
LADY'S CIRCLE '83

Partial List-Newspaper Stories

THE CAPITAL TIMES, WI
THE RECORDER, MA
NEW BRITAIN HERALD, CT
HARTFORD COURANT, CT
NEW YORK TIMES, CT
PENINSULA NEWS, CA
ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS, CO
DAILY NORTHWESTERN, WI
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL, WI
WATERVILLE SENTINEL, ME
BANGOR DAILY NEWS, ME
PARK FOREST STAR, IL
CONTRA COSTA TIMES, CA
WORCESTER GAZETTE, MA
SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, CA
THE BERGEN RECORD, NJ
PENINSULA TIMES TRIBUNE, CA
SUNDAY REPUBLICAN, CT
NEWS HERALD, WI
CATHOLIC TRANSCRIPT, CT
DAILY DISPATCH, IL
NEW HAVEN REGISTER, CT
PRESS-TELEGRAM, CA
JOURNAL INQUIRER, CT
INDEPENDENT JOURNAL, CA
DENVER POST, CO
INDIANAPOLIS STAR, IN

Television

WFSB, CT
WTXX, CT
KRON, CA
KGO, CA
KCRA, CA
REAL-TO-REEL

Radio

WPOP, CT
WOR, NY
WGY, NY
WSNG, CT

Why Mississippi?

The focus for the initial help was Georgia and Mississippi sharecropper families. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, families were referred to The Box Project by civil rights workers in Mississippi. The third world nature of life in Mississippi and the development of field contacts there directed the focus for service into this one area of the country.

Mississippi has been certified as the poorest state in the union since 1930, and has been getting poorer relative to other states since. The general boom in the South of recent years has bypassed Mississippi. State leaders admit that the state has misapplied its relatively small resources because of politics and racism.

There are a myriad of problems - - an economy still based on plantation agriculture, indecent living conditions, poor education, inadequate health care, and a lack of steady full-time jobs for their citizens. Simply stated, people (primarily blacks) are poor because they cannot work a full year at even minimum wages in jobs that are available to them and there are too few jobs available.

The four major Public Assistance Programs available to U. S. residents are: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) for disabled or retired individuals. These programs do not support families at any reasonable level in Mississippi.

AFDC is supported by the federal government and by the state. Criteria for eligibility are set by the federal government and the amount of money to be paid is set by each state according to its own "Standard of Need". Mississippi's Standard was set in 1969 and is \$252 for a family of a Mother and three children. The benefit is only 50% of the Standard. Today, a family of four receives \$139. Families also receive food stamps from the state administered federal Food Stamp program. The food stamp coupon allotment for a family of four is \$271 a month. This, of course, can only be used for food. School children participate in the hot-lunch program at school and families receive the government give-a-way of food the purpose of which is to reduce the level of surplus foods in warehouses and not to feed hungry people.

Based upon these facts, The Box Project has continued to serve families in Mississippi with needed material help and is important as a source of friendship, encouragement, and information. The Box Project cannot end poverty, but its members can deal with the symptoms and pain of poverty in individual families with boxes of food, clothes, books, toys, household goods, and letters of hope and caring. It does make a difference. 📦

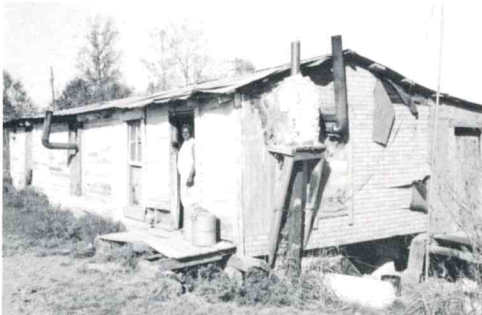


The Future

In 1985, the staff and Board of Directors began discussions about expanding The Box Project into other poverty areas within the United States. The need is growing as graphically shown in the distress of the hungry and homeless who have become a major area of concern today.

The Board of Directors authorized the "re-expansion" of our program areas at their fall 1986 meeting. In the past, we had worked in most of the southeastern states and in Minnesota. As the result of this decision, visits have been made to two community agencies in other poverty areas. A contract with the National Executive Service Corps has been entered into for development and strategic planning services.

We expect to begin service to at least two new areas of need within rural America in 1987. As the membership grows, other areas will be explored. Our goals are to expand the service areas, continue Mississippi as an area of greatest need, and to maintain the personal and caring exchange with our members which has always been a hallmark of our program.



"Since 1968, I have had the pleasure of helping my sister-family, Della and Lucille Wright. We have become good friends over the years and look forward to meeting in person some day. I thought you would be interested in knowing that the helping can work both ways. The Wrights have always been so grateful for our friendship and whatever assistance I have been able to share with them. They have been eager for some time to say thank you in a tangible way. This past Christmas they sent ME a box filled with samples of their delicious home cooking. I was delighted."

