

Buckner distributes 5 millionth pair of shoes

August 31, 2023

OAXACA CITY, Mexico—Buckner International recently gave away its 5 millionth pair of shoes through its Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls program.

The milestone was celebrated in Oaxaca, Mexico, as volunteers presented the shoes to 8-year-old Rodrigo Correón Martínez during a larger distribution for local children.

Rodrigo and his family live in the Xoxocotlán colonia in the outskirts of Oaxaca City, located in central Mexico. They first heard about Buckner because of its shoe program, which collects new shoes from around the United States and distributes them to vulnerable children in Texas and abroad.



Lilibeth Santiago, executive director of Buckner Mexico, washes the feet of 8-year-old Rodrigo Correón Martínez, who received the 5 millionth pair of shoes through Buckner's Shoes for Orphan Souls program. (Buckner Photo)

As is the case with many families, the new shoes Rodrigo and his brother received several years ago were the first step for their parents to access additional services through the Buckner Family Hope Center, a program that strengthens families in the community.

Buckner staff in Mexico describe Rodrigo as a respectful child who loves to learn and seeks to bring cheer to everyone he encounters. This year, he will be able to start the school year with a new pair of shoes.

About 150 children and their families gathered in the courtyard of the Buckner Family Hope Center in Xoxocotlán for the distribution. Buckner staff and volunteers cleaned the children's feet before placing a new pair of shoes, selected specifically for each child, on them.

This was one of two shoe distributions held in Mexico the same week. The other served an additional 120 children.

Shawn Spurrier, director of Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls, was among Buckner leaders present at the landmark presentation in Oaxaca.

"We have reached an amazing milestone," Spurrier said. "For many of us, the importance of new shoes is an afterthought, but they can be the catalyst to transformation in the lives of children.

"They help kids attend school, protect them against disease and injury, and give them hope. This pair represents 5 million opportunities to express to children throughout the world that they are loved, cared for and not forgotten."

Beginning in 1999, Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls held its first community shoe drives in Dallas. Since then, shoe drives have expanded across the country.

Collected shoes are then distributed domestically and in more than 86 countries around the globe to children living in poverty. Individuals, organizations and churches have helped collect millions of shoes for children served by Buckner.

"This pair also represents the hard work put in by tens of thousands of

donors, volunteers, community organizers and Buckner staff throughout the years,” Spurrier said. “We can only thank all of them for their efforts.”

All shoes collected are brought to the Buckner Humanitarian Aid Center in Dallas and are then shipped to children living in orphanages and impoverished communities where Buckner offers a variety of holistic services.

Through foster care, empowerment programs, transitional care and humanitarian aid, Buckner International supports children and families in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Peru and Mexico.

“We are not done yet,” Spurrier said. “The work towards the next 5 millionth pair starts now.”