

Sponsors contribute to out-of-the-box plan: [Final Edition]

SHERRY MIMS - STAFF WRITER

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

In our area, there's no shortage of worthy places to serve, but one you may not have heard about is The Box Project. The seeds of the organization were sown in a conversation between Vermont homemaker Virginia Naeve and the late Coretta Scott King. During a 1962 flight to a disarmament conference in Geneva, Switzerland, the two discussed rural poverty, and, as a result of that conversation, Naeve returned home and gathered food, supplies and clothing in boxes.

(Sponsors) don't have to 100 percent support the family," Susan Patneaude, the executive director of The Box Project, said from the national office, which was moved to Ormond Beach about three years ago. "That's not the goal of the program. But if they can help them to aspire, maybe to a college education or vocational training that gets them to a different level, increasing their self-sufficiency, that's a job well done."

She should know. She is often out in communities helping. She volunteers through Rotary (Daytona Beach West) and United Way , as well as working with a French friend in Ormond Beach named Ginette to co-sponsor a French-speaking elderly former nun in Maine.

FULL TEXT

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

ORMOND BEACH -- Every year, millions of Americans give of their time, money and expertise, never expecting anything in return except for a feeling of a job well done.

This is their week.

National Volunteer Week, which runs through Saturday, is a service of the Points of Light Foundation. Started by an executive order from President Richard Nixon in 1974, the week has been set aside ever since to acknowledge volunteering.

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The Box Project has grown into a national, nonprofit organization that has an estimated 2,500 matches between sponsor families across the U.S. and recipient families in 26 states. Despite having only three full-time employees and less than \$200,000 budget, it has helped an estimated 15,000 people since its inception.

Still, though, there are people on the waiting list who need to be helped, says Ormond Beach resident Jeanne Brigandi, a two-year sponsor who says she wants to get the word out about The Box Project.

Everyone can donate money to charities, and that's a wonderful thing to do, but The Box Project is really unique in that the organization is a minimal influence," she says. "You pay your dues, set your specific requirements -- maybe you want a senior or a family with children -- and a relationship is basically established between you and the recipient family."

Brigandi says she's not wealthy, but contributing is easy. The family of five she buys for in Mississippi doesn't ask for much. Even small things, such as packs of gum, the whole family appreciates.

Patneau says the average sponsor spends \$50 per month, leading to an in-kind contribution between sponsors and recipients of about a million dollars.

That's going into local communities that don't have a lot of resources, so it's got to be helping their local communities as well," Patneau says.

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You have to know what you're asking your volunteers to do," she says, "and when you do it yourself, you know what you're asking."

For additional information on The Box Project and how to get involved, call (386) 677-8094 or visit www.boxproject.org.

For information on National Volunteer Week, go to Points of Light Foundation's Web site at www.pointsoflight.org.

Illustration

Caption: Jeanne Brigandi fills a box with items for a needy family in Mississippi as part of The Box Project. "I send useful items, as well as something fun each time," she says. News-Journal/ PAM LOCKEY

DETAILS

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