

Operation Christmas Child enables students to help one shoe box at a time

JENNIFER LEIGH JONES
Contributing Writer

Meredith students may not be able to solve all of the world's problems, but each of us can make a difference in the lives of some of the world's most impoverished children - one gift-filled shoe box at a time

In the past ten years, Operation Christmas Child, a project sponsored by Samaritan's Purse, has distributed more than 24 million shoe boxes filled with gifts to underprivileged children in over 115 countries around the world. Participating in Operation Christmas Child is a great opportunity for the Meredith community to share with these needy children at Christmas.

Consider the story of Lena Sopot. In 1996, Lena

was a fourteen-year-old schoolgirl who lived in a small apartment with her parents and older brother in Minsk, Belarus. Lena's family had a monthly income of only \$70.00. In addition to financial difficulties, Lena also suffered health problems due to the effects of radiation from the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident. One wintry day in December at the factory in which she worked, Lena's mother learned of a Christian relief organization from the United States called Samaritan's Purse that would be distributing shoe boxes filled with Christmas gifts to the local children, and she quickly made plans to go with Lena to the distribution site in the hope of securing a Christmas package for her daughter.

Imagine her delight as

Lena received a colorfully wrapped shoe box full of Christmas surprises. As Lena eagerly opened her precious shoe box, she discovered all sorts of wonderful gifts - her very own stuffed teddy bear, school supplies, and toiletry items. Soon afterward, she wrote a thank-you letter to the family whose address she found enclosed in a card inside the box. This letter began the correspondence over the past seven years between Lena Sopot and this family - my family - whose shoe box she received that Christmas.

Lena is now twenty-one years old and a college student at the university in Minsk where she is studying languages. Last summer, she was granted a visa to come to the United States to work at a camp in Brevard, North Carolina.

After many years of corresponding with her by mail, my family traveled to Brevard in July to meet Lena and spent a fun-filled weekend in Asheville with her. All of our lives have been enriched through that one simple gift-filled shoe box.

Although many of us may be tempted to offer excuses such as hectic schedules due to demanding classes, upcoming exams, the holidays and limited budgets, participation in this project is actually easy, fun, and requires little time or money. Just find an empty shoe box and wrap it if you wish. Wrapping is optional, but if you choose to, wrap the box and lid separately. Decide if your box will be for a boy or a girl and the age group of the child, 2-4 years old, 5-9 years old, or

10-14 years old, and choose items appropriate for the age and sex of the child. Suggested items include small toys, school supplies, toiletry items and hard candy. By using your imagination and creativity, your box can be a unique reflection of your own personality.

Remember to include \$5.00 to help with shipping and handling expenses. Enclose a card, a note, a picture of yourself if you wish, and your name and address.

Through Operation Christmas Child, you may develop a friendship with a new pen pal from some distant part of the world. But even if you don't, you can still feel great just knowing that somewhere a child is enjoying Christmas because you gave to Operation Christmas Child.

Kill Bill kills with laughter

ANDREA GILLIKIN
Contributing Writer

As most of you who keep up to date with movie headlines know, Quentin Tarantino's fourth film *Kill Bill* was recently released in theaters. For movie lovers it is always exciting to see what Tarantino will think up next. Like other Tarantino films, this one has a number of shockers - things you wouldn't see in just any movie. *Kill Bill* is mostly a martial arts film, and the plot is about The Bride, played by Uma Thurman, trying to find her former boss, Bill, and kill him to get her revenge.

Even if you aren't a Tarantino fan, you may want to see this movie for its beautiful cinematography. There is an especially

beautiful scene that portrays The Bride and O-Ren Ishi, played by Lucy Liu, fighting in the snow. The scene's beauty can be attributed to Robert Richardson, (*Snow Falling on Cedars*) the director of photography. Another gorgeous scene involves Thurman set in black and white where color is slowly introduced. First her eyes come to life in bright blue and then her earrings in bright green. The martial arts moves are also beautiful to watch. The movie is very well choreographed with Thurman battling anywhere from one person to thirty in some scenes.

Kill Bill also has a wonderful soundtrack. One of my favorite parts in the movie is in the opening scene; Thurman has been

shot by her boss Bill, and suddenly all we hear is Nancy Sinatra singing "Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)." This song sets the tone for the movie with Sinatra's deep and forlorn voice. The film also includes other fabulous songs: "Woo Hoo," by the 5.6.7.8's, "Green Hornet," by Al Hirt and "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," by Santa Esmerelda. After the movie was over, my friends and I decided we had to buy the soundtrack, and I spent the rest of the night humming "Bang Bang."

The film has a lot of violence, but do not let that deter you. The violence is portrayed in ways that make it a lot more funny than gory. At one point, I was simply hysterical in the theater when The Bride

chopped off one guy's foot. It flew up in the air and the man caught it, looked at it, and then screamed while showing this "oh my God I lost my foot" look on his face. Most of the time the vio-

*continued on page 4*ence also has music in the background that helps make it less gory. There are only a few important scenes where you can hear the weapons in action. Tarantino uses the violence humorously throughout most of the movie. There are a few very serious scenes where the violence makes you cringe and jump out of your seat, but those usually end with some comic relief.

Uma Thurman is simply fabulous in this movie, and I would recommend seeing it just for her. There is a

hilarious scene in which Thurman, who has been injured and is temporarily paralyzed, attempts to talk her big toe into moving. The camera switches from a close-up of Thurman's face to a close-up of the toe, while we hear her telling herself to move her toe. Over and over she says, "Wiggle your big toe," with quick cutting from face to toe. In what other film could you get up close and personal with a toe?

When the movie is over, we are only half way through The Bride's journey to find Bill. It is a martial arts/action type film, but most of the time it's hard to not think it's a comedy.