

Children clothed in blessings when others discover joy of giving

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ROUND ROCK—Children at [Texas Baptist Children's Home](#) are wearing blessings provided by an 8-year-old girl whose birthday wish was to make a difference and a mother who knows how important it is to feel loved.



Donna DeLaCruz was proud when her daughter, Mary Beth, decided to ask for donated shoes for Texas Baptist Children's Home rather than presents for herself on her birthday. (PHOTOS/Children at Heart Ministries)

Birthday parties seem like a pretty good excuse for children to think mostly of themselves. But for Mary Beth DeLaCruz it was her opportunity to give to a group of children she had never even met.

Meanwhile, Lisa Kaminski, who knew the feeling of abandonment and loneliness that often comes from being a child raised in poverty, saw an opportunity to wrap loving arms around a 9-year-old girl at the children's home.

Mary Beth's giving spirit was evident when her parents started to think about ideas for her birthday party, and she informed them she'd rather give presents to children who don't have any than receive them herself.

"She came up with the idea all by herself with no prompting from us whatsoever," said her mother, Donna DeLaCruz. "It was one of those moments where you are really proud of your child and think that maybe something you have taught them is getting through."

Mary Beth's mother knew about Texas Baptist Children's Home through her father and stepmother, longtime friends of Don Cramer, vice president of the Children at Heart Foundation. After a tour of the ministry, Mary Beth asked if she could bring presents to the kids. Texas Baptist Children's Home Volunteer Coordinator Brenda Gilbert suggested a better idea—shoes.

"I knew this little girl really wanted to make a difference, and shoes are sometimes one of the most-needed but under-donated items we receive," Gilbert said.

Mary Beth was thrilled by the idea.

"To an 8-year-old girl, any reason to buy shoes is a good one," her mother said, chuckling. "She was so excited."

Each of her birthday party guests brought at least one pair of shoes to be donated and some bought more than one. Mary Beth's grandmother brought four pairs of new shoes.

Donna DeLaCruz, who was raised by a single mother, felt a connection to providing something for displaced children. Now she has started planning her own shoe party for mothers in the Texas Baptist Children's Home Family Care program.

"It's contagious. We want to find new ways to give back and are excited about it," she said. "Mary Beth's idea to give to others less fortunate made us all ask ourselves, 'If a child can give up their birthday presents, then what can I sacrifice?'"



Emily and Lisa Kaminski provided clothing for Texas Baptist Children's Home Campus Life resident Veronique.
(PHOTOS/Children at Heart Ministries)

Lisa Kaminski began in a much different way but with a similar spirit. She worked as a preschool teacher at Round Rock Christian Academy, where she met Barachel Toner, daughter of longtime Texas Baptist Children's Home house parents Brenda and John Toner.

"She asked me if (the children's home) could ever use donated items, and I said, 'Absolutely!'" Barachel Toner recalled. "Her first donation was actually a large set of books, CDs and computer games that were in pristine condition."

Then, when she was sorting through her daughter Emily's school clothes, Kaminski decided to donate outfits that were too small for her.

Meanwhile, 9-year-old Veronique, a children's home Campus Life resident, had returned to her cottage from a visit with her mother a bit discouraged. When she told her mother that she needed some school clothes, all that her mom could afford were some socks.

"Veronique's mother is ill and doesn't make a lot of money," said Charlotte Sherburne, a house parent. "I wasn't sure what we were going to do, but I knew we had to get her some clothes. School was about to start and she had literally nothing to wear."

Within the week, two bags of clothes landed at the Sherburnes' door, each item in near-perfect condition.

"It was everything Veronique needed—shirts, jeans, hoodies, sweaters, even shoes," Sherburne said. "It's just amazing how God provided for her needs. I didn't even ask for these things, God just gave it. I didn't have to worry."

When Lisa was told the impact of the clothes she donated, she was almost speechless.

“It makes me want to cry to know God used our donations in such an important way,” she said. “I’m a mom, and I know what it means to feel loved.”

She also knows from personal experience what a gift like hers can mean. Raised in what she calls “ the ghetto,” Kaminski has seen the temptation to become bitter and angry at the world around you.

“Whenever I received gifts as a child it always made me feel like someone cared,” she said. “So, if the things I give to (the children’s home) can be a set of small arms to go around a little girl, then let those arms show her someone loves her so she will turn towards the Lord and know that is where her blessings come from.”

For Kaminski, that confirms the Scriptures God places on her heart regularly.

“He is calling us to take care of the less fortunate,” she said. “If we don’t feel an ‘ouch’ when we give something away, then we aren’t sacrificing enough. These children need to know God is not too busy to know what’s happening in their lives or to provide for what they need.”