

Operation: 100 million shoe boxes

This month Operation Christmas Child will give away the 100 millionth shoe box gift. Since 1992, the Franklin Graham-led ministry has mobilized 100,000 volunteers in 130 different countries to give impoverished children shoe boxes filled with toys, school supplies, hygiene items and candy.

For this major feat, 12-year-old Evilyn Pinnow will present the 100 millionth gift to a child in the Dominican Republic on the heels of a U.S. nationwide tour to collect items to donate.

“Celebrating Operation Christmas Child’s 100 millionth shoe box gift means reaching 100 million children with hope, through a simple gift-filled shoe box,” Pinnow says. “I don’t know about you, but 100 million kids getting a shoe box gift is a hard number for me to imagine. That’s lots of millions!”

Pinnow has been collecting and donating shoe boxes since she was 8 years old when she founded the Shoe Box Club in her hometown of Ft. Atkinson, Wis. The club now has 80 members between ages 3 and 12, includes a board of directors, and has collected 2,000 shoe boxes in the past four years.

Pinnow travels throughout Wisconsin teaching other children to start Shoe Box Clubs in their area. For this mature-beyond-her-age schoolgirl, the Shoe Box Club is only the beginning of a long-held dream that started when she accepted Christ at age 6.

“[When I started the club] I had been praying for two years before that time that I would be able to start something to help kids,” Pinnow says. “I didn’t even know about Operation Christmas Child then. I just had that desire.”

Pinnow has written a manual with instructions and graphics to help others start Shoe Box Clubs throughout the country. She is looking forward to mobilizing volunteers during the 10-city tour that will culminate with giving away the 100 millionth gift.

Pinnow admits to thinking extensively about what she'll say to the recipient. But she's decided to keep it simple: "I'm probably going to tell them that God loves them and I love them too. Yay!"