"You're always there when I need you. My helper is a good listener. I can relate to her by mail. I tell her things I wouldn't tell anyone else. About my needs, hopes, plans because I feel she understands and cares about my family."

"I read every Box Project newsletter and follow through on the important news like food stamps. In the last newsletter I am looking into sickle cell anemia due to one of the children complaining about headaches."

"She has done so much for us I can't begin to tell you how much. She is the reason we going places. We did not go because we did not have things to wear. All my thanks go to her and you all."

"I have some very nice help. I don't want no one else for my help because they are my family. They is good to us and we love them very much."

"I am glad to be a part of The Box Project and since I have become a part of it, me and my kids are doing a whole lots better."

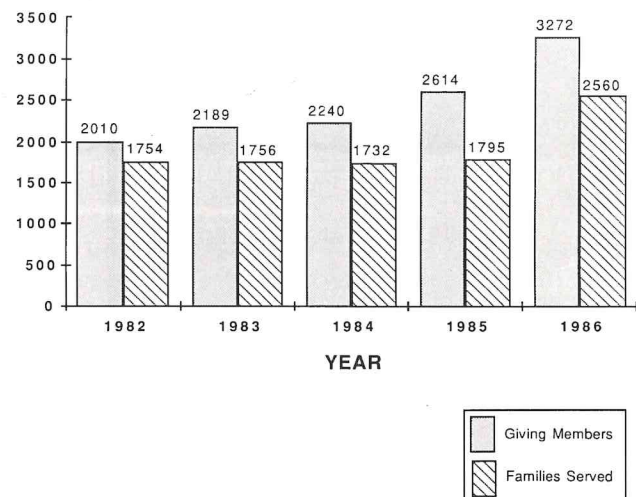
"Many times in our relationship I have asked myself: 'Just who is underprivileged here?' This is a most loving family, totally devoted to each other's welfare and well being, even though they lacked most of the so-called good things of life, even some of the necessities. Materially, they needed the Box Project help and appreciated it, but spiritually they are all richer than many of us will ever be."

"I wasn't in the Christmas spirit until we receive our Christmas gifts from you and Tony. Its good to know that someone cares about people they have never met or talk to, just read letter. Its very kind and I love you all for it. We appreciate everything you have

gave us, and how you made our life so surprising. I never been surprise in my life but now I know what its like to be surprise and how it feel and it feels just wonderful."

"Thank you for all the help you and Box Project have given me and my family. Thank you for the nice family sister that were assigned to me and my family. My family and I'll no longer need a helper. Thank you and your service for helping me and my family and for finding us a nice family that was like family."

Giving Members – Families Served



THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Rollie Sidla, President
Ruby L. Jackson, Vice-President
Dorothy Johnson, Secretary
Sybille Brewer, Treasurer
Willie V. Crump
Barbara Dros
Sharon Johnson
Daniel Julius
Mary Helen Lawrence
Lucendia Matthews
Adell Smith Moore
Doris Wetzel

STAFF

Nancy A. Normen, Executive Director
Odell G. Durham, Field Consultant
Irene Kelsey, Program Staff
Gail Potter, Program Staff
Rita Norton, Clerk
Alice R. Gilrain, Financial Secretary

VOLUNTEER STAFF

Sybille Brewer
Linda Lyons
Rena Webster (RSVP)

FIELD CONTACTS

Sister Julian Betts
Willie V. Crump
Hattie Dennard
Susie Evans
Sister Mildred Hein
Ruby L. Jackson
Sister Cora Lee Middleton
Sister M. Rose Monica
Sisters of The Sacred
Heart Southern Mission
Tommie Lee Williams
Social Services, Mississippi
Band of Choctaw Indians



We are grateful for the contributions of services from the following:

AUDITORS

Ernst & Whinney 1985-
Arthur Young & Co. 1978-1984

BROCHURE DESIGN

Lardis & McCurdy Advertising

25TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET

Research & Writing: Patricia Walker
Jill Johnson
Nancy Normen

Graphs: Norman Couch
Henry Crespo

Photography: Carl J. Russell, Jr.
Nancy Normen
Clarence Hawkins

Graphic Design: Kenneth H. Blanchard

Printing: PrintMail Division of
Consolidated Graphics Co.

The Box Project has a history of dedicated service by staff people. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the volunteer time SYBILLE BREWER and PAT AUGUR have given to The Box Project.

THANK YOU!

Please share this booklet with others who might be interested in our program. They may write for information to:

The Box Project, Inc.
P.O. Box 435
Plainville, CT 06062
or call: (203) 747-8182

THE BOX PROJECT, INC.
P.O. BOX 435
PLAINVILLE, CT 06062

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT # 9
Plainville, CT 06062