



Books For Peace

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Hola Amigos,

Friends have been asking me if they have missed this year's fundraiser? My friend, Gina, told me to tell my friends that I am giving them a gift of a night off, where they don't have to put one more thing on their calendar.

I do want to update you on Books for Peace, which was founded in 1999. We're still delivering books in the very rural areas of El Salvador. The philosophy behind Books for Peace is that by helping children to become more literate, we are also helping their potential to become more active leaders in their own communities and government. This past summer instead of going to El Salvador and delivering books, we sent a cargo container in conjunction with the Sisters of St. Francis. It was filled with not only books and uniforms but teacher desks, computers, wheelchairs, bicycles and clothing. Kevin Gordon with the help of his mother and fellow scouts earned his Eagle Scout badge by collecting and packing the goods.

Because of our new 501 C 3 status, Books for Peace has been able to become a Scholastic Literacy partner allowing us to buy the books at a forty percent discount. So, now a stack of books as tall as I am, has arrived. The books get stamped and packed in our suitcases for our next delegation to El Salvador on May 23rd. Our group will deliver these books to 10 schools and community libraries.

Also on the agenda are visits to the 4 preschools where we pay the yearly teacher's salaries. Books for Peace has been paying these salaries for 5 years now and last year the teachers asked for a pay raise. How could we possibly say no to a \$10 a month pay raise after 5 years? The preschool teachers have asked us to deliver a workshop as they are not certified teachers, so I hope to get some ideas from our early childhood center here in the Blue Springs school district. In addition, the preschools are requesting just under \$200 each to build a swing set at each school.

People sometimes ask, if after these past nine years, we can see the benefits of the books in the children's lives. To quote one teacher, "These books you bring to us are like a revolution. My students come from families where a third of the parents only have a second or third grade education themselves, a third of the parents can only write their names for legal purposes, and a third can't read or write at all. These children are reading 10, 20 up to 60 books and taking them home to read to their families." The members of our delegation noticed that the children at this school had much higher writing levels in their notebooks. The books we bring are not to replace a teachers reading program, but to enhance it with the belief that children learn comprehension and to read by reading.

I'd like to tell you about my best friend from 7th grade, Beth. When I first started Books for Peace, I dreamed of Oprah sending me a million dollars. Needless to say, Oprah hasn't sent the check and in the meantime we have built several classrooms and delivered our books. It wasn't too long after telling Beth about my Oprah dream, she began sending me a monthly check. It isn't a million dollars, but over the years Beth's contribution has been quite substantial. So this year we have more books to buy, our commitment to the teacher's salaries and the swing sets. So, although our needs aren't great, with just a little bit of help we can realize them for this year and next. I'd like to ask each of you to consider a donation in the name of literacy. No amount is too small (or too large!!) Please send your fully tax deductible donation and your address corrections to:

**Books for Peace,
1209 Indian Lane,
Blue Springs, Mo 64015**

Thank you for any help you can give and God bless. Sincerely,

Ellen Trakas



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