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Andrews University students fill shoeboxes for distribution to needy children

Michigan—Students from several departments in the Andrews University School of Health Professions kicked off their Christmas season by giving to children around the world through Operation Christmas Child. Sharing the good news of God’s love with hurting boys and girls is the heart of Operation Christmas Child. Along with small presents and personal items for the children, each box contains literature on the gospels, an opportunity for the child to receive Bible lessons and a copy of *The Greatest Journey* in the child’s native language.

The Department of Physical Therapy became heavily involved when Esther Jones, regional collection center coordinator for Operation Christmas Child and administrative assistant in the Department of Physical Therapy, and Sarah Hythecker, vice president of the Physical Therapy Class of 2014, set a dream in motion. Hosting a packing party in October 2012 and several collection dates between October and November 2012, physical therapy students and staff were able to pack nearly 100 boxes. This is the second year that Physical Therapy has been involved in Operation Christmas Child. Wanting to get more people around campus excited about this ministry, Hythecker invited department chairs from the School of Health Professions to get their students and faculty involved.

Through chapel announcements and Operation Christmas Child posters hung across campus, students were able to see that just a simple, small gesture could make a big difference. Participation meant packing a shoebox with small gifts, donating \$7 online or including it in the box and then dropping it off on the collection days.



Students from the Department of Physical Therapy packed 89 boxes for Operation Christmas Child during a packing party on Wed., Oct. 17, 2012.

“As a physical therapy student, my spare time is limited. What I like about Operation Christmas Child is that participation is quick and easy. All you have to do is purchase items to include in the box, make an online donation, and pack the box. Quick and easy!” says Hythecker. “I can only imagine the joy the little girl receiving my box will experience. She will find colorful hair accessories, a toothbrush and toothpaste, a teddy bear, a coloring book and crayons, a notebook and pencils, some candy and, most importantly, she will learn about the love of Jesus Christ.”

As students from the Department of Physical Therapy encouraged others to join in, many lent a helping hand. The Department of Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology also hosted a packing party in October, resulting in approximately 50 shoeboxes. Students from the Departments of Nursing and Nutrition & Wellness packed boxes on their own time. In total, students from Andrews ended up donating 212 packed shoeboxes to Operation Christmas Child.

From Andrews, the boxes were taken to the Niles Adventist School, a regional collection site. Operation Christmas Child is no stranger to Niles Adventist School. The school has been involved for the past 16 years, during which time more than 158,000 gift boxes have



On Sun., Oct. 28, 2012, students and faculty from the Department of Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology hosted an Operation Christmas Child packing party. They packed a total of 47 boxes, which will be shipped around the world to boys and girls in need. The boxes contain a variety of small toys, personal hygiene items, basic school supplies and a personal note from the Andrews student who packed the box.

passed through the site. This year alone, 23,701 shoeboxes were collected at the Niles Adventist School collection site.

With the anticipated shoebox collection of more than nine million boxes worldwide this year, Operation Christmas Child expects to pass a significant milestone — collecting and delivering shoeboxes to more than 100 million children since it was established in 1993 by Samaritan’s Purse, a Christian relief and evangelism organization.

Even though the main collection drive has come to a close, shoeboxes can be “packed” online by visiting www.samaritanspurse.org/giving/buildabox/.

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