

# Back-to-School Drives Collect Supplies for Needy

As schools nationwide prepare to open their doors for another year of learning, most parents are shopping for back-to-school bargains using a school-issued supply list as their guide. But this year, U.S. kids are thinking beyond their own backpacks and buying supplies for kids they have never met.

Americans are stocking up on items for Operation Christmas Child—a massive year-round project of international Christian relief and evangelism organization Samaritan's Purse—where participants fill shoe boxes with school supplies, toys, necessity items and letters of encouragement for kids overseas.

"I love getting extra notebooks, colored pencils and erasers for my kids to pack in our shoe box gifts," said San Diego-area mom of three and Operation Christmas Child volunteer Melanie Ryden. "During back-to-school sales I can get items for great prices, which enables our family to help more children in need."

This shoe box packing effort, requiring months of organization and preparation, will reach some 8.5 million kids who are suffering because of natural disaster, disease, war, terrorism, famine and poverty. For many of these children, the shoe box will be the first gift they have ever received. Since 1993, Operation Christmas Child has hand-delivered shoe box gifts to more than 86 million hurting children in some 130 countries.