



FOR CHILDREN WHO WISH
FOR **JUST ONE GIFT**

Q&A with Jim Cavnar

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Cross Catholic Outreach President Jim Cavnar

What is a Box of Joy? Who packs them and how do they get them to needy children?

Jim: A Box of Joy is a shoebox-sized box that families fill with small, age-appropriate gifts for children in poverty-stricken nations. Cross Catholic Outreach then delivers the boxes — each includes a rosary and “The Story of Jesus,” in the recipient’s native language — to these children to spread Christmas joy. Most of the participants right now come through Catholic dioceses across the country — through their schools, parishes and groups — as well as other organizations, individual folks and families. People jump at a chance to serve God by packing and sending help and hope. If you could see the faces of the kids on the receiving end, you’d see we’re hardly packing just toys and supplies; we’re boxing up and shipping happiness!

When people participate, how do they know what to give?

Jim: Box of Joy makes it easy. The website — www.BoxofJoy.org — gives a list of helpful suggestions for age and gender. Once you have your list, shop for what you would like to give, like toys, school and hygiene items, etc. Pack the box and donate \$9 online at <https://crosscatholic.org/box-of-joy/online/#shipping> or click here to cover shipping and local ministry support. If your group is participating, your project leader will provide collection details. If you are doing Box of Joy on your own, go to the website to locate your nearest Drop-Off Center. For those who want to participate but you simply don’t have time to go shopping, visit <https://crosscatholic.org/box-of-joy/online/>, where a box will be packed by Team Joy volunteers and shipped to a child for you.

But for children in dire poverty, is the best response a box of toys?

Jim: When that box is part of a broader response of love, it is. Cross Catholic Outreach, through our network of local partners, responds to emergency needs and addresses root causes of extreme poverty. But for a child who has never received a gift, what better way to combat hopelessness than with a message of hope and love. Box of Joy doesn’t replace other aid, it enhances it. By sending a box of small gifts, it’s a good reminder of the strangers who gave our baby Jesus gifts at His birth, who wanted to love Him the best they could and gave what they had for his enjoyment.



Box of Joy sends more than gifts, doesn't it?

Jim: Yes, it does. Of the \$9 check you donate for shipping, \$2 also supports outreach and ministries in the child's community. Believe me, a whole lot gets packed into every Box of Joy!

What kind of reception is the Box of Joy program getting?

Jim: The growth and involvement amaze us. In 2014, our pilot year, we began with just two dioceses, and that handful of parishes and schools brightened Christmas for kids in Guatemala. We piloted in eight states in 2015 and went nationwide in 2016. In 2021, despite the continuation of the global pandemic, we served children in seven nations — Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic — bringing them 106,276 boxes of joy, almost double what we brought in 2020! The number of participating groups has also increased significantly: in 2014, we only had 29 participating groups, and by 2021, that number was up to 1115. We are hoping to have more than 1,500 participating organizations/groups in 2022.

Can you participate in Box of Joy without packing a box yourself?

Jim: Absolutely. There are two ways to do this: 1) you can donate a box online at our website for \$34 and Team Joy volunteers will shop, pack and ship it for you, or 2) you can order items online through our Amazon wishlist and these items will be packed and shipped in Box of Joy gifts for children.

I'm a Project Leader and need to know how to engage my group/school/parish to participate in Box of Joy?

Jim: We have plenty of ideas of activities on our website to help out project leaders when it comes to planning for a successful Box of Joy ministry. These activities include creating a Joy Meter, having a Family Christmas Party, inviting people to bring enough boxes to create a Christmas Tree, or even host a 5K Run for Joy.

Who is the organization behind Box of Joy?

Jim: Box of Joy is proudly facilitated by Cross Catholic Outreach, an official Catholic nonprofit 501(c)(3) relief and development organization. Since it was founded in 2001, Cross Catholic has given more than \$1 billion in aid to help "the poorest of the poor" in more than three dozen developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It's a privilege to be part of this work that has received so many accolades, including recognition from the Vatican.

How has Cross Catholic Outreach responded to COVID-19 in the nations they serve?

Jim: Food insecurity hit these poor countries hard, and we have been focused on providing the necessary nutrition, clean water access and medical services throughout the hardest hit areas. Our ministry partners have responded in big ways — several stories are available on our website of what they have done to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and meet the needs of people we serve.



If a person or group or church wants to pack a box or become a volunteer, what do you tell them?

Jim: First, we tell them “welcome to the world of joy,” because everyone who gives joy receives joy in return! Second, go to www.BoxofJoy.org and sign up if you want to lead a campaign for your group. There’s also information there for individuals and families. By September, project leaders for local groups will receive their kits with materials. November 5-13 is Box of Joy Collection Week. The “volunteer” page gives all the details about volunteering.

Why not just have people send in money?

Jim: Box of Joy is a two-way ministry. We help the poorest of the poor share in Christmas joy. But we also share in the joy. That starts with selecting and packing gifts and knowing that our gifts are hand-delivered to a special child. Studies abound showing that joy comes not in spending on ourselves but in doing for others. Your Christmas gifts are opened by a child who will very likely receive nothing else. I repeat: nothing else. Seldom do any of us have a chance to cause such genuine happiness.

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To learn more, visit boxofjoy.org.

For interviews, contact Kevin Wandra at 404-788-1276 or kwandra@carmelcommunications.com.

Learn more about Cross Catholic Outreach at CrossCatholic.org.

Based in Florida, Cross Catholic Outreach is an official Catholic nonprofit 501(c)(3) relief and development organization that, since its founding in 2001, has given more than \$1 billion in aid to help “the poorest of the poor” in more than three dozen developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and other parts of the world. For more information about Cross Catholic Outreach, visit CrossCatholic.org or call 800-914-2420.



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